



---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Editorial - Preventing Children's School Failures - Research and Interventions</b><br><i>Anca Bejenaru</i> ..... | 2 |
|---|---|

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>The Relations between Family Factors and School Outcomes at Different School Levels</b><br><i>Ágnes Dávid-Kacsó</i> .....                   | 4  |
| <b>Assessing Gender Differences in School Success. A Comparative View</b><br><i>Lorena Vaetisi</i> .....                                       | 12 |
| <b>The Education of Migrant Children: The Case of the Romanian Children Living in Bruxelles.</b><br><i>Adela Raluca C. Rotaru (Popa)</i> ..... | 23 |
| <b>Teachers' support and students' academic level</b><br><i>Ioana Orzea</i> .....  | 29 |

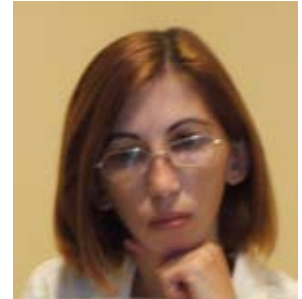
## PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES OF INTERVENTION AT SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>"It is normal, to be not normal"- How to develop the potentials of gifted children</b><br><i>Annemarie Jost</i> .....  | 39 |
| <b>Experience of implementation of two intervention programs focused on the development of the prosocial behavior among students within a mainstream school in Timișoara</b><br><i>Camelia Circu, Ana Muntean, Anca Luștrea, Ioana Dârjan</i> ..... | 46 |
| <b>Decreasing school failure by after school programs</b><br><i>Simona Pop, Raluca Segesvari, Iolanda Molnar</i> .....  | 56 |
| <b>Romanian Foundation for Children Community and Family, a practice model contributing to the school success</b><br><i>Adriana Podea</i> .....   | 64 |
| <b>The Role of Emotional Education in Promoting the Healthy Development of Children</b><br><i>Alina Georgeta Mag</i> .....  | 71 |
| <b>Instructions for Authors</b> .....   | 87 |
| <b>Information page</b> .....   | 90 |



---

# EDITORIAL - PREVENTING CHILDREN'S SCHOOL FAILURES - RESEARCH AND INTERVENTIONS



**Anca Bejenaru**  
Lecturer, PhD candidate  
Department of Sociology and Social Work  
Faculty of Science  
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

It is fully accepted today that education is one factor that, may equally contribute to the reduction but also to the reproduction of social inequality. In post-communist Romania, this double role of the education became more and more obvious. Statistics show us that, after 1990, the number of children that go to elementary and secondary school has dropped significantly, but the numbers increased in the case of those that go to tertiary school. As a result, a clear difference is being created between children and teenagers with education and those with a low level of education.

The evidences that show the school failure, as we can today see them by drop or non-attendance of school, are fairly few. We know even less about the children "at risk" of school failure because they don't even appear in statistics: children with poor results, children that skip school at an alarming rate, children that can not accommodate in school, children with inadequate school and social attitude and behaviour.

In this light, an urgent need to analyze these problems takes shape, through field researches that should reveal the social, school, family and individual factors that cause these risks. We believe that this is an essential con-

dition for developing and implementing efficient intervention programs that will reduce the sum of these risks.

In 2007, under the coordination of Professor Maria Roth, PhD, Head of Social Work Department of „Babes Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, began the implementing of PNII project, No. 91-063/2007, *The social diagnosis of the school performance through the social scale of school success and the projection of some methods of intervention validated by research*, financed by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, within the National Centre of Program Management. The scientific purpose of the project is the study of the social factors of school success and the development of practice of social intervention based on research.

Being partner in this project, University of West, Timișoara, The Center for Researching Parent-Child Relations (CICOP), dedicates the Issue 27 of the „Today's Children are Tomorrow's Parents” Journal (TCTP), to the dimensions of school success.

TCTP is proposing to its readers, theoretical and empirical articles that show results of research and also proposals of intervention and experiences from the implementation



---

of programs that are specific for improving school success and reduction of failure risk.

In the first part of the journal, *Research articles*, human-social science researchers approach in an original manner, factors of school success like family (in the article of Ágnes Dávid-Kacsó), or the children's type (in the article of Lorena Văetiși).

The second part of the journal, *Programs and strategies of intervention at school and community level*, includes items developed by practitioners in the field of sociology, social work, psychology, psychiatry, and

education too, in which are presented proposals and ideas about how we could facilitate the children's school success (in the article of Annemarie Jost, or in that of Alina Mag), and also implementation experiences, at school level, (article of: Camelia Circu, Ana Muntean, Anca Luștea, Ioana Dârjan) or at community level (article of Adriana Podean or that of Pop Simona, Segesvari Raluca, Molnar Iolanda), of some intervention programs.

This issue is completed, bringing to your attention a series of scientific events that will take place in the near future.



---

# THE RELATIONS BETWEEN FAMILY FACTORS AND SCHOOL OUTCOMES AT DIFFERENT SCHOOL LEVELS



**Ágnes Dávid-Kacsó**  
PhD student,  
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca  
kacso\_agnes@yahoo.com

## **Abstract:**

*This article examines the relations between family factors and school outcomes. The analysis below is based on the data obtained from the national survey, which aimed to validate the School Success Profile questionnaire (Bowen and Richman, 2005) in Romania. The survey was carried out within the project Social Diagnosis of the School Performance through the Social Scale of School Success and Development of Evidence-based Intervention Methods (see details about the project on [www.successcolar.ro](http://www.successcolar.ro)). The sample used is composed from the data collected in November 2008 - January 2009 in the process of the questionnaire's validation and is representative for secondary and high school students from Romania. The results show that the family characteristics are perceived differently by students at the two school levels. Also differences between the family factors correlated with school outcomes were found.*

**Keywords:** school performance, social capital, family characteristics, school behavioral problems

## **Rezumat:**

*Articolul de față examinează relațiile dintre factorii familiali și rezultatele școlare. Analiza de față se bazează pe datele obținute în studiul național realizat în cadrul proiectului Diagnosticul social al performanței școlare prin scala socială a succesului școlar și proiectarea unor metode de intervenție validate prin cercetare (detalii pe [www.successcolar.ro](http://www.successcolar.ro)). Proiectul a urmărit validarea în România a chestionarului School Success Profile (Bowen and Richman, 2005), construit la Universitatea Chapel Hill din SUA. Baza de date studiată este alcătuită din 2465 cazuri, obținute în perioada noiembrie 2008-ianuarie 2009, constituind un eșantion reprezentativ pentru populația din gimnaziu și liceu din România. Rezultatele arată că există diferențe între ciclurile școlare în ceea ce privește perceperea factorilor familiali. Au fost găsite diferențe între niveluri școlare în ceea ce privește factorii familiali corelați cu rezultatele școlare.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** performanță școlară, capital social, caracteristici familiale, probleme comportamentale



## Résumé:

*Cet article examine les relations entre les facteurs familiaux et la réussite scolaire. L'analyse ci-dessous est basée sur les données obtenues de l'enquête nationale menées dans le projet Le diagnostic sociale de performance scolaire par l'échelle sociale de réussite scolaire et conception des modèles d'intervention validés par la recherche (détails sur le site du projet [www.successcolar.ro](http://www.successcolar.ro)). Le projet visait à valider en Roumanie le questionnaire Profil de réussite scolaire (Bowen et Richman, 2005), développé à l'Université de Chapel Hill, Etats-Unis. La base de données étudiée se compose de 2465 cas, obtenus au cours de Novembre 2008-Janvier 2009, constituant un échantillon représentatif de l'école intermédiaire et secondaire de la population scolaire en Roumanie. Les résultats montrent que les caractéristiques familiales sont perçues différemment par les élèves aux deux niveaux scolaires. Également des différences entre les facteurs familiaux en corrélation avec les résultats scolaires ont été trouvés.*

**Mots-clefs:** *le rendement scolaire, le capital social, caractéristiques de la famille, des problèmes de comportement*

## Introduction:

This study is a result of the secondary analysis of the data obtained during the project *The social diagnosis of school performance using the School Success Profile (SSP-Ro) and the design of evidence based intervention methods*<sup>1</sup>. The project was focused on the identification of social factors that influence school success, which can serve as a base for efficient interventions in order to improve students' school performance. During the first stage of the project, the *School Success Profile* questionnaire was translated and validated for Romania, based on the self-administered questionnaire developed by Richman and Bowen (2005) for secondary and high school students in the USA.

<sup>1</sup> The article is based on the results of the PN II project nr. 91-063/2007 financed by The National Centre for Programme Management (CNMP), coordinated by Maria Roth, PhD (Babes-Bolyai University). For more details please check the site of the project: [www.successcolar.ro](http://www.successcolar.ro)

The researchers embraced an ecological-developmental-international perspective (Richman and Bowen, 1997), offering a diagnosis of students' social milieu: the family, peers, neighborhood and school.

In Epstein's categories of family involvement in children's education (apud Ingram, Wolfe and Lieberman, 2007), two categories refer to particular family practices which influence the school performance of students: (1) the gratification of the student's needs in the family and (2) the school related issues and activities such as homework, cognitively stimulating activities (reading, cultural activities, discussions on school related topics, etc.). Pomerantz et al. (2007) state that more parent involvement in the homework activities of children does not necessarily lead to better school results. The emotional climate of the parent-child interaction during the time spent with school-related issues might be influential as well. According to the results of Agabrian and Millea (2005), Romanian parents are motivated to get involved in their children's education and consider school related expectations very important. The same study reveals that adolescents perceived the school-related strategies of their parents as being of twofold: usually formal (asking formal questions about school related issues), but sometimes specific (explaining, encouraging, helping). The importance of the emotional support of the family on school results has not been studied in the Romanian context yet.

The present study tried to analyze the importance of the emotional support provided by parents, the home academic environment, school related expectations and regular discussions about school-related issues and problems faced by adolescents at school.

## Theoretical background

The relationship between family and children's school outcomes can be approached from many perspectives. Common in these perspectives is that the parental role in the educational success of the child cannot be examined without considering the social



context in which it occurs (Auerbach, 2007). It can be analyzed as a strategy that aimed to conserve or improve the social status of the family (as shown by Bourdieu, 1978), or as a result of family practices which mediate the effects of demographic factors (Feinstein et al., 2004). The ecological-developmental-international perspective conceptualizes the school success as a result of interactions within and between the microsystems of students' lives (Richman and Bowen, 1997)

Bourdieu (1978) considers that the educational strategy of the family is determined by the "habitus" of parents. According to their educational strategy, families invest their capital (economical, social and cultural) in their child's education. The families which need cultural capital for their social ascension will be more interested in education and will invest more of their capital in this process. In the context of this study, the focus on the investment of social capital in education is crucial. In Bourdieu's approach, the social capital relevant for the educational career of children consists of the social relations that parents can use in order to customize their children's school experience. Coleman (1988) also emphasized the importance of the families' social capital for children's school success, social capital meaning significant relationships as accessible resources for the child. In this perspective, social capital in its directly usable form for the child means the physical presence of the adult in the family and the attention this adult pays to the child. The different kinds of social capital valuables for the child influence different aspects of school outcomes, such as academic performance or behavior at school (Coleman, 1988, apud. Woolley, Kol and Bowen, 2008)

Feinstein et al. (2004) constructed a model of intergenerational transmission of school success, identifying distal and proximal factors. The authors consider "distal" those factors that have measurable effect on the development of children; proximal are factors that mediate their effect. The distal factors are: family structure, family size, teenage motherhood, income and poverty and

the employment of the mother. The proximal factors are: parental style and educational behavior of the parents. The effect of distal factors is mediated by proximal factors, namely the family characteristics consisting of parental particularities. The authors consider that the constellation of the factors have greater importance in their effect on school success than each factor in particular.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems perspective also provides a useful way to conceptualize children's developmental environment. Bronfenbrenner describes four systems: micro, meso, exo and macro. The micro system refers to the individuals immediate environment; the system that the individual participates in directly. For children, the most important microsystems are the family, the school, the neighborhood and the peer group (Richman and Bowen, 1997). The mesosystem represents the connection between microsystems. (e.g. the relationship between family and school: when parents meet with teachers on the child's behalf). The exosystem represents the settings in which the child does not participate directly, but influence the microsystems (e.g. the parents' work place, the neighborhood). The macrosystem is the broad social level (e.g., national government policies, cultural values, war, and economy). The interactional perspective refers to the "goodness-of-fit" between the individual and the environment. It includes two levels: the needs of the person and the gratification of these needs and the demands of the environment with the adaptability of the person to these demands (Richman and Bowen, 1997). The developmental perspective suggests that the child is in continuous interaction with the environment, acts and reacts, which in time results in specific developmental outcomes (Richman and Bowen, 1997). Applying this approach on the school success, the successful student's needs are satisfied in all four microsystems, this student being capable to answer adequately to the increasing demands of school. In time, as the student's needs are changing, an effective and satisfying microsystem also changes. The family factors



with important effect on the school results can change in different developmental stages which mean that it is useful to analyze these relationships between family and school outcomes, separately for the different school levels.

The most severe form of school failure is the school drop-out, but Richman and Bowen (1997) consider that the concept is more complex including the “interior drop-outs”, i.e., pupils who are physically present at school, but they don’t profit from the educational activities and leave the educational system without acquisitioning the skills and knowledge needed for their social integration. These students obtain low average grades, they have to repeat classes, and they register many absences. The behavioral problems at school are also associated with poor academic outcomes (Wolley et al., 2008).

Numerous studies, using quantitative or qualitative methods, have demonstrated the role of various family-related factors for school success. For example, Spera (2003) found a significant relation between parental values, aspirations, child-centered attitudes and parental monitoring, and the school outcomes of children, such as academic performance, school motivation and engagement in education. Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) and Woolley, Kol and Bowen (2008) provided solid evidence for the influence of family cohesion, parental emotional support, and academic environment at home on the children’s school achievements, trouble avoidance, school engagement and the feeling of coherence associated with school. Plunkett et al (2008) associated parental educational support with the child’s academic motivation. These findings correspond with those obtained by qualitative methods: Auerbach’s (2007) results obtained by interviewing socially disadvantaged parents show that the most effective socially disadvantaged students were those whose parents provided moral support, discussed with their child about the importance of education and other topics, had high expectations and had a clear structure of the family life. These findings are

similar to the results of Murray and Naranjo (2008) whose subjects also highlighted the importance of parents’ interest in school related topics in their school success.

### **The purpose of the present study**

This study examines the relationship between the emotional support provided by the family, educational activities in the family and the school outcomes of the child. The first hypothesis is that, there are significant differences in family characteristics perceived by pupils between girls and boys at different educational levels. The second hypothesis is that the family characteristics are correlated with school outcomes: with academic performance and behavioral problems.

### **Method**

The analysis below is based on the data obtained from the national survey, which aimed to validate the *School Success Profile* questionnaire (Bowen and Richman, 2005) in Romania. The survey was carried out within the project *Social Diagnosis of the School Performance through the Social Scale of School Success and Development of Evidence-based Intervention Methods* (see details about the project on [www.successscolar.ro](http://www.successscolar.ro))

The School Success Profile (SSP) is a self-report questionnaire designed for secondary and high school students. The data were collected in November 2008 -January 2009 on a representative sample of secondary and high school students from Romania. After excluding the cases with more than three missing answers on the 27 dimensions of the questionnaire, a working dataset of 2465 cases was obtained.

The researches on Roma children show that the school experience and educational career is different for Roma and non-Roma children and the relationship between children, parents and educational institutions are also different (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008). Given that our sample did not include a Roma sub-sample, there were only 25 children who participated at the survey and declared themselves as being of Roma ethnicity; con-



sequently, the data do not permit a separate analysis of Roma students. For this reason, I have decided to perform the analysis including only the non-Roma children.

### Measures

All measures used in this research were scales and items from the SSP.

#### *Measures of family factors:*

The *family togetherness* scale consists of seven items asking the student for example if their family members “support one other”, “play and laugh together”, or “feels loved by and cares for one another”. The possibilities of response are ranging from “at all”-1, to “very much”-3. The alpha reliability of this scale is .88.

The emotional *support* scale includes five items such as “how often in the last month, your family members “let you know you were loved” or “told you that you did a good job”. The possibilities of response are ranging from: “never”-1, to “three times ore more”-3. The reliability of this scale is: alpha=.85.

The *monitoring of the child in out-of-school activities* is measured by the SSP item: “Is there an adult in your home who knows where you are when you are not at home or in school?” The possibilities of answer are: “no”-1, “sometimes”-2, “almost always”-3, “always”-4. In order to be able to introduce this item in the regression analysis, the answers were dichotomized: the “no” received the value 0; all the other possibilities received the value 1.

The *home academic environment* scale consists of eight items asking the student about how often in the last month the members of their family discussed with them things like “School activities or events that interest you”, “Things you’ve studied in class”, “Current events”. The possibilities of response are ranging from: “never”-1, to “three times or more”-3. The alpha reliability of this scale is .83.

The *school related expectation* scale consists of eleven items asking the student about how upset the adults in their home

would be if they knew the student turned in his/her homework late or not at all, or he/she cut a class, etc. The possibilities of responses are between “at all”-1, “very much”-3. The alpha reliability of this scale is .91.

### The outcome variables

The dependent variables are: the *number of grade averages below 5* (in the last semester), *lack of involvement in learning* operationalized by the item “My parent received a warning about my grades or homework”, *behavioral problems*: “I had to see the principal or I was at the disciplinary committee because of the problems with my attendance or behavior”.

### Data analysis and results

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample (N=2465)

| Variables                     | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Ethnicity</b>              |                |
| Romanian                      | 89.4           |
| Hungarian                     | 9.6            |
| Roma                          | 1.0            |
| <b>Gender</b>                 |                |
| Girl                          | 55.3           |
| Boy                           | 44.3           |
| <b>school location</b>        |                |
| Rural                         | 25.6           |
| Urban                         | 74.4           |
| <b>Parents working abroad</b> |                |
| None                          | 88.4           |
| Mother                        | 3.3            |
| Father                        | 5.2            |
| Both                          | 2.2            |
| <b>School level</b>           |                |
| Secondary                     | 43.8           |
| High                          | 56.2           |

The table below shows the descriptive and the differences in the analyzed variables between school levels.



**Table 2. Differences between the school levels**

| Variables                             | School level | Mean  | STD  | Df   | t     | p    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------|------|------|-------|------|
| Number of grade averages below 5      | secondary    | 1.33  | .80  | 2440 | .098  | .922 |
|                                       | high         | 1.32  | .82  |      |       |      |
| Lack of involvement in learning       | secondary    | 1.18  | .43  | 2407 | 2.45  | .014 |
|                                       | high         | 1.14  | .40  |      |       |      |
| Behavioral problems                   | secondary    | 1.05  | .24  | 2415 | .275  | .783 |
|                                       | high         | 1.05  | .26  |      |       |      |
| Family togetherness                   | secondary    | 19.57 | 2.41 | 2451 | 8.70  | .000 |
|                                       | high         | 18.59 | 2.98 |      |       |      |
| Parental support                      | secondary    | 13.22 | 2.18 | 2446 | 10.64 | .000 |
|                                       | high         | 12.13 | 2.76 |      |       |      |
| Academic environment at home          | secondary    | 6.57  | 1.60 | 2439 | 4.09  | .000 |
|                                       | high         | 6.29  | 1.78 |      |       |      |
| School behavioral expectations        | secondary    | 27.23 | 6.04 | 2429 | .81   | .415 |
|                                       | high         | 27.05 | 4.89 |      |       |      |
| Monitoring in extra school activities | secondary    | 3.28  | .97  | 1455 | 4.74  | .000 |
|                                       | high         | 3.10  | .93  |      |       |      |

**Source:** SSP dataset (2009). Author's calculations.

Table 3. presents the correlations between the family characteristics and school outcomes for each school level.

**Table3. Correlations between family characteristics and school outcomes**

| Variables                      | School level | Number of grade averages below 5 | Lack of involvement in learning | Behavioral problems |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Family togetherness            | secondary    | <b>-.074 *</b>                   | <b>-.128**</b>                  | <b>-.084**</b>      |
|                                | high         | .002                             | -.087**                         | -.133**             |
| Parental support               | secondary    | <b>-.096**</b>                   | <b>-.045</b>                    | <b>-.003</b>        |
|                                | high         | -.007                            | -.065*                          | -.077**             |
| Academic environment at home   | secondary    | <b>-.105**</b>                   | <b>.012</b>                     | <b>-.009</b>        |
|                                | high         | -.095**                          | -.093**                         | -.076**             |
| School behavioral expectations | secondary    | <b>-.216**</b>                   | <b>-.085**</b>                  | <b>-.039</b>        |
|                                | high         | -.047                            | -.046                           | .000                |

**Note:** \*:p<.05

\*\* :p<.01

**Source:** SSP dataset (2009). Author's calculations

## Discussion

As table 2 shows, there are significant differences between the perceived family characteristics at the two school levels, excepting the school related expectations of the parents. The pupils from the two school levels perceived differently the emotional climate

of the family, the emotional support they get from the parents, and there are also differences in the discussions with parents about different (not only school related) topics. The expectations of the parent related to the school are not perceived on a significantly different way by pupils from the two school levels.



If we compare the variables of the school outcomes, we can see that we have significant differences between school levels only on lack of involvement in learning. This variable measures in fact the warning received by parents for their child's learning problems, so the differences between school levels can be explained by the school's higher interest in children's learning problems at the secondary school level (which is compulsory).

The correlations are also different at the two school levels: in secondary school the number of grade averages below 5 are correlated with all family factors, with the family cohesion at the significance level of  $p < .05$ , but with the other three family related variables the correlations are significant at the level of  $p < .01$ . In high school, this number of grade averages below 5 is correlated only with the home academic environment, the importance of family factors decreases at this level. The lack of involvement in learning is correlated significantly only with the family togetherness and school related expectations, the significance level in both cases is  $p < .01$ . In high school, the correlation coefficients between the lack of involvement in learning and family togetherness are also significant at the level of  $p < .01$ , but at this level the lack of involvement was also correlated with emotional support, at the significance level of  $p < .05$ , and the home academic environment, at the significance level of  $p < .01$ . At secondary school level, the behavioral problems were correlated significantly only with family togetherness (at the significance level of  $p < .01$ ), while in high school it is correlated also with family togetherness, but it is correlated with the emotional support and the home academic environment too (all three correlations are significant at the level of  $p < .01$ ).

Summarizing, for poor school performances the importance of family factors is decreasing at the high school level, the lack of involvement in learning is correlated with family togetherness at both school levels, but in secondary school it was correlated with expectations, and in high school with home academic environment and also with emotional support.

Note that there were no perceived differences in expectations between the school levels. The behavioral problems in secondary school were related only with the family togetherness, but in high school with all family factors, excepting the expectations.

### **Limitations of the study**

In our results we can only consider associations, without causality between the variables. Further research is needed to clarify changes on lack of involvement in learning between the school levels. One more limitation is the deletion of some cases in order to reduce the missing values from the sample, which affected the representativity of the national-level sample. Finally, all our results are based on a self report questionnaire completed by students, so the family characteristics analyzed refer in fact to the students' perceptions of those characteristics.

### **Conclusions:**

At the two school levels the pupils perceived differently the family factors, which explain the psychological changes characteristic for the two developmental stages (Buda,) but the importance of the family factors also for the high school students was shown by the more significant correlations between family factors and involvement in learning and behavioral problems. The results of the present study have also shown that as Feinstein et al. (2004) stated, beyond the demographic factors, the family characteristics expressed in parental practices have significant impact on the students' school outcomes. The family togetherness, the emotional support, the regular discussions with the student about important topics for her/him, the monitoring of the student, are signs of the intergenerational connectedness described by Coleman (1988), that makes the parents' different forms of capital valuable for the child. The social capital of the family accessible for the child is important not only for academic performance, but also for the social functioning of the child (his/her behavior of school) as Coleman (1988) has accentuated.



## References:

- Agabrian, M., Millea, V. (2005). *Parteneriate școală – familie – comunitate. Studiu de caz*. Iași: Editura Institutul European;
- Auerbach, S. (2007). From Moral Supporters to Struggling Advocates: Reconceptualizing Parental Roles. In: *Education through the Experience of Working-Class Families of Color, Urban Education*. Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 250-283;
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Az osztályok pályája és a valószínűségi okság. In: *A társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek újratemelődése*. Budapest: Gondolat;
- Bowen, G. L., Richman, J. M. (2005). *School Success Profile*, Jordan Institute for Families, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: experiment by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press;
- Buda, B. (1991). A serdülőkor szociálpszichológiája In É. Kósa; Ádám, M Ritoókné. (Eds), *Fejlődéslélektani szöveggyűjtemény pedagógiai és tanárszakos hallgatók részére*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó;
- Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. In *The American Journal of Sociology; Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure*. Vol. 94, Issue Supplement, pp. 95-120;
- Feinstein, L., Duckworth, K., Sabates, R. (2004). *A Model of the Intergenerational Transmission of Educational Success*, The Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning London, Institute of Education 20 Bedford Way;
- Fleck, G., Rughinis, C. (2008). *Vino mai aproape. Incluziunea și excluziunea romilor în societatea românească de azi*. București: Human Dynamics;
- Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Sandler, H.M. (1997). Why Do Parents Became Involved in Their Children's Education? In: *Review of Educational Research*. Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 3-42;
- Ingram, M., Wolfe, R.B., Lieberman J.M. (2007). The Role of Parents in High Achieving Schools Serving Low-Income, At-Risk Populations. In: *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 479-497;
- Murray, C., Naranjo, J. (2008). Poor, Black, Learning Disabled, and Graduating: An Investigation of Factors and Processes Associated With School Completion Among High-Risk Urban Youth. In: *Remedial and Special Education*. Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 145-160;
- Nash, J.K., Fraser, M., W. (1997). Methods in the Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors: Lessons from Epidemiology. In M.W, Fraser (ed). *Risk and Resilience in Childhood. An Ecological Perspective*. Washington DC: NASW Press;
- Plunkett, S.W., Henry, C.S., Houltberg, B.J., Sands, T., Abarca-Mortensen, S. (2008). Academic Support by Significant others and Educational Resilience in Mexican-Origin Ninth Grade Students from Intact Families. In: *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. Vol. 28, Nr. 3, pp. 333 - 355;
- Pomerantz, E.M., Moorman, E.A., Litwack, S.D. (2007). The How, Whom and Why of Parent's Involvement in Children's Academic Lives: More is Not Always Better. In: *Review of Educational Research*, Vol.77, No. 3, pp. 373-410;
- Richman, J.M., Bowen, G.L. (1997). School Failure: An Ecological-Interactional Developmental Perspective. In M.W Fraser, (ed). *Risk and Resilience in Childhood. An Ecological Perspective*. Washington DC: NASW Press;
- Spera, C. (2006). Adolescent's Perceptions of Parental Goals, Practices, and Styles in Relation to Their Motivation and Achievement. In *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. Vol. 26, No. 4 pp. 456-490;
- Woolley, M.E., Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2006). Protective Family Factors in the Context of Neighborhood: Promoting Positive School Outcomes. In: *Family Relations*. Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 93-104;
- Woolley, M.E., Kol, K., Bowen, G. (2009). The Social Context of School Success for Latino secondary School Students: Direct and Indirect Influences of Teachers, Family and Friends. In *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 43-70.



# ASSESSING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL SUCCESS. A COMPARATIVE VIEW



**Lorena Văetiși,**  
PhD student  
Faculty of Sociology and Social Work<sup>2</sup>  
Babeș-Bolyai University  
[lorenavaetisi@yahoo.com](mailto:lorenavaetisi@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> The author wish to thank for the financial support provided from the program co-financed by The Sectoral Operational Program for Human Resources Development (Contract POSDRU 6/1.5/S/3 – “Doctoral Studies. A Major Factor in the Development of Socio-Economic and Humanistic Studies”).

## **Abstract:**

*The article discusses the role of gender in interpreting school success. It presents some specific variables of school success (such as scores, grades repeating, passing rate) and some ecological determinants (such as behavioral issues and secure school environment) in determining some differences between male and female students regarding school success. This discussion is triple contextualized: (a) within a theoretical framework of gender in education; (b) a comparative evaluation of the educational systems in US and Romania (namely, between schools in two counties in both countries) based on the results to standardized national tests, according to gender; and (c) a comment on some gender-relevant variables and results of the Romanian application of the School Success Profile questionnaire. The comparative comments and the conclusions provide a contribution to the discussion on how female students' academic achievement (and male students' academic underachievement)*

*is related to specific social-cultural contexts and the local constructions of gender and school practices.*

**Keywords:** *gender, school success, evaluation, comparative perspective*

## **Rezumat:**

*În articolul de față discut despre rolul genului în interpretarea succesului școlar. Studiul are în vedere câteva variabile cum ar fi notele și rata promovabilității, precum și anumiți factori ecologici (de mediu social) cum ar fi comportamentul școlar și siguranța mediului școlar. Utilizez aceste variabile și factori cu scopul de a observa și analiza unele diferențe dintre elevi și eleve în ceea ce privește succesul școlar. Această discuție este triplu contextualizată: (a) un cadru teoretic privind genul în educație; (b) o evaluare comparativă a sistemelor educaționale în S.U.A. și România (mai precis, între școli din două județe, în ambele țări) pe baza rezultatelor la testele naționale, în funcție de gen; și (c) un comentariu privind unele variabile de gen, considerate relevante, din rezultatele aplicării Profilului Succesului Școlar (versiunea*



românească a chestionarului *School Success Profile*). *Observațiile comparative și concluziile propun o contribuție la discuția privind cauzele rezultatelor școlare mai bune ale elevilor (comparativ cu cele ale elevilor) din perspectiva contextelor specifice socio-culturale și a construcțiilor locale ale genului și practicilor educative.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *gen, succes școlar, evaluare, perspectivă comparativă*

## Résumé:

*L'article examine le rôle de genre dans l'interprétation de la réussite scolaire. Il s'appuie sur des variables spécifiques de la rendement scolaire (comme les notes, redoubler les classes, le taux de réussite) et certains déterminants écologiques (tels que des problèmes de comportement et de l'environnement scolaire sécurisé) dans la détermination de certaines différences entre les garçons et filles en ce qui concerne la réussite scolaire. Cette discussion est contextualisée en fonction des trois thèmes: (a) dans un cadre théorique concernant le genre dans l'éducation; (b) une évaluation comparative des systèmes éducatifs aux Etats Unis et en Roumanie (plus spécifiquement, entre les écoles dans deux comtés dans les deux pays) sur la base des résultats à des tests nationaux, selon le sexe, et (c) un commentaire de certaines variables de sexes et résultats pertinents de la version roumaine du *School Success Profile* questionnaire. Les commentaires comparatives et les conclusions contribuent à la discussion sur la réussite scolaire supérieure des filles (et l'échec scolaire des garçons), considérée comme liée à des contextes socioculturels et des constructions locales du genre et des pratiques scolaires.*

**Mots-clefs:** *sexe, réussite scolaire, évaluation, perspectives comparatives*

## Introduction: the complex relationship between gender and academic success

Evaluating the school success is a complex process that involves measurements, interpretations and discussions which recog-

nize the fact that academic achievement is influenced by a lot of factors, among which gender.

We focus in this paper on the gender difference in school success, particularly on how gender constitutes relevant variable in test results and school performance. We also address the gender aspect as significant for an inter-institutional and inter-cultural comparison between schools in Romania and the United States, in two regions (counties) characterized by relevant racial, economic, and cultural aspects.

The gender-sensitive approach in the educational process and evaluation has been examined by many researchers, from different perspectives (see Skelton, Becky and Smulyan, 2006; Bank, Delamont, and Marshall, 2007). Specific studies such as those conducted by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (1992, 1998) have highlighted the effects of gender on education and have addressed the challenges of gender equity in elementary and secondary education. In their 1998 report *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, AAUW analyzed and synthesized more than 1,000 research articles and emphasized key factors in the area including educational standards and evaluation; the unequal attention given to girls, especially in math and science classes; a climate in the classroom that contributes to girls' lower self-esteem; increasing levels of sexual harassment; disparities of race and class as factors that have unfavorable consequences for girl's education; and an 'evaded' curriculum that ignores the contribution of women and provides inadequate education on sexuality and health (Wagner, Armentor-Cota, and Pino, 2008). Other authors indicated, on the contrary, the better performance female students have, on average, than their male counterparts (Skelton, 2006; Maynard, 2002), (despite being still disadvantaged with respect to the outcomes of schooling (Jacobs, 1996)), and even noticed that race and class can constitute indicators of higher school success for minority or lower-classes female students (Shakeshaft, 2009; Tenenbaum and



Aldrich, 2005). Add to this, school behaviors and the discipline problems, violence in school, teacher expectations, gender-role orientation and attitudes, gender-biased school subjects, gendered learning identities or biased assessments depending on gender and we can see the multifarious gender thematic, showing, on the one hand, the relevance of the social-cultural dimension of gender when assessing education practices and performance in schools, and on the other hand the complex relationship between gender and academic achievement.

Two major theoretical models were utilized in explaining gender differences in education and academic success (Skelton, 2006). The *sex-difference theories* (popular in the 1970s and early 1980s, but still influential), which hold that boys and girls are ‘naturally’ different or are socialized into masculine and feminine ways of being through gendered practices and expectations embedded within the institutions of family, school and media; and the *socialization theories* (more related to the contemporary constructivist assumptions on gender) which holds that the differences between boys and girls are created through interactions with such institutions as the family, the school and the media. If researches on gender and education highlight the differences between boys and girls (or at least treat the aspect of different school behavior and different academic achievement), the strategies to deal with such socialized differences are located within ‘equity’ or ‘equal opportunities’ frameworks.

### **The scope of our study**

We are going to address both the issue of gender difference in education and the aspect of better female achievement seen as influenced by racial, economic, institutional and cultural contexts, in the perspective of the socialization theory. For this purpose we considered the studies that showed how gender differences in academic performance disappear and female students regularly outscore male students in standardized tests when race and class are examined. For a better relevance

we adopted a comparative view (comparing two regional test results in two countries) and then analyzed data at a national level from a lesser studied country, Romania.

Although different authors vary about the best predictor of school success, emphasizing the academic, the social or the behavioral skills, we may take academic performance as one of the most significant predictor of school success, adding to it also the social-cultural and ecological factors that influence this performance. The *test performance* is, first of all, an important component of the education process; then, it is an indicator of abilities and capabilities; not lastly, it is a direct predictor of future success. Besides test performance, *The School Success Profile* (SSP) (Bowen and Richman, 2005) – as a comprehensive tool that can examine, beyond the results to standardized results, also students’ beliefs about themselves, their neighborhoods, families and colleagues – is a very useful survey, because it is based on a contextual perspective that suggests that the social environment has a powerful effect on a student’s development and success in school.

We analyze and compare the educational results in two counties in the U.S. and Romania utilizing standardized tests results, and then we discuss some specific factors influencing school success suggested by the data provided by the Romanian version of School Success Profile (*Profilul Succesului Școlar*, SSP-Ro) applied on a national sample. If the first part of our analysis utilizes a comparison between the test results in different educational systems, with the aim of revealing the gender difference and specific gender-related performances in particular social-cultural contexts, the second part, interpreting some data provided by the application of the SSP-Ro questionnaire, it is not intended for a comparative view but simply for assessing some gender-relevant items in the context of a discussion about gender in school success.

We attempt to reveal the role of gender differences in school success and comment on some significant social and cultural



aspects that the academic achievement implies, considering the gender dimension in comparative and contextual perspectives. We consequently attempt to illustrate how “race and class divisions may represent an exception to the advantage boys have in the testing arena” (Wagner, Armentor-Cota, Pino, 2008) in some regions (and the considered counties, namely Jasper and Cluj Counties, are such regions), and to provide an interpretive comment on the way gender gap is conceptualized in the light of our analysis.

### **Test performance according to gender in two different educational systems**

The general relevance of gender in education, how gender informs academic achievement and the similarities and differences of gender-related data in patterns of school success – all become more visible in comparing different educational systems and considering such a predictor as *test performance* according to gender. We took for comparison the schools in two counties in two different countries, namely the Jasper County, USA, and Județul (county) Cluj, Romania. The data used in this comparison included information for male and female students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, aged 14-16, taken from the following official statistics: the PACT (*Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests*) results for Jasper County, South Carolina, USA, 2007, and the National Tests (*Teste Naționale*), for the same year 2007 in Cluj County, Romania. We intended to show, besides the relevance of gender – as indicating about how different results in standardized tests are informed by gender –, some patterns of success, especially regarding subjects (such as Mathematics or Sciences) which are generally invoked as gender-biased in researches on gender in education (Lundeberg and Mohan, 2008).

The PACT is a standards-based accountability measurement of student achievement in four core academic areas: English language arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social studies. The PACT items are aligned to the South Carolina academic standards developed for each discipline. Four

performance levels are established to reflect the knowledge and skills exhibited by students: “Advanced”: the student exceeded expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards; “Proficient”: the student has met expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards; “Basic”: the student has met minimum expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards; “Below Basic”: the student has not met minimum expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards<sup>3</sup>.

The National Tests (*Teste Naționale*) are standards-based test, which means they measure how well students are mastering specific skills defined for the eighth grade by the Romanian school system. It is a standard test which measures the degree to acquire certain skills that any student should have until attending eight grades in a school in Romania. This verification takes place for the following subjects: Romanian language (and literature), Mother language (for those of different ethnicity), Mathematics, Geography, and History. Since the Romanian academic grading system use a 10-point scale (with 5 being the minimum grade for passing) we transformed the students’ scores into the four American categories, as explained later, in order to allow comparison.

We utilized data for eight grade students in both cases. The following tables indicate a significant difference between the percentages of student population meeting the educational standards. This speaks about the different approaches on evaluation and school success in the two countries, and subsequently about the gender relevance in both situations.

### ***The PACT tests in Jasper County, South Carolina***<sup>4</sup>

The PACT tests for 2007 gather information from 212 students, who completed at least two of the four tests (normally English

3 See: <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Accountability/Assessment/old/assessment/PACT/>

4 Source: [http://ed.sc.gov/topics/assessment/scores/pact/2007/show\\_district\\_pact\\_scores.cfm?ID=2701](http://ed.sc.gov/topics/assessment/scores/pact/2007/show_district_pact_scores.cfm?ID=2701)



Language Arts and Mathematics). In Science and Social Studies the number of those who took the test is about a half smaller (115 and 105).

**Table 1.** All 8 grade Student Scores by Subject

| Subject               | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |                            |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|----------------------------|
|                       |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard <sup>1</sup> |
| English Language Arts | 212           | 55.7                  | 36.8  | 7.5        | -        | 44.3                       |
| Mathematics           | 212           | 66                    | 28.3  | 4.7        | 0.9      | 34                         |
| Science               | 115           | 68.7                  | 27.8  | 2.6        | 0.9      | 31.3                       |
| Social Studies        | 105           | 64.8                  | 33.3  | 1.9        | -        | 35.2                       |

This table presents selected tests score results for all eight grade students by subjects and number of students taking the test, from the entire sample. The tests scores show the percentages for students by subject, with 44.3% the highest percent of success (in English Language Arts) and the other percentages of success between 31% and 36%. These percentages (all below 50%) constitute the first indication about the poor academic achievement among these students.

*Test Scores by Subject and Gender*

**Table 1.a** English Language Arts Test results (selected results according to gender)

| Subject: English Language Arts | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                                |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students                   | 212           | 55.7                  | 36.8  | 7.5        | -        | 43.3          |
| Male                           | 107           | 62.6                  | 33.6  | 3.7        | -        | 37.4          |
| Female                         | 105           | 48.6                  | 40    | 11.4       | -        | 51.4          |

Table 1.a presents selected tests score results for English Language Arts by gender from the entire sample. The results show that tests score of male students are below basic in 62.6 percent while female students meeting the standards are above 50%.

**Table 1.b** Mathematics Test results (selected results according to gender)

| Subject: Mathematics | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                      |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students         | 212           | 66                    | 28.3  | 4.7        | 0.9      | 34            |
| Male                 | 108           | 68.5                  | 25.9  | 5.6        | -        | 31.5          |
| Female               | 104           | 63.5                  | 30.8  | 3.8        | 1.9      | 36.5          |

Table 1.b presents selected tests score results for Mathematics by gender from the entire sample. The results show closer results, with more female students failing to meet standards than in ELA (a difference of almost 15%). This confirms the gender-biased expectation regarding poor mastering of Mathematics. Nevertheless female students outscore male students in meeting the standards (with a difference of 5%).

**Table 1.c** Science Test results (selected results according to gender)

| Subject: Science | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                  |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students     | 115           | 68.7                  | 27.8  | 2.6        | 0.9      | 31.3          |
| Male             | 55            | 63.6                  | 34.5  | -          | 1.8      | 36.4          |
| Female           | 60            | 73.3                  | 21.7  | 5          | -        | 26.7          |

Table 1.c presents selected tests score results for Science by gender from the entire sample. The results show the highest percent of failure among female students (73.3%) from the four tests. The difference between male and female students meeting the standards is almost 10% in favor of male students.

**Table 1.d** Social Studies Test results (selected results according to gender)

| Subject: Social Studies | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                         |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students            | 105           | 64.8                  | 33.3  | 1.9        | -        | 35.2          |
| Male                    | 55            | 63.6                  | 36.4  | -          | -        | 36.4          |
| Female                  | 50            | 66                    | 30    | 4          | -        | 34            |



Table 1.d presents selected tests score results for Social Studies by gender from the entire sample. The results show that male and female students met the standards in similar percentages (about 35%) which is still far from the 50 percent.

### ***National Tests in Cluj County, Romania<sup>5</sup>***

This regional database containing results from 2007 gathers the answers of 5434 students. This is significantly a greater number than that analyzed in Jasper County, but it corresponds to the ratio of the population number between the two counties (which is about 34.1: Cluj is significantly more populous than Jasper, with about 700,000 people living in Cluj County compared with about 20,500 people living in Jasper County). Our attention focused on the four main national test disciplines: Romanian Language, Mathematics, Geography, and History, roughly corresponding to English Language, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies in the American case. In order to see what differences are manifest according to gender we executed a series of transformations of numeric variables and crosstabulations following the independent variable of gender.

The original database contains the exact scores obtained by each student – that means that no codification of the variable values has been operated in the database. In the Romanian grading system, scores from 0 to 10, including decimals, are used to evaluate students. In order to make this database comparable to the American data, we recoded the students' scores into four categories as follows. "Advanced": grades from 9 to highest (10); "Proficient": grades from 7 to 8.9; "Basic": grades from 5 to 6.9 and "Below Basic": grades from lowest (0) to 4.9. We made a crosstabulation between gender (female, male students) and each tested subjects.

A shortcoming that the Cluj database posed to us was the absence of the gender info registration. Fortunately, operators that created the database included the Numeric

Personal Code – attributed to a person at birth – which contains the gender (1 or 5 for males, 2 or 6 for females), the date of birth and the code of the region where the person was born. Thus, we could recode the NPC into gender and so obtained our independent variable.

From this point, we used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to execute the correlation between the independent variable of gender and the dependent variables, national test disciplines. Similarly with the Jasper County database, missing cases were excluded from our analysis.

*Table 2. All 8 grades Students Scores by Subject*

| Subject           | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                   |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| Romanian Language | 5224          | 10                    | 33.5  | 40.1       | 16.3     | 89.9          |
| Mathematics       | 5219          | 10.4                  | 36.1  | 33.8       | 19.6     | 89.5          |
| Geography         | 3626          | 2.5                   | 17.8  | 38.1       | 41.6     | 97.5          |
| History           | 1606          | 1.6                   | 28.6  | 45.9       | 23.9     | 98.4          |

An immediate, striking observation is that regarding the significant high percentage of students meeting standards in the Romanian system of evaluation comparing with the American counterparts. In average and proportionally, Romanian students have test performance in more than double (2.58) number compared with their American colleagues. We will return to this observation.

**Table 2.a** Romanian Language Test results according to gender

| Subject: Romanian Language | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                            |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students               | 5224          | 10                    | 33.5  | 40.1       | 16.3     | 89.9          |
| Male                       | 2475          | 13.7                  | 40.8  | 35.6       | 9.8      | 86.2          |
| Female                     | 2749          | 6.6                   | 27    | 44.1       | 22.2     | 93.3          |

Table 2.a presents selected tests score results for Romanian language by gender from the entire sample. The results show the similar difference in favor to female students that we found in Jasper County for English

<sup>5</sup> Source: „Catalog cu rezultatele la Testele Naționale 2007”, Inspectoratul Școlar Județean Cluj, Departamentul Informatizare.



Language.

**Table 2.b** Mathematics Test results according to gender

| Subject: Mathematics | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                      |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students         | 5219          | 10.4                  | 36.1  | 33.8       | 19.6     | 89.5          |
| Male                 | 2471          | 11.4                  | 38.4  | 32.7       | 17.4     | 88.5          |
| Female               | 2748          | 9.5                   | 34.1  | 34.7       | 21.6     | 90.4          |

Table 2.b presents selected tests score results for Mathematics by gender from the entire sample. The results show a decreased percentage of successful female students, which is an aspect remarked in the American case as well.

**Table 2.c** Geography Test results according to gender

| Subject: Geography | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                    |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students       | 3626          | 2.5                   | 17.8  | 38.1       | 41.6     | 97.5          |
| Male               | 1635          | 3                     | 19.9  | 41         | 36       | 96.9          |
| Female             | 1991          | 2.1                   | 16    | 35.7       | 46.1     | 97.8          |

Table 2.c presents selected tests score results for Geography by gender from the entire sample. The results show significant high levels of test success for both male and female students.

**Table 2.d** History Test results according to gender

| Subject: History | Number tested | Percent Mastering (%) |       |            |          |               |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
|                  |               | Below Basic           | Basic | Proficient | Advanced | Meet Standard |
| All students     | 1606          | 1.6                   | 28.6  | 45.9       | 23.9     | 98.4          |
| Male             | 839           | 1.4                   | 30.4  | 46.6       | 21.6     | 98.6          |
| Female           | 767           | 1.8                   | 26.6  | 45.1       | 26.5     | 98.2          |

Table 2.d presents selected tests score results for History by gender from the entire sample. The results show as well very high

levels of test success for both male and female students. This time the female percentage is a little bit smaller than the male one.

### Background and specific comments

As a first general observation we have to notice that despite the disparity regarding the population number and the different culture, the two regions share some similar features in terms of demographic and economic conditions. Both regions can be described as non-specific for the Western modern White middle-class male-oriented system. They are two regions largely characterized by traditional values, with active areas of rural economy, encompassing many poor families, among which many are minorities characterized by histories of discrimination and segregation (African American and Roma populations) or marginals characterized by lack of access to modern resources (agricultural rural populations or working-class urban populations living in poverty). Consequently, other important characteristics of the two regions which are relevant, beyond gender, are these specific aspects regarding race and class (or economic status). Jasper county is composed by 56% African Americans (and this is reflected in the school population) and is, at a state and national level, a poor region. In 2008 the median income for a household in the county was \$30.7 (compared with \$44.6 at the state level, and with \$52.3, at the national level), with 20.7% of the population living below the poverty line, including 26.3% of those under age 18<sup>6</sup>. As regards Cluj County, as part of Romania, which is one of the poorest country in Europe, this is characterized by regions where teaching and learning conditions are unsatisfactory (especially in rural areas where many schools lack specific facilities such as running water or libraries), and where many schools still employ many unqualified teachers and are characterized by an increasing rate of school dropout<sup>7</sup>.

6 Sources: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jasper\\_County,\\_South\\_Carolina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jasper_County,_South_Carolina), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_U.S.\\_states\\_by\\_income](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._states_by_income)

7 "Starea învățământului din România" (*Report on the Education in Romania*), Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, and Youth, 2007.



In a comparative table between the results in the two counties we can trace some further interpretation considering this background observation.

**Table 3.** Comparative results between Jasper and Cluj Counties for all subjects (below basic and meet standards) and the difference between male and female students as suggested by the test success.

|            | USA (Jasper county) |               | Romania (Cluj county) |               |
|------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|
|            | Below Basic         | Meet Standard | Below Basic           | Meet Standard |
| Male       | 64.6                | 35.4          | 7.5                   | 92.5          |
| Female     | 62.8                | 37.2          | 5                     | 95            |
| Difference | 2.2                 |               | 2.5                   |               |

This comparative table is realized by calculating a simple average for the four subjects of the national tests in the two cases. The most important comment is that the evaluation system in Romania obviously favors a high level of success rate, and secondly, that gender differences are relevant in both situations. Male and female percentages are roughly following the same proportions in both countries despite significant differences in the achievement percentage. We can, in fact, consider gender differences more relevant than the dissimilarities provided by the different evaluation systems, because they are conforming a pattern. Moreover, female students in both cases have better results than males in Language, and significant poorer results in Mathematics compared with Language.

We have, therefore, nearly the same differences, in average, between male students and female students for the four subjects (of 2.2 and 2.5 in the two compared cases in favor of female students), the critical difference here being that the Romanian evaluation system arguably promote a policy of school success more ‘tolerant’ to meeting the standards.

The better results female students have do not necessarily mean having success because, besides grades and percentages of test success, other determinants appear to

be relevant (including perceptions of school environment, self-esteem, relationship with mentors and peers etc.). As we could see from commenting the background of the two compared regions, we have to rely on, besides statistical data, also on economic, cultural and regional determinants. In order to develop further this analysis, we propose, as follows, a discussion on a different method of assessing the academic achievement, which highlights the importance of the social environment as a context for school success, the *School Success Profile Scale*.

### Gender in School Success Profile (SSP)

#### *The Romanian case*

This database uses the validation in Romania of the School Success Profile (SSP) developed in the United States by Gary L. Bowen, Natasha K. Bowen and Jack M. Richman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Bowen and Richman, 2005)<sup>8</sup>. Eighty-three variables on a database of 2465 cases made the subject of the work on the national School Success Profile. Our aim was to correlate gender with several dependent variables that described the school success of students from Romania, in order to observe the differences that arise when gender varies. We operated a selection, choosing only some variables that addressed both already discussed indicators (such as *scores* and, in relation, *grade repetition rate*) and ecological indicators related to a gender-specific behavior (such as those asking about *insults*, *fight*s and *sexual harassment* in schools).

These dependent variables evaluated aspects of school success besides the scores that students obtained, by questioning the relationship with other colleagues and the students’ own evaluations of the school environment (such as violence or safety). These variables used scales that measured or evaluated the intensity or frequency of a social fact or phenomenon – e.g. “During the last month, how often someone from school in-

<sup>8</sup> In Romania, this project was financed by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (Project PN II nr. 91063) and was coordinated by Maria Roth from the Babeş-Bolyai University.



sulted you?": "Never/Once or twice/More than Twice".

Once more, we used the SPSS to generate and analyze the crosstabulation. Missing cases were excluded.

**Table 4.a** "What scores did you have at the end of the last semester?" according to gender

| Gender |              | What scores did you have at the end of the last semester? |  |              |              |              |              |               | Total        |
|--------|--------------|---|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|        |              | Rather 10   | From 9 to 10                           | From 8 to 9  | From 7 to 8  | From 6 to 7  | From 5 to 6  | From 4 to 5   |              |
|        |              | Male  | 105 <sup>2</sup><br>35.2% <sup>3</sup> | 285<br>35.4% | 252<br>43.2% | 244<br>52.8% | 134<br>62.3% | 55<br>82.1%   |              |
| Female | 193<br>64.8% | 520<br>64.6%  | 332<br>56.8%                           | 218<br>47.2% | 81<br>37.7%  | 12<br>17.9%  | 4<br>25.0%   | 1360<br>55.6% |              |
| Total  |              | 298<br>100%   | 805<br>100%                            | 584<br>100%  | 462<br>100%  | 215<br>100%  | 67<br>100%   | 16<br>100%    | 2447<br>100% |

**Table 4.b** "How many grades did you repeat during school?" according to gender

| Gender |               | How many grades did you repeat during school? |               |             |               | Total        |
|--------|---------------|---|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|        |               | None  | One           | Two         | More          |              |
|        |               | Male  | 1040<br>43.9% | 21<br>56.8% | 4<br>40.0%    |              |
| Female | 1327<br>56.1% | 16<br>43.2%                                   | 6<br>60.0%    | 2<br>33.3%  | 1351<br>55.8% |              |
| Total  |               | 2367<br>100%                                  | 37<br>100%    | 10<br>100%  | 6<br>100%     | 2420<br>100% |

Assessing the *scores* obtained and the *grade repetition rate* through the SSP questionnaire at the national level we have a confirmation of a higher academic achievement in female students. The highest grade, 10, was get by female students in a bigger proportion, of almost a double number more than the male students, while the minimum passing grade, from 4 to 5, was obtained by three times more male students than female students. Correspondingly, the graded repeated by female students were fewer, the ratio of retentions being 1.27 in favor of female students, i.e. "no class repeated during school".

Since scores and grades repetition is related not only to intellectual capabilities or diligence but also with a series of other factors such as discipline or perceptions of the school environment we provide as follows the responses to other three items, relevant for this ecological perspective, proposed by the SSP

questionnaire, namely assessing implications and perceptions of 'insults', 'fights', and 'sexual harassment'.

**Table 4.c** "During the last month, how often someone from school insulted you?" according to gender

| Gender |              | During the last month, how often someone from school insulted you? |               |                 | Total        |
|--------|--------------|--|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
|        |              | Never  | Once or Twice | More than Twice |              |
|        |              | Male   | 498<br>38.2%  | 394<br>47.6%    |              |
| Female | 807<br>61.8% | 433<br>52.4%   | 121<br>37.7%  | 1361<br>55.5%   |              |
| Total  |              | 1305<br>100%   | 827<br>100%   | 321<br>100%     | 2453<br>100% |

**Table 4.d** "I had a fight with another student" according to gender

| Gender |               | I had a fight with another student |               |                 | Total        |
|--------|---------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
|        |               | Never                              | Once or Twice | More than Twice |              |
|        |               | Male                               | 734<br>37.4%  | 259<br>73.8%    |              |
| Female | 1228<br>62.6% | 92<br>26.2%                        | 12<br>13.8%   | 1332<br>55.5%   |              |
| Total  |               | 1962<br>100%                       | 351<br>100%   | 87<br>100%      | 2400<br>100% |

**Table 4.e** "In my school I feel safe from sexual harassment" according to gender

| Gender |              | In my school I feel safe from sexual harassment |              |              |               | Total        |
|--------|--------------|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|        |              | Not at all                                      | A little     | Much         | Very much     |              |
|        |              | Male  | 291<br>60.8% | 45<br>31.5%  | 110<br>33.2%  |              |
| Female | 188<br>39.2% | 98<br>68.5%                                     | 221<br>66.8% | 845<br>57.1% | 1352<br>55.6% |              |
| Total  |              | 479<br>100%                                     | 143<br>100%  | 331<br>100%  | 1479<br>100%  | 2432<br>100% |

These responses indicate about the issue of school violence, also exposed by many studies on gender and behavior in schools, which reveal the fact that male students are usually more involved than female students in insults and fights with schoolmates (Schonfeld, 2006). An ostensibly surprising result is provided by the responses to the issue of sexual harassment where female students appear to feel safer than male students, despite reported more acts of sexual harassment against female students than against male students



(AAUW, 2002; Macan Ghail, 1994). This could be interpreted through a cultural acceptance of some acts that normally might be considered sexual harassment (for example, female students not perceiving the jokes and comments with sexual connotations made by the male students as being a form of sexual harassment etc.).

### Conclusions and discussion

We could see from analyzing the test success (as a predictor of academic achievement) in two different educational systems, first of all, two different approaches on evaluation and school success, and, subsequently, the gender relevance in both situations. Female students have better grades and, despite relatively poorer results in such gender-biased disciplines as Mathematics and Science, generally a higher academic achievement than males. This is relevant also because we studied these results in two regions (two counties in the U.S. and Romania) which shared some similarities, despite the different educational systems and cultures.

Then, at a national level, we took the case of Romania, where some items utilized by the self-addressed questionnaire of School Success Profile (SSP) were analyzed from the same gender perspective. Again, female students appeared to have better grades and a better school continuity than male students. Moreover, they recognized a better trouble avoidance and a diminished involvement in violent acts, despite an arguably poor perception of the sexual harassment acts.

### Discussion

Interpreting the data provided by the two cases we could assess the general assumptions made about gender in school success as well as to bring some critical observations to how the male-female gap in school success is conceptualized. As Wagner, Armentor-Cota and Pino (2008) wrote, specific contexts (regions, schools) where the racial and class aspects appear prevalent (i.e. dominant African American students, or dominant poor students) an exception to the advantage

boys have in test success can be reported. For example, African American girls tend to outscore African American boys at almost every assessment point (including) in Mathematics and Science. Also, though high-income boys usually outperform high-income girls, evidence indicates that low-income girls outperform low-income boys (*ibid.*). An interpretation of this situation would be that, in these race and class-relevant contexts, the ‘troublesome’ group in terms of discipline, the male group, is also the most affected in terms of test success because of its limited interest in learning (in a mainstream and normative institution as the school is) and its orientation in outside-school activities and even dropout (see also Văetiși, 2009 for this discussion). And this is a confirmation of the importance and role of the ecological factors in school success. In the same time, taking the case of the Cluj County, we could see how specific cultural and institutional practices (the tendency to give high grades in National Tests and to pass a significantly high percentage of students, of up to 98.6%) are also relevant in understanding these exceptions.

We could see how, in Jasper County, where African American students were the majority, and in Cluj County, where the abovementioned cultural and institutional practices were prevalent, how female outscored male students in Mathematics. These examples, ultimately, tell us about different constructions of gender in specific cultural contexts, but also about different notions of success according to gender.

As Skelton, Becky and Smulyan noticed (2006), early studies in education worked within static notions of gender and identity, and focused on making female students fit into male-defined notions of achievement in schools. More recently, though, these studies shifted from a dichotomous position of ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ to researches that “examine the construction of gendered selves within discourses that often privilege existing gender positions in political, social, and economic structures. Current researches also *explore the importance of geopolitical loca-*



tion, local knowledge and practice, which are necessary for understanding the negotiation of gendered selves within different school subjects and fields of study” (*id.*, p. 205, our italics).

This constructivist and cultural perspective of both gender and academic success is clearly evidenced by some responses that male and female students provided to the SPSS questionnaire. Recognizing involvement in many ‘insults’ and ‘fights’ can be correlated with the perception of a hostile school environment from male students, and consequently with the tendency to be uninterested (and perform bad) in school. Reversely, not recognizing ‘sexual harassments’ in every possible case from female students can be correlated with the perception of a more friendly school environment and consequently with a better school performance. This last observation enables us to understand how “local knowledge and practices” are involved not only in different constructions of gendered selves but also in different constructions of school success.

## References

- American Association of University Women (AAUW). (1992). *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation;
- American Association of University Women (AAUW). (1998). *Gender Gaps: Where schools still fail our children*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation;
- Bank, B.J., Delamont, S. and Marshall C. (2007). *Gender and Education: Gendered theories of education*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers;
- Bowen, G.L. and Richman, J.M. (2005). *The School Success Profile*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: The Jordan Institute for Families;
- Jacobs, J. A. (1996). Gender Inequality and Higher Education. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 22, pp. 153-185;
- Lundeberg, M., Mohan, L. (2008), Gender Issues and Schooling, in T.L. Good. (ed.). *21st Century Education: A Reference Handbook*. Tucson: University of Arizona;
- Macan Ghaill, M. (1994). *The Making of Men: Masculinities, sexualities and schooling*. Buckingham: Open University Press;
- Ministerul Educației, Cercetării și Învățământului (2007). *Starea învățământului în România*. București;
- Maynard, T. (2002). *Exploring the Boys and Literacy Issue*. London: Routledge.
- Schonfeld, I. (2006). School Violence. In Kelloway, E.K., Barling, J., Hurrell, J.J. (eds.). *Handbook of Workplace Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications;
- Shakeshaft, C. (2009). Gender in Precollegiate Education. In K. Lomotey (ed.) *Encyclopedia of African American Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications;
- Skelton, C., Becky, F., Smulyan, L. (eds.) (2006). *Gender and Education*. London: Sage.
- Skelton, C. (2006). Boys and Girls in the Elementary School. In C Skelton, F. Becky, L. Smulyan (eds.) *Gender and Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tenenbaum, H. R., Aldrich, N. (2005). Gender Differences. In N. J. Salkind (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Human Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Văetiși, L. (2009). Rolul diferenței de gen și etnico-rasiale în evaluarea succesului școlar, in M. Roth, D. Dămean, M.-B. Iovu (eds.), *Succesul școlar la intersecția factorilor sociali*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, pp. 101-113.
- Wagner, W. E., Armentor-Cota, J. and Pino, J. (2008). Education: Gender Differences, in J. O. Brien (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.



---

# THE EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN: THE CASE OF THE ROMANIAN CHILDREN LIVING IN BRUXELLES



**Adela Raluca C. Rotaru (Popa)**<sup>9</sup>

**Official of the European Union, the Council of the European Union  
PhD student, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures  
adelaraluca@yahoo.com**

---

<sup>9</sup> The author of this article is an official of the EU. The opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the author. In no case should they be considered as representing a position of the Council.

## **Abstract:**

*Romania's accession to the European Union imposed several obligations insofar as Romania needs to send experts to Brussels to work in different institutions. On the other hand, the European Union recruited via its European Personnel Selection Office Romanian citizens to work for the European institutions. Moreover, the economic migration for which a certain percentage of Romanian citizens opted in the last years brought to Brussels a considerable number of people ready to work and live in a multicultural and multilingual environment. Objectives: a) to operate a classification of the Romanian immigrants to Brussels according to their level of education, working places and social position, b) to show that there is a link between the level of education of the parents and of their working places and the choice of a certain education establishment and of a certain type of education. Methods: A direct*

*observation has been operated between May 2007 - May 2010 by the author of this article.*

**Results:** *The study has shown that there is a strong connection between the education level of the parents and their working places and the enrolment of children in certain education establishments. Conclusions: The specificity of the bruxellois environment with a complex immigration (elite immigration, economic immigration, poor immigration) influences the education of the children who follow their families to Brussels.*

**Keywords:** *education, Romanian immigrants, children, multilingualism*

## **Rezumat:**

*Aderarea României la Uniunea Europeană a impus României anumite obligații întrucât trebuie să detașeze la Bruxelles experți care să lucreze în cadrul unor instituții. Pe de altă parte, Uniunea Europeană a recrutat prin Oficiul European pentru Selecția Personalului cetățeni români care să lucreze*



pentru instituțiile Uniunii Europene. Migrația de tip economic pentru care a optat un anumit procent de cetățeni români în ultimii ani a adus la Bruxelles un număr considerabil de persoane gata să lucreze și să trăiască într-un mediu multicultural și multilingv. **Obiective:** a) efectuarea unei clasificări a imigranților români la Bruxelles în funcție de nivelul de educație, de locul de muncă și poziția socială; b) evidențierea legăturii dintre nivelul de educație a părinților, locurile de muncă și poziția socială și optarea pentru o anumită instituție de învățământ și pentru un anumit tip de educație. **Metode:** Autoarea articolului a efectuat o observație directă între mai 2007 și mai 2010, locuind la Bruxelles de câțiva ani. **Rezultate:** Studiul a arătat că există o legătură strânsă între nivelul de educație a părinților și locul de muncă al acestora și înscrierea copiilor în anumite instituții de învățământ și la anumite activități extrașcolare. În plus, nivelul scăzut de educație al părinților influențează educația copiilor, în special în ceea ce privește copiii de etnie romă. **Concluzii:** Specificitatea mediului din Bruxelles care cunoaște o imigrație complexă (imigrație de elită, imigrație de tip economic, imigrație săracă) influențează educația copiilor care își urmează familiile în Belgia. Copiii sunt înscriși în anumite școli în funcție de nivelul de educație al părinților și probabil în funcție de rețeaua de cunoștințe a părinților, putându-se constata tendința de înscriere a copiilor în școli frecventate de alți copii cunoscuți familiei.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** educație, imigranți români, copii, multilingvism

### Résumé:

*L'adhérence de la Roumanie à l'Union Européenne a imposé des obligations à la Roumanie qui doit envoyer des experts à Bruxelles pour travailler dans le cadre des certaines institutions. Par contre, l'Union Européenne a recruté via EPSO des citoyens roumains pour travailler pour les institutions européennes. En outre, la migration de type économique pour laquelle un certain pourcentage des citoyens roumains a opté*

*dernièrement a apporté à Bruxelles un nombre considérable des personnes prêtes à travailler et vivre dans un milieu multiculturel et multilingue. **Objectifs:** a) faire une classification des roumains immigrants à Bruxelles en tenant compte du niveau de l'éducation, de lieu de travail et de la position sociale; b) démontrer qu'il y a une relation entre le niveau de l'éducation des parents et de leur lieu de travail et le choix des certains écoles et d'un certain type d'éducation; **Méthodes:** Une observation directe a été effectuée par l'auteur de cet article entre mai 2007 et mai 2010. **Résultats:** L'étude a démontré qu'il y a une forte relation entre le niveau d'éducation des parents et leur lieu de travail et l'inscription des enfants dans certaines écoles. **Conclusions:** La spécificité du milieu bruxellois avec sa complexe immigration (immigration d'élite, immigration économique, immigration pauvre) influence l'éducation des enfants qui suivent leurs familles à Bruxelles.*

**Mots-clefs:** Education, immigrants roumains, enfants, multilinguisme

### The international context

Niklaus Steiner, Director of the Centre for Global Initiatives (USA), argues in his last study "International Migration and Citizenship today"<sup>10</sup> that the phenomenon of migration at an international level reached an unprecedented scale. According to the American analyst, two dimensions interlink and contribute to this novelty: the ability of people to move and the ability of governments to control this movement<sup>11</sup>. Steiner operates a very clear distinction between *immigrants and refugees*, explaining that the former category makes reference to persons leaving a country on a voluntary basis, while the latter makes reference to persons leaving a country involuntarily, because of causes that escape their control: persecutions, wars etc.

As a follow up to the data he had analysed, Steiner draws the conclusion that currently there are approximately 200.000.000

10 Steiner, Niklaus (2009). *International Migration and Citizenship Today*, London and New York: Routledge; 11 Idem, p. 3.



persons living outside their country of origin, most of whom having left their country of origin because of *economic reasons*.

### **Bruxelles and its specificity**

The city of Bruxelles is in a specific situation among the other European capitals. Bruxelles is not only the place where the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee/the Committee of the Regions and other relevant institutions for the European Union are situated, but also the place where NATO and Eurocontrol are situated. This reality triggers a specific situation: on the one hand, there is the immigration to Brussels of highly-qualified persons, experts in various fields, and on the other hand, there is the classical immigration to a West-European country.

The migration of Romanian citizens to Belgium, and especially to Brussels, is mainly a politico-economic one. In what follows, I will try to classify the types of Romanian immigrants to Brussels living in this city since the period of Romania's pre-accession to the EU, according to the level of education, the working place and the social position. I will try to prove that the level of education, the working place and the social position are highly important factors in the selection of the education establishments for their children and in the choice of a certain type of training for these children. I should specify that this classification is not exhaustive and that in this paper I will not deal at all with the category of persons having come to Belgium before 1989, most of whom have been living in Brussels on political asylum criteria.

### **Categories of Romanian immigrants to Brussels- non-exhaustive presentation**

➤ The first category of Romanian citizens living in Brussels is represented by seconded experts of Romanian ministries (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence, etc) working for the Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union. The Representation is man-

aged by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative. These persons are specialised in various strategic fields and take part in meetings at different levels where Romania's interests are represented.

- The children of these experts can be enrolled in the Belgian public education system in French or Flemish, the European School<sup>12</sup> (on the basis of the agreement between the Board of Governors of the European Schools and the EU Member States) and the private-based education system (religious, mainly Catholic, or non-religious). As far as the private-based education system is concerned, in Brussels there are Belgian schools (in French and Flemish) and international schools-in French (for instance Lycee Francais<sup>13</sup>), English (the American School<sup>14</sup>) and German (Deutsche Schule<sup>15</sup>).
- One could notice that the staffs of the Permanent Representation tend to choose for their children either the Belgian public system of education in French, or the enrolment of children in the European School (in English or French). In the European School the children can study Romanian for half an hour every day, while in the Belgian system of education the children can study Romanian upon request, if there is a certain number of children. In both systems, the children must choose between the course of religion (Orthodox or Catholic) and Ethics.
- Many of these children are enrolled by their parents at different 'stages' during vacations or on Saturday (classical music, sports, dance), the objective being both that of mastering French (these courses being mainly organised in French), and that of getting the children used to the contact with children of other nationalities, in a multicultural environment. In fact, it was

12 [www.eursec.org](http://www.eursec.org), accessed on 9 September 2010.

13 <http://www.lyceefrancais-jmonnet.be>, accessed on 9 September 2010.

14 <http://www.brus-ehs.eu.dodea.edu>, accessed on 9 September 2010.

15 <http://www.dsbruessel.be>, accessed on 9 September 2010.



noticed that the ease with which these children learn a foreign language and learn to behave in a multicultural, multilingual environment is extraordinary.

- It is interesting to specify that in Brussels there are three Romanian Churches, one of them - 'Saint Nicholas' - organising on a weekly basis, each Saturday, with the help of specialised teachers, courses of Romanian, English, French, History etc, without pay. One can notice that persons that would not go to Church in Romania bring their children to the Church for these courses every week.
- The second category is represented by the staff of the Romanian Embassy to Belgium, managed by the Romanian Ambassador to Belgium. The staff of the Embassy can enrol their children in the French and Flemish public education system and in the private-based education system (religious and non-religious). One can notice that the staffs of the Embassy tend to enrol their children in the French language Belgian schools in which, as I have previously specified, the children can study Romanian, upon request, if a certain number of children are met. The children must also choose between Orthodox religion/ Catholic Religion and Ethics.
- The third category is represented by the Romanian staff of NATO and Eurocontrol who benefit from the same conditions as the staff of the Permanent Representation. The children of the staff of NATO are mainly enrolled in the French-speaking Belgian system, while the children of the Eurocontrol staff are mainly enrolled in a certain private French-speaking Belgian school<sup>16</sup>. It is important to specify that this school for which the Romanian staff of Eurocontrol mainly opts offers courses of Flemish as well. It is important to specify as well that the enrolment of the children in this education establishment is made thanks to its high reputation, thanks to its proximity to the bruxellois area where these persons tend to settle down

and probably because the parents wish to better integrate the children in the environment in which they live thanks to the friendship relationships that exist among the Eurocontrol staff.

- The fourth category is represented by the staff of the European Union institutions (EU) (officials, contract agents, temporary agents). These persons have the possibility of opting, exactly like the staff of the Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union, for the French-speaking and Flemish-speaking Belgian public education system, for the European School and for the Belgian and international private education system (religious or not). The children of the staff of the EU institutions are enrolled in all the three types of education institutions (Belgian public system, European school or private schools in English, French and German). One can notice that, because of the fact that these persons work in a multicultural and multilingual environment, the pressure of enrolling children to certain courses and 'stages' is even greater than in the case of the previous categories. Especially the children of the staff of the European institutions, who come to Belgium to work for an indefinite period, are enrolled to more foreign languages courses, being quite common to see 7-9 y.o. children already trilingual. Many of these children, even if they do not have special skills for the study of foreign languages, manage to learn to communicate in an environment which is not their mother-tongue environment quite fast, without too big an effort, thanks to the permanent contact with native speakers. It is extremely interesting to notice the ease with which children switch from English to French, for instance, in a couple of minutes, if the discussion partner changes, as it is frequently the case with children.
- The fifth category is represented by the persons working within the European institutions, being seconded by differ-

<sup>16</sup> <http://ecolesingelijn.be>, accessed on 9 September 2010.



ent ministries as national experts or being employed by Belgian companies with which the EU institutions have a cooperation contract (in general it is the case of IT specialists). The salaries of these persons are not comparable to those of the staff of the EU institutions, but the high level of education and the working in the specific environment of the EU institutions make these persons wish to offer the same education as the EU staff. One can notice that the seconded national experts tend to enrol their children in the European School and in the high-reputation French-speaking Belgian schools, while the employees of the Belgian IT companies tend to enrol their children in the French-speaking Belgian public education system.

- The sixth category is represented by the representatives of the different cults who offer the service to the Romanian community, the children of these persons being enrolled in the French-speaking and Flemish-speaking Belgian public system.
- The seventh category is represented by the persons coming to Belgium in order to work in the field of constructions, interior decorating, house-cleaning. These persons have usually graduated from a high-school in Romania and mainly work for companies managed by other Romanian citizens. According to the Belgian legislation, the EU citizens having graduated from a faculty can establish a company in Belgium and it is interesting to notice how extended families (brothers, parents and children, grand-parents) immigrate to Brussels, several of the adults of that family working for the family-company set on the basis of the degree of one of them. These persons enrol their children in the Belgian public system of education, mainly in the French-speaking one. One thing that can be noticed is that the persons with a high level of education tend to speak Romanian to their children, while the persons with lower studies tend not to be consistent, speaking both in the family and publicly both French and Romanian

to their children. The children are in the same situation, being quite common to witness situations in which the children mix words from both of these languages. The small children (3-4 y.o.) can speak about "le tree", for instance.

- The eighth category is represented by families of young graduates of a faculty in Romania (teachers, engineers etc) and doctors and nurses that come to Brussels because of economic reasons. If the doctors/nurses come to work in Brussels on the basis of a previously signed agreement, many of the young intellectuals living in Brussels come to this city trying to find a job. One can notice that these persons focus on the integration of children in the Belgian society, not especially in the multilingual/multicultural part previously presented.
- The ninth category is represented by the Romanian Roma who is faced with the situations specific to this segment of population, many of the children of these persons being seen in the street in the centre parts of Brussels on day-time, which might mean they are not caught in the education process. One must specify that these persons/families tend to settle down in certain parts of Brussels where there is a poor immigration (poor, uneducated citizens coming from Arabian and African countries etc).

#### 4. Conclusions

Romania's accession to the European Union (2007) asked for its obligation of seconding highly specialised diplomats, national's experts, military staff to Brussels. Likewise, the fact that Romania became a NATO member (2004) and a Eurocontrol member (1996) asks for Romania's seconding experts for definite periods of time; in the case of Eurocontrol, these contracts can be converted into indefinite contracts. Most of these persons are fluent in English and French, being the graduates of specialised schools and trainings both in Romania and abroad. The children of these persons are enrolled in high reputation schools in Brussels, whether they



are part of the Belgian public or private education system, the European School or international private education system (religious or not). The children of the persons working for the European Union (officials, contract agents and temporary agents) or of the persons working within the EU institutions (national experts or employees of companies cooperating on the basis of a contract with the EU institutions) are in the same situation.

The children of classical immigrants, i.e. persons coming to Brussels on the basis of an employment contract (doctors, nurses, Romanian language teachers having passed a competition) or in order to find a job, are enrolled in different education establishments according to the level of education of their parents. An extremely important factor in the choice of a school is the feedback given by other acquaintances of the family (colleagues, friends, neighbours, acquaintances from the Church community etc), the parents having the tendency to opt for schools about which they had received information beforehand and attended by children already known by the family.

The children of Roma immigrants are in a situation imposed by certain specificity (the lack of education of the parents, the settling down in an area of poor immigration, the enrolment of children- if this one exists- in schools facing various problems etc)

To conclude, what seems to me very important to specify is that, from one could notice, the parents make the effort of helping their children integrate in a multilingual and multicultural society. Bruxelles is a city of immigrants, par excellence, a multicultural

and multilingual space, regardless of the fact that one addresses the issue of elite immigration, economic immigration or the poor immigration. The integration of children in such a city is a challenge. Beyond the linguistic factor that I have tried to shortly present, and which represents a challenge easily surpassable by children, the cultural factor and that of the integration in a profoundly non-homogeneous environment such as that of Brussels represent a long-term challenge. I think this is the reason for which, in fact, the choice of schools and 'stages' is made not only according to the criterion of the high reputation of the schools, but also according to the criterion of the family acquaintances, one being able to notice the tendency of enrolling children in education establishments already attended by children known by the family.

The degree of integration of these children in this type of society or the degree of intensity of the relationships of children with the Romanian environment from Romania represent an issue to monitor in time. But this could make the object of another study.

#### **References:**

- Steiner, Niklaus, (2009). *International Migration and Citizenship Today*, London: Routledge;  
<http://www.eurisc.eu>, accessed on 9 September 2010.  
<http://www.lycee-francais-jmonnet.be>, accessed on 9 September 2010.  
<http://www.brus-ehs.eu.dodea.edu>, accessed on 9 September 2010.  
<http://www.dsbruessel.be>, accessed on 9 September 2010.



---

# TEACHERS' SUPPORT AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LEVEL



**Ioana Orzea**  
PhD Candidate

Faculty of Sociology and Social Work  
Babes-Bolyai University  
ioana\_orzea@yahoo.com

## **Abstract:**

*The school climate has been recognized as being an important feature of the prestigious schools and, at the same time, a predictive element of the success in schools. The support given by the teachers appears to be a component of the school climate. The quality of the teacher-student relationship represents an important element for the academic achievement of students. The objective of the study is represented by the analysis of the relationship between the teachers' support and the students' academic level. Both the teachers' support and the students' academic level have been determined by using the SSP-Ro questionnaire. The teachers' support reunites many items, each referring to the teacher-student relationship. The students' educational level results from the sum of multiple indicators: the average of the grades obtained in the precedent year, the average grades under 5 in the precedent semester, self-evaluation of the grades by comparing them to those of the colleagues. The questionnaire has been applied to a number of 2695 students, with an average age of 14.7 years, from the VI-XIII classes, girls and boys, rural and urban environment. Our findings demonstrate that there is a relationship between the teachers'*

*support and the academic achievement, but this correlation has a stronger level when the mother's and the father's occupation are constant.*

**Keywords:** *school climate, teachers' support, academic achievement*

## **Rezumat:**

*Pe plan educațional, climatul școlar a fost recunoscut ca fiind o componentă importantă a școlilor prestigioase și, totodată, un element predictiv al succesului școlar. Suportul oferit de profesori, reprezintă o componentă a climatului școlar. Calitatea relației profesor-elev reprezintă un element important care influențează rezultatele elevilor. Obiectivul studiului îl reprezintă analiza corelației dintre sprijinul profesorilor și nivelul academic al elevilor. Atât suportul profesorilor cât și nivelul academic al elevilor au fost înregistrate prin utilizarea chestionarului SSP-Ro. Sprijinul profesorilor reunește mai mulți itemi, toți făcând referire la planul relațional profesor-elev. Nivelul educațional al elevilor rezultă din însumarea mai multor indicatori: mediile obținute în anul precedent, mediile sub 5 obținute în semestrul precedent, autoevaluarea mediilor prin comparație cu cele ale colegilor. Chestionarul a fost aplicat*



unui eșantion național reprezentativ, de 2695 de elevi, cu vârsta medie de 14,7 ani, din clasele VI- XIII, fete și băieți, din mediul rural și urban. Rezultatele obținute demonstrează că există o relație între suportul profesorilor și nivelul academic, dar această corelație prezintă un nivel mai puternic când sunt menținute constante profesiile mamei și ale tatălui.

**Cuvinte cheie:** climat școlar, sprijinul profesorilor, reușită academică

### Résumé:

*L'environnement relationnel a l'école est une component importante des écoles prestigieuses et en même temps un élément prédictif du succès scolaire. Le support assuré par les enseignants est une composante du climat scolaire. La qualité de la relation entre les enseignants et les étudiants est un élément important du développement académique des étudiants. L'objectif de cette étude est l'analyse du lien entre le support offert par les enseignants et le niveau académique atteint par les étudiants. Le support offert par les enseignants et le niveau académique des étudiants ont été mesurés en utilisant le questionnaire "La mesure sociale du succès à l'école". Le support des enseignants contient plusieurs composantes, chaque se rapportant à la relation enseignant étudiant. Le niveau académique des élèves résulte de la somme de multiple indicateurs: la moyenne des résultats obtenus pendant l'année précédente, la moyenne des notes sous 5 dans le semestre précédent, l'autoévaluation des résultats par la comparaison de ses notes aux notes des collègues. Le questionnaire a été appliqué à 2695 étudiants ayant l'âge moyenne de 14,7 ans, de la 6 à la 8 année primaire, filles et garçons en milieu rural et urbain. Les résultats de cette étude montre qu'il existe un rapport entre le support offert par l'enseignant et les résultats académiques des élèves, mais ce rapport est plus fort quand les niveaux de l'éducation de la mère et du père sont constants.*

**Mots-clefs:** environnement relationnel, support des enseignants, la réussite scolaire

## Introduction

On the educational level, the climate in school has been recognized as being an important feature of the prestigious schools and, at the same time, a predictive element of the success in schools. The climate represents a relatively stable trait of the school environment which is sensed by the participants, shapes their behavior and has at its roots the collective perceptions of the school behavior (Hoy&Miskel, 1996). The school climate is viewed differently from one research to another, and the support given by the teachers appears to be a component of the school climate.

## Theoretical perspectives on school climate *School's "personality"*

The pioneer work on school climate is considered to be that of Halpin and Croft (1963, apud. Hoy & Sweetland, 2000). The climate was seen as a "personality" of the school, as a school's ethos, a climate in which schools differ one from another. There is a continuum - from open to closed, along which school climate is positioned. An open climate requires a formal leader / a realistic manager not aiming to overload employees nor their rigorous control nor increasing rules and regulations. Moreover, the behavior of the director and of the staff is authentic. A closed environment is built by antithesis with the open one. By analyzing Halpin and Croft's perspective on school climate is deduced a first indicator of school climate: the quality of work relations. Though these are not horizontally analyzed, but in terms of existing roles in a school: teachers and director, focusing on management style / leadership. The latter one is direct indicator of school climate. The weak point of such a vision is the omission of students as actors who contribute to school climate.

### *School health*

Health is another metaphor through which the school climate is examined. The idea of positive and healthy relationships in an organization is not new and draws attention to the conditions actually contributing



to improve the organization's performance.

### ***Miles' Perspective on the Organization's Health***

In the analysis of school, Matthew Miles (1969) uses the metaphor of health for the first time. In his opinion, a healthy organization is one which "not only survives the environment, but continues to properly face and develop and continually expands its coping skills" (1969, p.378). The basic idea of this definition is that a healthy organization successfully manages disruptive external forces, efficiently focusing energies on the objectives and on the mission of the organization. Miles has identified ten important characteristics of a healthy organization. These reflect the needs / the requirements (goals, communication and power), maintenance needs (cohesion, morality, use of resources), growth and development of needs (innovation, autonomy, adaptation, problem solving ability) of a social system. Unfortunately, the attempts to operationalize the Miles' concept on organizational health through a valid set of measurements have been unsuccessful.

### ***Parsons' perspective on the organization's health***

In addressing human action, Parsons is inspired by the typology of R. Bales on small groups functioning. The adaptive, instrumental, expressive and maintenance phase of standards are the four functions which must satisfy the small groups to work properly. Inspired by this model, Parsons argues that human action can be divided into four subsystems: the body, the personality, the social system and the cultural system. Each of these systems, in order to function properly, has four functions: adaptation, orientation or goal achievement, internal integration of the system and maintaining the control models (A,G,I,L) (Lallement, 1998). The first function aims at the adjustment to global environmental conditions, system pulling out resources from its environment to survive; the second function focuses on the role of the system to set goals and means to achieve them; the in-

ternal integration of the system aims at the coordination and integration of the system to stabilize it, the last function corresponds to the production, preservation and coherent reproduction of a set of common values (Lallement, 1998).

By applying this pattern to schools, results that these should solve four problems:

1. Adapting to environment.
2. Establishing and objective implementation.
3. Maintaining cohesion in school
4. Creating and maintaining/preserving of an unique culture(Hoy and Feldman, 1987)

The proper schools are those who have the necessary instruments for adaptation and goal achievement, but also for social and normative integration. Parsons (1967, apud. Lallement, 1998) also mentions that, such as all the organizations, the schools have three distinctive levels of control for these needs: technical, managerial and institutional.

Starting from Parsons' perspective on the health of the organization, Hoy and co.(1998) develop this approach. The climate, seen from this perspective, is conceptualized as the collective perception of the teachers on the relationships in schools existing between the teachers, between the teachers and the students, between the teachers and the principals, between the school and the community ( Hoy, Barnes and Sabo, 1995; Hoy and Tarter, 1997). The dimensions by which such a school climate is operated refer, on the one hand to the teachers' and the students' behavior, on the other the principal's behavior, and, last but not least, the relationship school-environment, these being: emphasis on the academic performance, teachers' affiliation, leadership collegiality, the level of support and the influence of the principals, the integrity of the institution.

The technical level refers to the teaching-learning process, which includes the primary mission of the school - to educate students. The teachers and the supervisors are responsible to provide a teaching-learning



process as effectively as possible. The second level, the managerial one, controls the administration of the organization. Managers / directors are main school administrators. The fulfillment of such a role requires the acquisition of resources necessary for teaching (financial, material, human), development of teachers' loyalty, trust, commitment and motivation of teachers, mediation of relationships between teachers and students. The last level, institutional level, school connects the school to its environment. Therefore it is called community level. The school needs legitimacy and support from the community and teachers need a "buffer" between themselves and external forces (Hoy and Feldman, 1987, Hoy and Hannum, 1997).

The strong affiliation of the teachers regarding the school and the emphasis drawn by these on performance at school (academic pressure), are two aspects that we can integrate into the technical level. Academic pressure supposes high objectives established for the students, but reachable, an orderly and serious studying environment, teachers that are confident into the students' capabilities, but also students who work hard, make efforts to reach the objectives and respect those who succeed in reaching them. As regarding the affiliation of the teachers to school, this implies that the teachers feel fine together, feel enthusiastic about their work, like their students and are dedicated to them, but also to their colleagues (Hoy and Hannum, 1997).

The director's behavior is pursued in three respects: collegiality, ability to influence and support. A collegial manager is friendly, open, supportive and guided by rules of fairness. He also informs teachers on the level performance they are expected to achieve. Educational materials are provided to teachers even when more is required. The director's ability to influence aims at the managerial level, analyzing its influence on supervisors (ibid.). The dimension recording the school-climate relationship is institutional integrity.

### *Moos' perspective*

The school climate has been defined

by Moos (1979) as the social atmosphere of the place or as the "learning environment" (p.81), where students have different experiences, depending on the protocols established by the teachers and directors. The social climate is determined by physical features of the environment, by organizational factors and individual traits of all its members. Moos divided social environment into three categories:

1. relational environment
2. personal development and target – orientation
3. system maintenance and system change

The relational environment includes involvement, affiliation / attachment to others / peers in the classroom, and the teacher's support. Personal development and goals-orientation aims at self-development in that environment, and maintaining the system, while its change aims at the environmental order, clear rules, rigidity / severity teachers in applying rules, the teachers' authority and the level of innovation.

As the three approaches on school climate reveal, quality of relationships is an indicator of school climate. Teachers are those who significantly contribute in the cultivation and quality of teacher-student relations. The healthy teacher-student relationship based on trust and support is a basic element for achieving the best possible educational results by students.

### **Students' educational success**

Defining school success is based on certain criteria (Cocoradă, 2009) :

- Minimum requirements of an educational program
  - The average level - national norm (standardized tests results)
  - Level set by teachers for a teaching sequence and a group-class
  - Student's potential
- Other two criteria can be added:
- Length of school period
  - Diploma Level

School success requires reaching or exceeding goals.



---

### ***Academic achievement as an effect of school***

The research that analyzed the impact of schools on the students' results, were integrated, at the beginning, into the theory of inequality of chances.

Among the pioneering research based on the success in school of children is that of Coleman (1966). His results show that most part in explaining the differences of educational success play the variables referring to the family environment, mostly the educational level of the parents. In his research, Coleman tests the influence of the variables inside the schools: those referring to the schools characteristics (curriculum, equipment) or to the teachers (levels of qualification, payment). The conclusion that can be drawn from his research is that these variables inside the schools didn't prove to have much influence on explaining the differences in educational success. In consequence, this study sustains the theory of the pointlessness of school, which represents only an instrument of social reproduction, proving its inefficiency in achieving social mobility. School offers legitimacy to the dominant cultures of society, conferring prestige and power to those who possess such a culture.

The research on the school climate has changed this point of view, offering examples of schools situated into racial segregated urban areas and economically challenged, in which almost every child reached the objectives specific to his group.

Representative for the importance of school climate in educational success of the students is the research made by Brookover and his colleagues (1978) in USA, on the elementary schools situated in underprivileged areas. Considering school climate as being a social system whose guidelines and expectations are being shared, the researchers take into consideration as well as the points of view of the teachers and those of the administrators and count the impact of the school climate on the mathematics and reading competences, on the self-concept of the students and their self-confidence. The

conclusion is that, regarding the academic success of the students, the school climate is a predictive element even better than the socio-economic status or the ethnic group.

The thesis according to which the schools can make the difference between the students' acquisitions and behavior, when some of the students' characteristics are put under control, especially the socio-economic status, is sustained by the study made by Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston and Smith (1979). The research verified the impact of school processes- emphasis on academic achievement, behavior such as recompense/punish- not only on the grades obtained in examinations, but also on the behavior of the students- the level of delinquency and the perseverance of the students.

### ***Educational achievement as an effect of school's subunits***

Along with studies on school processes research on school effectiveness are completed starting from school subunits. There is a variation not only between schools in terms of their effectiveness, but also between students and classes of the same schools. It was noted that units smaller than a school exercise much greater influence on students' acquisitions than the institution as a whole (Bressoux, 1995 Cousin, 2000, Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000, Rutter and Maughan, 2002). School effect becomes less important than the class, and the latter one is less important than the effect of the teacher. The teachers' training and their salaries have little influence on the achievements of students. At the opposite side, the impact on students' academic success is the moral character of teachers. Grisy (cit. in Meuret, 2000) added to the effective teacher's traits, the following: competence / professionalism, desire for all students to succeed, structured teaching, sense of justice, not wasting time in class and less indiscipline in their classrooms.

Requirements from students affect school performance. By their position as managers, teachers exercise an important role in determining the requirements and the expectations in their performance.



### ***Relational climate - School success***

Trust, close relations to adults and peers create a climate that supports personal development and education (Nyman and Styron, Jr., 2008). The trust and the mutual respect of teachers in all school students, a good communication and a positive social climate favors the students' school success and characterize effective schools. Felouzis (1997) states that effective teachers show an open attitude towards students.

Involving students in school life and the good relationships with teachers are associated with positive perception of students on school. Unlike students that are unhappy in school, satisfied students are more motivated and record achievements according to their skills. Cantwell (2003) claims that a supportive school environment increases self-esteem resulting in successful school. Trust, close relations with adults and peers create a climate that supports personal development and education (Styron and Nyman, 2008). A warm, student-oriented climate is friendly, relaxed, and full of respect, energizing (Lipsitz, 1997, apud, Styron and Nyman, 2008).

The teachers' support, as used in this study integrates relational climate.

On a national level, Romanian research benefits of very few studies in the domain of school climate. The only I could identify are those initiated by the Institute of Education Science and that made by Pavalache and colleagues (2007). The study made by Pavalache-Ilie and colleagues, made on a group of 287 students, learning in theoretic, technologic high-schools and Sam, the average age being 15.9 years, Brasov county, using correlation analysis, proved that the results at the Romanian language are much more dependant of the elements defining school climate, especially by the relational ones. The average grade of the students correlates backwards to the relational climate, the educational climate and the global climate score.

### **The methodology of research**

#### ***Objectives and hypothesis***

The objective of the study represents

the analysis of the relationship between the teachers' support and the students' academic level.

#### ***Hypothesis of research***

1. Teachers' assistance correlates with the students' performance in schools.
2. There is a difference for the correlation between the teachers' support and the students' performance in school depending on the residing environment.
3. There is a difference for the correlation between the teachers' support and the students' performance in school depending on grade.
4. There is a difference for the correlation between the teachers' support and the students' performance in school depending on nationality.
5. There is a difference for the correlation between the teachers' support and the students' performance in school depending on gender.

#### ***Instruments used***

As well as the teachers' support and the students' academic level have been determined by using the SSS (Social Scale of Success in School) questionnaire. The teachers' support reunites many items, each referring to the relation teacher-student. The students' academic level results from the sum of multiple indicators: the average of the grades obtained in the precedent year, the average grades under 5 in the precedent semester, self-evaluation of the grades by comparing them to those of the colleagues.

Below we have extracted from the questionnaire the indicators and the items of each component.

#### ***The teacher support***

How much do the following statements define your teachers?

Not at all, Few, Much, Very much

- a) Teachers care about me.
- b) Teachers listen what I have to say.
- c) Teachers care if I come to school or not.



- d) Teachers encourage me a lot.
- e) I am respected and appreciated by my teachers.
- f) Teachers know what my qualities are.
- g) Teachers appreciate my efforts when I work hard.
- h) Teachers care about my grades.

*Academic level*

What was the average grade of the subjects studied last year?

- 1. At most of them 10.
- 2. At most of them 9 and 10.
- 3. At most of them 8 and 9.
- 4. At most of them 7 and 8.
- 5. At most of them 6 and 7.
- 6. At most of them 5 and 6.
- 7. At most of them 4 and 5.

How many of your average grades were under 5?

1.Non, 2.One, 3.Two, 4. Four or more.

As compared to your colleagues your grades are?

- 1. Much more better than those of the most
- 2. Better than those of most
- 3. Like those of the most.
- 4. Worse than those of the most
- 5. Much worse than those of the most

**Sample investigated**

The questionnaire has been applied to a number of 2395 students, with the average age of 14.7 years, from the VI-XIII classes, girls and boys, rural and urban environment.

**Results**

As it can be seen in the table 1, the correlation between the academic level and the teachers' support is not high,  $r(2330)=.202$ , but is significant  $p<0.01$ , correlation being positive, meaning that the students' academic level is increasing along with the teachers' support.

**Table 1 Correlations between grades and teacher support**

|                 | Grades   | Teacher support |
|-----------------|----------|-----------------|
| Grades          | 1        | .202(**)        |
| Teacher support | .202(**) | 1               |

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

Table 2 presents the same correlation for the rural and urban environment, comparatively. We observe that, again, the level of correlation is low, but significant for both environments, at the limit  $p<0.01$ . There is a slight difference between the values of the two correlations depending on the environment, this being slightly higher in the urban environment compared to the rural one.

**Table 2a Correlations between grades and teacher support depending on the residing environment**

(0 - rural, 1-urban) = 0

|                 | Grades   | Teacher support |
|-----------------|----------|-----------------|
| Grades          | 1        | .157(**)        |
| Teacher support | .157(**) | 1               |

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

**Table 2b Correlations between grades and teacher support depending on the residing environment**

(0 - rural, 1-urban) = 1

|                 | grades   | Teacher support |
|-----------------|----------|-----------------|
| grades          | 1        | .255(**)        |
| Teacher support | .255(**) | 1               |

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

Table 3 indicates to us the level of correlation depending on nationality. It can be observed that in the case of gypsies and other ethnic groups there is no significant correlation between the two variables. The correlation becomes obvious between the Romanians and the Hungarians, being slightly higher in case of the Romanians:  $r(226)=.134$ ,  $p<0.05$  for the Hungarians, respectively  $r(2041)=.210$ ,  $p<0.01$  for the Romanians.



**Table 3 Correlations between grades and teacher support depending on nationality**

| Nationality | Pearson Correlation |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Romanian    | .210(**)            |
| hungary     | .134 (*)            |
| roms        | .257                |

- \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
- \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

In the table 4 we find again the results of the correlations regarding the grade. The correlation between the academic level and the teachers' support is significant for the 6-th, 7-th., 10-th and 11-th grades, at the limit of  $p < 0.01$ , and for the 8-th, 9-th, and 12-th grades, the correlation is insignificant. Regarding the grades that manifest a significant correlation, this is higher in the case of the 6-th, 7-th and 10-th grades, as compared to the 11-th grade.  $r(291)=294$ ,  $r(451)=262$ ,  $r(471)=282$ ,  $r(414)=147$ .

**Table 4 Correlations between grades and teacher support depending on grade**

| Class | Pearson Correlation |
|-------|---------------------|
| 6th   | .294 (**)           |
| 7th   | .262 (**)           |
| 8th   | .111                |
| 9th   | .075                |
| 10th  | .282(**)            |
| 11th  | .147(**)            |
| 13th  | .340                |

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

From the correlations recorded in table no. 5, we infer that the relationship between teachers and the academic level is stronger for boys than for girls.

**Table 5 Correlations between grades and teacher support depending on gender**

| Gender | Pearson Correlation |
|--------|---------------------|
| Fem.   | .191(**)            |
| Masc.  | .205 (**)           |

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

Regression analysis is recorded in Table No. 6. This analysis aimed to identify how much from the variance of the dependent variable – academic level - is explained by the proposed models. We note that from the total variance of the dependent variable - the academic level – of 8504, only a small part, namely 774, is explained by our model, the rest of 7729 is residual, unexplained by the model. However, the significance threshold of F under  $p < 0.01$ , means that the proposed model significantly explains more variation than other factors. Of the predictors entered into the model it is found that the most important ones are, in order of values, academic relevancy, teachers' support, academic rigor and personal safety while the learning climate, school safety and personal security do not make a significant contribution to the proposed model. Predictors were chosen based on specialty literature, being mentioned in investigations as school climate factors influencing the academic success of students.

**Table 6 Regression Model Summary**

| Model | R       | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .302(a) | .091     | .088              | 1.934                      |

a Predictors: (Constant), School safety, personal safety/security in school, individual safety/security in school, academic relevancy, learning climate, academic rigor, Teacher support

b Dependent Variable: Nivelul academic (grades)

**ANOVA(b)**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df   | Mean Square | F      | Sig.    |
|-------|------------|----------------|------|-------------|--------|---------|
| 1     | Regression | 774.519        | 8    | 96.815      | 25.877 | .000(a) |
|       | Residual   | 7729.667       | 2066 | 3.741       |        |         |
|       | Total      | 8504.186       | 2074 |             |        |         |

a Predictors: (Constant), School safety, personal safety/security in school, individual safety/security in school, academic relevancy, learning climate, academic rigor, Teacher support

b Dependent Variable: Nivelul academic (grades)



## Coefficients(a)

| Model |                                      | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|-------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|       |                                      | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1     | (Constant)                           | 9.583                       | .463       |                           | 20.680 | .000 |
|       | Teacher support                      | .140                        | .026       | .179                      | 5.436  | .000 |
|       | academic rigor                       | .045                        | .011       | .130                      | 4.108  | .000 |
|       | academic relevancy                   | -.059                       | .009       | -.201                     | -6.660 | .000 |
|       | learning climate                     | -.040                       | .028       | -.042                     | -1.406 | .160 |
|       | School safety                        | .007                        | .006       | .026                      | 1.234  | .217 |
|       | personal safety/security in school   | .012                        | .011       | .024                      | 1.064  | .288 |
|       | individual safety/security in school | .041                        | .010       | .092                      | 4.117  | .000 |

a Dependent Variable: Nivelul academic (grades)

Since the correlation between teachers' support and the academic level showed low values, we tried to analyze the level of correlation by a constant occupation of the mother, of the father, then of the mother's education. It appears that the correlation value increases for certain professions. Thus, for students coming from families where the mother and /

or the father have a medium or higher level occupation (intellectual occupations, management), the correlation between teachers' support and the academic level increases. In other words the link between teachers' support and the academic level is mediated by the maternal and /or father's occupation.

**Table 7 Correlation between grades and teacher support depending on mother's and father's occupation**

| Mother's occupation          | Pearson correlation | Father's occupation          | Pearson Correlation |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| jobless                      | .221(**)            | jobless                      | .163(*)             |
| Unskilled worker+farmhand    | .106(*)             | Unskilled worker+farmhand    | .186(*)             |
| Skilled worker+ trade worker | .300(**)            | Skilled worker+ trade worker | .183(*)             |
| services                     | .304(*)             | services                     | .240(*)             |
| Office worker                | .232(*)             | Office worker                | .199(*)             |
| Intellectual occupations     | .309(*)             | Intellectual occupations     | .298(*)             |
| management                   | .318(*)             | management                   | .342(*)             |

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

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

### *Discussions and conclusions*

As it can be seen from the presented results, our hypotheses have been confirmed, even if the level of correlation is low between the academic level and the teacher support. The important limit of this study is given by the lack of control of the socio-economic level the students come from. By controlling the socio-economic level we can obtain more accurate data. The more powerful correlation

for the urban environment owes to, probably, the quality of the teachers and their involvement in the professional activity. The differences according to the grades have shown that, for the terminal grades, the correlation is absent, which means that at that level there are much more important factors that can explain the academic level of the students.

### **References:**

Bressoux, P. (1994). Les recherches sur les



- effets-écoles et les effets-maîtres. In *Revue française de pédagogie*. Vol. 108, pp. 91 – 137;
- Brookover, W.B., Schweitzer, J.H., Schneider, J.M., Beady, C.H., Flood, P.K. și Wisenbaker, J.M. (1978). Elementary school social climate and school achievement. In *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 15, pp. 301-318;
- Cocoradă, E. (2009). *Psihologia Educației*. Brașov: Pastel;
- Coleman, J., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfeld, F. și York, R. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office;
- Felouzis, G. (1997). *L'efficacité des enseignants*. Paris: PUF, coll. Pédagogie d'aujourd'hui;
- Hoy, W.K., Feldman, J.A. (1987). Organizational health: the concept and its measure. In *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. Vol. 30, pp. 30-38;
- Hoy, W.K., Barnes, K., Sabo, D. (1996). Organization health and faculty trust: A view from the middle level. *Research in Middle Level Education Quarterly*, Vol. 19, pp. 23-41;
- Hoy, W.K., Miskel, C.W. (1996). *Educational administration. Theory into practice (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill;
- Hoy, W.K., & Hannum, J.W. (1997). Middle school climate: An empirical assesment of organizational health and student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Vol. 33, pp. 290-311;
- Hoy, W.K., Hannum, J. & Tschannen-Moran, M., (1998). Organizational climate and student achievement: a parsimonious and longitudinal view. *Journal of School Leadership*. Vol. 8, pp. 336-359;
- Hoy, W.K., Tarter, C.J. (1997). *The road to open and healthy schools: The handbook for change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Hoy, W.K., & Sweetland, S.R. (2000). School characteristics and educational outcomes: Toward an organizational model of student achievement in middle schools. In *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Vol. 36, pp. 703-729;
- Lallement, M. (1998). *Istoria ideilor sociologice*. Oradea: Antet;
- Meuret, D. (2000). Établissements scolaires: ce qui fait la différence. *L'Année sociologique*, Vol. 50, pp. 545 -556;
- Moos, R.H. (1979). *Evaluating educational environments*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers;
- Norton, M.S., (1984). What's so important about school climate? In *Contemporary Education*. Vol. 56, pp. 43-45;
- Pavalache-Ilie, M., Cocoradă, E., Luca, M.L., Orzea, I. (2007). *Climatul școlar și performanța în învățare*. PROCED. Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, Autoritatea Națională pentru Cercetare Științifică;
- Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., Ouston, J. & Smith (1979). *15 000 hours*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



---

# “IT IS NORMAL, TO BE NOT NORMAL” - HOW TO DEVELOP THE POTENTIALS OF GIFTED CHILDREN



**Annemarie Jost,**  
Professor, PhD

Lausitz University of Applied Sciences,  
Cottbus, Germany  
[annemarieJost@t-online.de](mailto:annemarieJost@t-online.de)

## **Abstract:**

*This article is written from a professional coaching perspective and from personal experience. The author comes from a family in which members have been skipping school years for four generations. All members of the last two generations (7) skipped a year in grade or high school. Moreover, some were schooled early. The focus of this article is neither on intelligence definitions and assessment nor on didactic methods and teaching modalities (enrichment) for gifted children but on psychological aspects: How parents and teachers can guide gifted children in learning proper self-management and in building up motivation to achieve, which means following the path of one's own interest, by and large, as well as setting appropriate goals. It means joy of learning but also readiness to work; learning to stay on task and to cope with mistakes; learning to develop self-rewarding strategies; learning to evaluate oneself and to find resources. Comparisons to sports coaching are made.*

**Key words:** gifted children, coaching, excellence, acceleration

## **Rezumat:**

*Acest articol este scris atât prin prisma pregătirii profesionale, cit și din perspectiva experienței personale a autoarei. Ea provine dintr-o familie în care membrii au promovat gimnaziul sau liceul mai repede decât majoritatea. Toți membrii ultimelor două generații (7) au promovat ciclul școlar cu un an mai repede. Mai mult decât atât, unii au fost școlarizați devreme. Acest articol nu se centrează nici pe definițiile inteligenței sau pe procesul de evaluare și nici pe metodele didactice și modalitățile de predare pentru copiii supradotați, ci pe câteva aspecte psihologice: Cum pot părinții și profesorii ghida copiii supradotați în procesul de dezvoltare a deprinderilor corespunzătoare de auto-management și în construirea motivației de autorealizare? Aceasta înseamnă urmărirea propriului interes, în general, precum și stabilirea unor obiective adecvate; înseamnă bucuria de a învăța, dar, de asemenea, disponibilitatea de a munci; de a deprinde să rămână centrat pe sarcină și de a trece peste erori; de a-și dezvolta strategii de auto-recompensare; de a învăța a se auto-evalua și de a-și găsi resurse. Articolul prezintă de*



asemenea comparații cu instruirea sportivă.

**Cuvinte cheie:** copii supradotați, instruire, excelență, accelerare

### Résumé:

*Cet article est le point de vue de la formation professionnelle et de son expérience personnelle. L'auteur vient d'une famille dont les membres ont été en sautant les années scolaires depuis quatre générations. Tous les membres des deux dernières générations (7) sauté une année à l'école primaire ou secondaire. En outre, certains ont été scolarisés au début. L'objectif de cet article n'est ni sur les définitions du renseignement et de l'évaluation, ni sur les méthodes didactiques et des modalités d'enseignement (l'enrichissement) pour les enfants surdoués, mais sur les aspects psychologiques: Comment les parents et les enseignants peuvent guider les enfants surdoués dans le développement de compétences appropriées de l'autogestion et de la motivation d'auto-réalisation? Cela signifie la poursuite de l'intérêt général et des objectifs appropriés; signifie la joie d'apprendre, mais aussi une volonté de travailler; d'apprendre à rester concentré sur la tâche et de surmonter les erreurs; d'élaborer des stratégies d'auto-récompense, d'apprendre à s'auto-évaluer et trouver des ressources. L'article présente également des comparaisons avec la formation sportive.*

**Mots-clefs:** enfants surdoués, l'éducation, l'excellence, d'accélérer

### Objective of the article, and methods used

This article is based on a literature review, concerning methods of “how to support and coach gifted children”. The results of the cases in the literature are compared with the author’s personal experience. The author, who is a Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist and Coach, comes from a family in which members have been skipping school years for four generations. All members of the last two generations (7) skipped a year in grade school or high school. Moreover, some were schooled early. The objective of this article is the giving of “guidelines for educators and

parents”, on how to promote the talents of gifted children.

### Public opinion about gifted children

There is a growing political attention to gifted children in Europe, and a growing attention to testing, early schooling, enrichment and acceleration – by legislators and by the media; but on the other hand newspapers and TV very often report problems, that gifted students may not fit in to the school system well enough, that they may be underachievers or that some of them show behavioral problems or get excluded by classmates, even to the degree of bullying. If you compare intellectually gifted children to soccer talents for example, talents in sports get a lot of positive attention by the media, and the focus does not seem to be as much on the problems that may evolve from being extraordinarily good in sports (although competitive sports causes much more health problems than high intellectual achievements). There seems to be less worry that children, very talented in sports, may not fit well enough into the team or may be excluded by others. The media seem to look for “Superstars”, but extraordinary intellectually gifted children are still not so much seen as stars but more as “nerds”.

There is a persisting prejudice that gifted children have behavioral problems or problems with social adaptation more often than other children, but empirical research shows that gifted children are not more emotionally unstable than others. In fact, the opposite is true: Gifted children are, on average, more stable and better integrated, although of course gifted children can develop behavioral disorders, as any other children can. (Rost, 2007; Ziegler, 2006)

Gifted children are definitely not “problem cases”, but they do need support: in order to realize their full potential they need guidance in their development of such self-management skills as motivation to achieve, working techniques, learning techniques, self-confidence, and engagement.



## Acceleration: myths and empirical research

There is much empirical research showing that acceleration (early schooling, skipping one or two grades, or attending accelerated or “flex” classes) seems to be one of the most effective methods of promoting the talents of gifted children, and there is also empirical evidence that teacher behavior is very influential in promoting academic achievements (Lipsey și Wilson, 1993; Rost, 2007; Ziegler, 2006). Since teachers usually receive insufficient training regarding how to deal with gifted children in general, and in particular regarding how to relate to accelerated children, there are still many (negative) myths about acceleration, although the attitudes have already changed significantly since the 1980’s. In Germany about 0.1% of the children skip a year (Heinbökel, 2009), while--depending upon the definition--about 2 % of the children could be classified as gifted or talented.

In a recent questionnaire teachers reported that girls seem to have less emotional and social problems with acceleration than boys. In assessing their experiences retrospectively, 95.2 % of parents of girls, as compared with 86.9% of parents of boys, reported in Germany during the 1990’s, which skipping a year was the right decision (Heinbökel, 2009). Retrospectively the children themselves, and grownups who have skipped school years themselves, mostly do not report regrets. Most problems that come from acceleration can be solved by good preparation and support by teachers and parents.

## The importance of teacher attitude and behavior

Supportive teacher behaviour --independent of questions of acceleration--that promotes the talents of gifted children includes:

- Praise and validation
- Special hints and correcting feedback
- Activity-orientated teaching
- Continuous individual feedback about achievements

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGO), USA, points out in a position paper that teachers of gifted children need knowledge and valuing of the origins and nature of high levels of intelligence, as well as knowledge and valuing of the cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, needs, and potential problems experienced by gifted and talented students from diverse populations. Furthermore, in order to provide appropriate learning environments, they also need:

- “a knowledge of, and access to, advanced content and ideas;
- an ability to develop a differentiated curriculum appropriate to meeting the unique intellectual and emotional needs and interests of gifted and talented students; and
- an ability to create an environment in which gifted and talented students can feel challenged and safe to explore and express their uniqueness.”

Not only teachers who were gifted children themselves are helpful to gifted children; the following personality traits of teachers seem to be most important (Kafanke, 2006):

- Ability to introspect
- Empathy
- Systematic, stimulating and integrating ways of working
- Enthusiasm
- Ability to listen, and patience
- Acceptance and well-meaning ness
- The expectation that students will get better than they (the teachers) are (accepting their own limits)

Helpful teachers are not captious, do not ridicule and do not insult their students, and they do not use sarcasm.

## Motivation and instruction

To develop their potential, gifted children need time and good **instruction** by their parents and teachers. To use their talents best, gifted children need specific instructions. Perversely, some teachers may think that gifted children are sufficiently advanced already



and therefore may not need as much instruction as the others. But gifted children can be analogized to soccer talents again, in the fact that sports trainers similarly should not just blithely neglect their best-talented performers just because they are quite good already, and neither should teachers of gifted children.

Gifted children and talented sportsmen alike need to learn self-guidance and self-control. They need to learn how to maintain motivation, how to deal with failure, and how to overcome obstacles. And of course they need social support and appreciation. Kogler (2006) describes 3 phases of a child's sportive development:

- Initiation, when they are young: During this phase, fun and joy of playing are very important
- Development: During the development phase specific activity, practice, and getting sincere are crucial
- Perfection: Achievers become more and more autonomous, and have learned to manage themselves

Talent alone does not necessarily equate with achievement. Achievement also requires hard work, motivation, the development of strengths, dedication, and staying on task.

Bloom (1985) compared world-class swimmers, tennis players, pianists, sculptors, mathematicians, and research neurologists, and found three characteristics that they seemed to share: 1. early motivational and emotional support; 2. willingness to do a great amount of work to achieve high standards; 3. the ability to rapidly learn new techniques, ideas, and processes, combined with good instruction and regular practice in the talent area.

An environment of stimulation and guidance is very important for talent development. Quality of instruction, home environment, and motivation seem to be key factors that influence achievement in gifted students (Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008). Bloom (1985) points out that high-level performers had at a young age a parent, teacher, or coach that gave them (not forced on them) a desire

for learning.

### **Early influences on learning and self-management**

Young children are influenced very much by their significant others. Therefore the attitudes of the parents toward learning and academic achievement are very significant. Older children develop their own goals, and increasing quantities of self-management techniques. How do parents and educators promote adequate self-management? Self-management does not start in school years but is connected to life-long relationship experiences, starting at birth. In order to understand self-management, it is important to understand the person's goals.

Jansen and Streit (2006) point out that an important goal of young children is to please their significant others. There is always a balance between bonding needs and exploring needs: fearful events trigger bonding behavior, and a safe environment stimulates exploring. Young children need a great amount of prompt and well-timed feedback and appreciation. Parents and significant others influence the learning motivation very early by the signals they give during the "second-window", by their (partly unconscious) immediate feedback: whether they trust their children and understand their signals or whether they tend to "take over" and inhibit initiatives; whether they enthusiastically support learning or inhibit and control exploration; whether they see obstacles as chances to grow or as problems; whether they tolerate mistakes and creative ways of going about a task and let the child use instructions to accomplish the task themselves or jump into the situation and take over. To explore the world, young children need a safe and caring environment and support of their own initiatives within safe limits.

### **Early reading**

This chapter was written together with Michael Wargo, the father of our children.

There are many chances to support young children: for example, to support those



who want to learn how to read. But remarks about this will be heard very often, such as, “You are too young to learn how to read and write; wait until you learn that in school!” These discouraging types of remarks are very counterproductive.

When our two boys seemed desirous of learning how to read at the age of 3 or 4, we gave them support and used many everyday occasions to answer their questions, and to tell them what letters mean (e.g., labels in a grocery store or signs when travelling by car or written words on television). We always made sure that we gave the phonological information, (i.e., “fff” instead of “eff”, and “mmm” instead of “emm”, and so on, being careful not to tell them the names of letters or to teach them the alphabet, but to teach them only the sounds that each letter makes, in order to prevent the usual confusion caused by the difference between the name of the letter and the sound that the letter makes) to make it easier for the boys to make the connection between the letters and the corresponding sounds of the letters in words.

We never “pushed” reading, but we supported their curiosity and validated their interest, and they both learned how to read quickly and easily and began to read stories to the other children in kindergarten. Most importantly, they very much enjoyed learning how to read, and still today derive much pleasure in reading, as opposed to the usual “work” endured by teacher and learner in the chores of teaching, learning, and reading. Reading, and learning in general, are thus “paired” with pleasure, instead of the usual associating of reading with ordeal, like the Pavlovian dog’s associating of the ringing sound with pleasurable meat.

### **Underactivity**

In school many gifted children are not challenged enough. Many of them complain about boredom; some respond angrily, others passively, some underachieve, others ask for enrichment. To prevent underachievement and an attitude of opposition during early school years, it is important for parents

of gifted children to perceive the following signals of underactivity in their children: The children get bored and indolent and they disconnect from the situation, the face gets still, the body position is limp and the blood pressure goes down. Underactivity can be a result of a wrong learning scenario, such as too many repetitions or an inadequate speed of learning set by school. It is important that parents take these signals seriously, consider a professional assessment, and discuss their observations with the school professionals, asking for strategies such as acceleration or enrichment.

Underactivity can also be caused by a lack of interest in a topic, or it could be caused by a desire to manipulate others to do one’s tasks. Some children use underactivity to get more attention or to win power games. Some parents get more active when the child gets less active. Others perceive under activity and change their way of instruction. It is important to not support under activity, but to teach adequate self-regulation, and goal-setting without manipulating others, while providing a positive learning environment in school and at home.

### **Self-management during later school age**

If children get a lot of good and appropriate instruction, they learn more and more self-management as they get older. Self-regulation in regard to learning means: to follow the path of one’s own interest and to set appropriate goals; and it means joy of learning but also readiness to work; to get to know one’s own adequate speed and the right amount of repetitions; to learn to stay on task, even when it gets difficult; to cope with mistakes; to develop self-rewarding strategies; to learn to evaluate oneself; and to learn to find resources.

Self-motivating and self-rewarding strategies derive from the motivating and rewarding strategies learned and passed on by significant others, through the following types of teachings from parents and other authority figures: proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, quotations, mottoes, shibboleths, and other types of



“words to live by”, which are learned while growing up. Positive sentences heard repetitiously during childhood, such as “I believe that you can do it” or “well done” or “you gave your best” can contribute significantly to later rewarding strategies.

The teaching and learning environment can help enormously to maintain motivation, through social support and intellectual exchange (Hany, 2002): The environment should reward learning, and not just performing. It should give feedback, and appreciation of good results. Goals should be realistic (some gifted children get perfectionist and set too-high goals), the tasks should be connected to real life and authentic problems. Gifted children profit greatly from summer camps, projects, and special interest groups; and they often like to meet professionals and build networks, if given a chance.

### Results and conclusions

Gifted children need significant others who believe in them and who observe carefully and give good feedback. They eventually develop their own self-management and set their own goals, but intellectual talent does not grow without help and promotion. Without adequate support, the achievements get less, and the abilities do not grow further. Although the importance of a nourishing environment has been pointed out by empirical research for more than two decades (Bloom 1985), we do not support intellectual giftedness sufficiently, compared to sports. We need to perceive young talents, promote early playful learning, arrange competitions which include support of team play, develop early promotion methods that include parents; and we need to start long before the school years. When gifted children learn to read at 3 or 4 years of age, they often get held back from moving forward beyond the level where they are, by being placed into classes for children just beginning to learn how to read, irrespective of the fact that the gifted children already know how to read; and of course this placement into beginner’s classes holds the gifted children back from advancing their reading

skills beyond the level they have already attained. Acceleration is still generally seen as a negative, although empirical research shows that it is beneficial to the gifted child (Heinbökel, 2009).

The media need to educate more thoroughly about the empowerment that comes to learners from their being supported in their curiosity and intellectual interest. Support can start immediately after birth, not with rigid training methods but with attention, understanding the child’s signals, and reacting promptly and adequately. Parents promote and empower their children through love, caringness, and nurturing. They can teach self-confidence by believing in their children, and learning to listen and respond to them, and respecting individual differences, and not discouraging or hindering intellectual development at a young age.

### References:

- Bloom, B. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballentine;
- Hany, E.A. (2002). Entwicklung und Förderung hochbegabter Schüler aus psychologischer Sicht. In: W. Bergsdorf; J. Court; M. Eckert & H. Hoffmeister (Eds.), *Herausforderungen der Bildungsgesellschaft*. Weimar: RhinoVerlag, pp. 203-228;
- Heinbökel, A. (2009). *Handbuch Akzeleration*. Berlin: Lit;
- Jansen, F. & Streit, U. (2006). *Positiv lernen*. Heidelberg: Springer;
- Kaffanke, E. M. (2006). Begabte(n) Lehrer. *Labyrinth*, Vol. 29, pp. 17-23;
- Kogler, A. (2006). *Die Kunst der Höchstleistung: Sportpsychologie, Coaching, Selbstmanagement*. Wien: Springer;
- Lipsey, M. W. Wilson, D. B. (1993). The efficacy of psychological, educational, and behavioral treatment: Confirmation from meta-analysis. *American Psychologist*; Vol. 48, No. 12, pp. 1181-1209;
- NAGC: <http://www.nagc.org/>
- Robinson, A. & Clinkenbeard, P. R. (2008). History of Giftedness. In: S. Pfeiffer (Ed.). *Handbook of Giftedness in Children*. New York: Springer, pp: 13-32;



---

Rost, D. H. (2007). Redlichkeit und vergleichende wissenschaftliche Evaluation tut not. In *Labyrinth*, Vol. 30, pp. 30-34;  
Ziegler, A. (2006). Hochbegabtenförderung im Jahr 2006 in Deutschland. In *Labyrinth*, Vol. 29, pp. 4-12

**Additional resources in different languages**  
Institute for Research and Policy of Acceleration [http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation\\_deceived/](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_deceived/)  
**And Romanian**  
Centrul Gifted Education <http://giftededu.org/>



---

# EXPERIENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF TWO INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AMONG STUDENTS WITHIN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN TIMIȘOARA



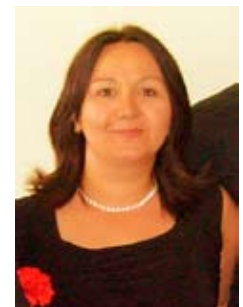
**Camelia Circu**  
Vice Director  
School No. 19 in Timisoara  
camelia\_timisoara@yahoo.com



**Anca Luștrea**  
Lecturer, PhD  
Department of Educational Sciences  
West University in Timisoara  
ancalustrea@gmail.com



**Ana Muntean,**  
Prof. PhD.  
Department of Social Work  
West University in Timisoara  
anamuntean25@yahoo.com



**Ioana Dârjan**  
Lecturer, PhD  
Department of Educational Sciences  
West University in Timisoara  
ioanadarjan@gmail.com

## **Abstract:**

*The development of the prosocial behavior in children is an important target in their education, especially nowadays, in our world, severely touched by violence. This paper presents the implementation of two programs that aim to develop the prosocial behavior in children from the 4th and 7th grades of a*

*secondary school in Timisoara. The experiment was organized during 2009<sup>17</sup>, within a project funded by CNMP in Romania. The experiment used two intervention programs: Making*

17 PN II, Project no. 91-063/2007, The social diagnosis of school performance using the School Success Profile (SSP-Ro) and the design of evidence based intervention methods, financed by The National Centre for Programme Management (CNMP), coordinated by Maria Roth, PhD, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca



*Choices and Strong Families. The organizing difficulties of the experiment jeopardized the outcomes and the differences between pre and post-test were not significant. The pre and post-test evaluation was done using complex instruments for children and parents: Carolina Children's Initiative, SSP-Ro, SDQ and Harsh Punishment. Despite the organizing difficulties and the good results on prosocial behavior of children in our samples, in the pretest phase, the implementation of programs led to an improvement of the results in post-test. Even if we did not obtain spectacular results in our experiment, we consider our experience meaningful and useful for professionals involved in the development of the prosocial behavior in school children.*

**Keywords:** *intervention programs, prosocial behavior, secondary school*

#### **Rezumat:**

*Într-o lume bântuită de violență, cum este cea contemporană, dezvoltarea comportamentelor pro sociale la copii reprezintă o țintă importantă în educația lor. Lucrarea de față prezintă experiența aplicării unor programe de dezvoltare a comportamentelor pro sociale la copiii din clasele a IV-a și a VII-a dintr-o școală generală din Timișoara. Această acțiune s-a realizat în anul 2009<sup>18</sup>, în cadrul unui proiect, finanțat de CNMP. Au fost utilizate două programe de intervenție: Making Choices și Strong Families. Dificultățile de organizare a experimentului, insuficient conștientizate în faza de pregătire a experimentului nu au condus la diferențe spectaculoase în rezultatele obținute la evaluările din pre-test și la cele din post-test. Evaluarea s-a realizat în ambele faze prin utilizarea unor instrumente vizând comportamentele copiilor precum și metodele de disciplinare folosite de către părinți. Aceste instrumente au fost: Carolina Children's Initiative, SSP-Ro, SDQ și Harsh Punishment (pentru părinți). In*

18 PN II, nr. 91-063/2007, Diagnosticul social a performanțelor școlare prin Scala de Succes Școlar și proiectarea unor metode de intervenție testate prin cercetare (SSP-Ro), finanțat de CNMP, coordonat de către dna Prof. Maria Roth, de la Universitatea Babeș Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca

*ciuda dificultăților de organizare, precum și a rezultatelor bune ale loturilor de copii la evaluarea în pre-test a comportamentelor pro sociale, aplicarea programelor a condus la o îmbunătățire a rezultatelor. Chiar dacă rezultatele nu sunt spectaculoase, considerăm că experiența acumulată cu această ocazie merită să fie cunoscută de către profesioniștii implicați în dezvoltarea comportamentelor pro-sociale la copii de vârstă școlară.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *programe de intervenție, comportament pro social, școală generală*

#### **Résumé:**

*Dans un monde atteint par la violence comme le monde contemporaine, le développement du comportement pro social aux enfants devient une cible important dans leur éducation. L'article présente l'expérience de l'application des programmes pour le développement du comportement pro social aux élèves de IV<sup>ème</sup> et VIII<sup>ème</sup> classe, dans une école générale du Timisoara. L'expérience a été développée dans le projet<sup>19</sup> financé par CNMP, pendant l'année 2009. On a utilisé deux programmes d'intervention: Making Choices et Strong Families. Les difficultés dans l'organisation du l'expérience, qui n'ont pas été assez conscientisées pendant la préparation du projet nous ont empêchées d'obtenir des résultats spectaculaires dans les évaluations pré et post-test. Les évaluations ont été faites les deux fois avec des instruments envisageant le comportement pro social des enfants aussi bien que les méthodes utilisées par les parents pour discipliner les enfants. Les instruments ont été : Carolina Children's Initiative, SSP-Ro, SDQ et Harsh Punishment (pour les parents). Même avec les difficultés d'organisation d'intervention et les bons résultats aux comportements pro social obtenue dans le projet par les élèves pendant l'évaluation de pré-test, l'intervention a conduit quand même à une augmentation des résultats. Même si on n'a pas eu des*

19 PN II, Projet no. 91-063/2007, Le diagnostic sociale de performance scolaire (SSP-Ro) par l'échelle sociale de réussite scolaire et conception des modèles d'intervention validés par la recherche, financé par le Centre national pour la gestion du programme (CNMP), coordonné par Maria Roth, PhD, Université Babes-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca



---

*résultats remarquables nous considérons que l'expérience accumulée vaut la peine d'être connue par les professionnels impliqués dans le développement des comportements prosocial aux élèves.*

**Mots-clefs:** programme d'intervention, comportement prosocial, école générale

### **What does the prosocial behavior mean?**

The concept of prosocial behavior is used as opposite to the concept of antisocial behavior. The antisocial behavior refers to all behaviors of a person or groups of individuals by which the physical, moral, psychological, economic or social integrity of a person is damaged. The concept of prosocial behavior developed at the beginning of the '70s, when the biologist Edward O. Wilson, defined the domain of socio-biology. Wilson (1975) demonstrated that the actions done for the benefit of other individual are basic behavior which can be found among human beings as well as among animals. The definition of prosocially behavior provided by Wikipedia, in 2009, refers to gestures of providing help, giving, sharing (having compassion for another individual) the feelings and emotions with somebody else. The definition in Wikipedia emphasizes the attention which should be paid to the wellness and protection of the rights of other person, to the empathy to others, and to the development of actions which bring benefit to others, to a person or to the entire society, or group. Some authors claimed that such a prosocial behavior could be costly for the person who develops it. Consequently a question is raised regarding the reasons of the person who develops such behaviour. A possible motivation for prosocial behavior can be the altruism of the person. The altruism is one of the coping mechanisms developed by the healthy individuals in front of stressful situations (Ionescu, Jacquet, Lothe, 2002). Research in the field brought arguments in favour of this mechanism and shows the fact that helping others, being altruist, have in feed-back the diminishment of the consequences of stress hormones, which support the maintenance of cardiovascular

health condition and have a positive impact on the immunity system of individuals (Wikipedia, 2009). Regarding the altruistic behavior, the sense is that the person who develops altruistic behavior does not have any expectations about rewards consequently to her/his behavior.

Roberta L. Knickerbocker (2003) shows the opposite. She brings arguments to support the idea of that there are also prosocial behavior based on less generous reasons which pursue the rewards and recognition of merits, the price for the prosocial behavior. But despite the motivation which bases the prosocial behavior, these behaviors maintain and support the link between the individual and the group to which he or she belongs and at the same time develops and empowers the group. When the altruism is an excellent coping mechanism of individual, the prosocial behavior supports the healthy functioning of the group, the cohesion and the welfare of a certain group. The opposite, antisocial behavior, damages the individuals as well as the group. Within a social environment promoting the prosocial behavior, the individuals who develop prosocial behavior have as a beneficiary the members of the group but in return they benefit of the prosocial behaviors of other around them. The results are the group's cohesion and the mutual support which build-up a kind of social tissue which contains and support each member of the group despite any differences among the members of the group. Within such a cohesive group the individual can fully develop his creative potential within secure atmosphere, the children and teenagers benefit of an informal attention from all adults in the group and the capacity of the entire group to face stressful situations, including socio-economic reductions is higher. Everything is pleading and giving reasons for the development of the prosocial behavior to children. Until 3 years old, the children have limited prosocial behavior, especially based on the pleasure to play with other children but not at all willing to share his/her toys. It is the role of the adult to suggest them and to pay attention to the development of sharing



behavior. As they grow, the children can have prosocial behavior even without the adult support, just based on his/her emphatic feelings towards other children. The encouragements and the support of adult for the evolution of these natural tendencies and capacities of the child into pervasive social behavior are essential. The prosocial behavior funds the moral development of the child, according with his/her cognitive level and gives sense to the judgments regarding the right or the wrong. This is also part of the respect toward another person. The democracy within society is based on the mutual respect among the members of the society. The child learns in the relationship with peers and friends the correctness of the behavior, the negotiations and solidarity, the cooperation for common purposes. But the beginning of all democratic behaviors mentioned here is in the family life of the child. After all the prosocial behavior have positive effects for individuals and the groups at the biological, psychological, social and cultural level.

Researchers and practitioners being aware of the importance of the prosocial behavior within the healthy functioning of individuals and social groups developed lot of programs focused to promote the prosocial behavior of children. Making Choices (Fraser, Nash, Galinsky, & Darwin, 2000) and Strong Families (Fraser, Nash, Galinsky, & Darwin,

2000) are successful endeavors in this sense.

### **The design of the experiment and the intervention**

The work was done within the project *Social Diagnosis of the School Performance through the Social Scale of School Success and Development of Evidence-based Intervention Methods*, PN 91063, funded by CNMP, under the coordination of Prof. Maria Roth, from Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, Romania. The mainstream school no. 19, in Timisoara, was the framework of the implementation of programs. The design of intervention was based on pretest- intervention- post test (table 1). The pretest part was done during March 2009. The participants were students within the IV-th and the VII-th classes. The children within the IV-th grades were evaluated regarding the socio-emotional skills through Carolina test and regarding the behavioral troubles through SDQ. The parents of the children in the IV-th level were investigated through Harsh Punishment questionnaire for the models used to discipline the child. The pupils in the VII-th grades were assessed in the pretest phase with SDQ focused on behavioral troubles. The self-report and the parent's evaluation forms were applied. The students in the VII-th grades were also evaluated through the self-repost of SSP questionnaire which investigates the strengths of the child regarding school performances.

**Table 1. The design of the experiment with pre and post-test evaluation**

| <b>The grades</b>         | <b>Group type</b>  | <b>Pre-test evaluation's tools</b> | <b>Intervention's Program</b> | <b>Post-test evaluation's tools</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| IV th A<br>(16 students ) | Experimental group | Carolina, SDQ-T, SDQ-P             | MC + SF                       | Carolina, SDQ-T SDQ-P               |
| IV th B<br>(11 students)  | Control group      | Carolina, SDQ-T, SDQ-P             | -                             | Carolina, SDQ-T SDQ-P               |
| IV th C                   | Experimental group | Carolina, SDQ-T SDQ-P              | SF                            | Carolina, SDQ-T, SDQ-P              |
| IV-th E<br>(12 students)  | Experimental group | Carolina, SDQ-T, SDQ-P             | MC                            | Carolina, SDQ-T, SDQ-P              |
| VII-th E<br>(17 students) | Experimental group | SSP, SDQ-S HP, SDQ-P               | SF                            | SSP, SDQ-S HP, SDQ-P                |
| VII-th B<br>(16 students) | Control group      | SSP, SDQ-S HP, SDQ-P               | -                             | SSP, SDQ-S HP, SDQ-P                |



The intervention consisted in the adaptation and the implementation of the Making choices program with students in the IV-th grades (A &E) within Mainstream school no.19, in Timisoara and Strong families program, with the IV-th and VII-th grades, in the same school. The work was done during the months May-June, 2009. The implementation team had as members: Ana Muntean, Ioana Darjan and Anca Lustrea, from West University in Timisoara. For implementing the Strong Families program, a plan was set-up with 4 meetings with the parents who have children in the IV-th and VII-th grades. Each meeting was planned to be led by 2 members of the implementation team. For the implementation of Making Choices program, 4 meetings for each IV-th grades were planned. Each meeting in the class-rooms with students was led by only one member of the implementation team. The intervention targeted to highlight the impact of the educational programs for children and/or parents aimed to develop pro-social behavior to children in the school. The post-test was realized during the end of June 2009, with the same instruments as those used within the pre-test. The post-test evaluation aimed to assess the socio-emotional skills of children and the use of harsh punishment by parents in relation with their children, and the perception of the behavioral troubles and school success of students. The independent variable in our research was the Making Choices program. The dependent variables are the level of socio-emotional skills of children, the type of parental discipline techniques, and the perception of teachers and parents regarding the behavioral troubles of students. We have to mention that only the students who had the agreement of their parents could be considerate within the intervention. The roles of the experimental or control groups were distributed among the participant classes as in the table 1.

### **The assessment tools used**

The assessment of the socio-emotional skills level for students in the IV-th grades,

the tool used was Carolina Children's Initiative, created by Mark Fraser. This instrument is focused on the interpretation and the students' behavior in common social situations. The construction of the tool is based on questions regarding 6 stories and pictures on the stories. The students are asked to indicate the feelings, intentions and behavior of the main person in the pictures who is supposed to represent the respondent's feelings.

For the evaluation of perceptions regarding the behavior troubles of pupils in IV-th and VII-th grades at school, SDQ questionnaire was used. SDQ is a questionnaire for screening the mental health aspects, focused on behavior difficulties. SDQ have specific forms for children between 3 to 16 years old, and asks for answers from parents, teachers and self-report of older children. Within our work we used the forms specific for children's ages including in our intervention, the self-report, the parent's report and the teacher's report. SDQ highlights the perception regarding the mental health based on 5 dimensions: emotional symptoms, behavior troubles, hyperactivity, difficulties within social relationship and the prosocial behavior.

The investigation of parental discipline models was done through the questionnaire Harsh Punishment. This is an instrument which evaluates the techniques used by parents to discipline the children, on three dimensions: harsh punishment, efficient discipline, less efficient discipline. There are 19 questions focused on the techniques used by parents in order to control the child behavior in different common circumstances.

The school success profile, used here in our intervention, was initially elaborated by Gary Bowen and Jack Richman. The questionnaire was adapted for Romanian population, within *Social Diagnosis of the School Performance through the Social Scale of School Success and Development of Evidence-based Intervention Methods* project, coordinated by Babes-Bolyai University. The questionnaire has 220 questions, which are based on self-report, and investigates 6 domains: personal data, information regarding



the school, information regarding the friends, the family, the health condition of the respondent and the community.

### The collected data

In the following tables we are giving the data collected during the intervention.

**Table 2: The pre-test data collected with SDQ (students in the fourth class in a school)**

|                        | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Average | Standard deviation |
|------------------------|----|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| Emotional symptoms     | 48 | 5.00    | 12.00   | 7.6875  | 2.0747             |
| Behavioral troubles    | 48 | 5.00    | 10.00   | 6.3333  | 1.5205             |
| Hyperactivity          | 48 | 5.00    | 13.00   | 7.2292  | 2.3360             |
| Social difficulties    | 48 | 5.00    | 11.00   | 7.0833  | 1.4708             |
| Prosocial difficulties | 48 | 10.00   | 15.00   | 13.2917 | 1.5704             |
| Total                  | 48 | 34.00   | 53.00   | 41.6250 | 4.7919             |

**Table 3: the pretest data collected with SDQ (Students in the VII-th class)**

|                         | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Average | Standard deviation |
|-------------------------|----|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| Emotional symptoms      | 31 | 5.00    | 13.00   | 8.2903  | 2.4792             |
| Behavioral troubles     | 31 | 5.00    | 10.00   | 6.8065  | 1.1950             |
| Hyperactivity           | 31 | 5.00    | 13.00   | 7.6129  | 1.8561             |
| Social difficulties     | 31 | 5.00    | 11.00   | 7.3871  | 1.4760             |
| Pro-social difficulties | 31 | 6.00    | 15.00   | 12.9677 | 1.8346             |
| Total                   | 31 | 36.00   | 58.00   | 43.0645 | 5.4033             |

Comparing the collected data in the pre-test phase with the average data in the handbook of SDQ questionnaire (<http://www.sdqinfo.com/ScoreSheets/e1.pdf>) it is obvious that the data in our intervention are placed within the normal limits. That is why our intervention has more a preventing goal than a therapeutically one.

For highlighting the difficult aspects in the mental health domain the t test was applied on the data collected with the questionnaires answered by the peer samples. Considering the results it is possible to set-up a hierarchy of the behavioral troubles found within our investigation. The hierarchy is almost the same on both samples: on the first level are

placed the emotional symptoms followed by hyperactivity, social difficulties, behavioral troubles and pro-social difficulties. Taking into account the development of the students the normality of samples is stressed once more.

The parents of students in the IV-th and VII-th classes are applying an efficient model to discipline the children. This is emphasized by the confrontation of our data collected from parents with the scales of Harsh Punishment questionnaire. Looking at the data collected from both samples, no significant differences can be seen between the efficient discipline and the less efficient discipline but both type of discipline are significant more in use than the harsh punishment. Between the samples, even if they aren't statistically significant it is obvious that the less efficient discipline is more frequently applied.

The social and emotional skills' level of students in the IV-th class is identified by the statistic work on the data collected with Carolina Children Initiatives during the pre-test phase. Nor in the control sample, made up by 28 students, neither in the control group with 21 students, the answers are showing the hostility because of the emotional immaturity. The students in our intervention are not too impulsive and do not show a tendency to consider the ambivalent social situations as being hostile. Also, the respondents are not prone to vengeance. Considering the answers of children, the discrepancy between these and the perceptions of children's educators based on the same items is surprising. Carolina Children Initiatives is asking the educators to evaluate the children behavior, one by one, based on a Likert scale in 7 levels. The educators' perceptions regarding the children show the immaturity, low social skills, and no so many physical or even personality interesting aspects. Globally the image of students in educators' perceptions is disappointing and has bad consequences on the student-professor relationship and on the educational context and process.

Following the intervention, we used the same instruments to re-assess the sam-



ples chose for the experiment. In order to highlight the expected changes of children's emotional reactions within ambivalent social situations, following the implementation of MC program, we compared the results of the experimental group in the pre and post test. As we already mentioned, comparing the averages of the results on Carolina Children Ini-

tiatives, the conclusion is that children do not have excessive aggressive behavior. There are not significant differences found on the pre and post test (Table 14) due to the lack of aggressive tendency within children behavior from the very beginning. Consequently the intervention prone to reduce such a tendency does not find a sensible field.

**Table 4: Carolina Children Initiatives results in pre and post test**

|         |   |   | Differences in pairs | t      | Degree of freedom | Signification level |
|---------|---|---|----------------------|--------|-------------------|---------------------|
|         |   | Item  | Average              |        |                   |                     |
| Pair 1  | 1 | Why didn't he keep a place for you?               | -,18                 | -1,307 | 27                | ,202                |
| Pair 2  |   | What would you like to do?                        | ,11                  | 1,800  | 27                | ,083                |
| Pair 4  | 2 | Why did children laugh ?                          | ,00                  | ,000   | 27                | 1,000               |
| Pair 5  |   | What would you like to happen ?                   | ,00                  | ,000   | 27                | 1,000               |
| Pair 6  |   | Why did he hold your head submerged in the water? | -3,57E-02            | -1,000 | 27                | ,326                |
| Pair 7  | 3 | Why did he hold you submerged in the water?       | ,11                  | 1,140  | 27                | ,264                |
| Pair 8  |   | What would you like to happen ?                   | ,00                  | ,000   | 27                | 1,000               |
| Pair 9  |   | What would you do?                                | 3,70E-02             | 1,000  | 26                | ,327                |
| Pair 10 | 4 | Why didn't he invite you to his party?            | 3,57E-02             | ,297   | 27                | ,769                |
| Pair 11 |   | What would you like to happen ?                   | -3,57E-02            | -,372  | 27                | ,713                |
| Pair 12 |   | What would you like to do ?                       | 7,14E-02             | ,701   | 27                | ,490                |
| Pair 13 | 5 | Why did she drop your favorite journal?           | -,11                 | -,902  | 27                | ,375                |
| Pair 14 |   | What would you like to happen ?                   | ,14                  | 1,441  | 27                | ,161                |
| Pair 15 |   | What would you like to do?                        | -3,57E-02            | -1,000 | 27                | ,326                |
| Pair 16 | 6 | Why did the child push you in mud?                | -3,57E-02            | -,372  | 27                | ,713                |
| Pair 17 |   | What would you like to do?                        | -3,57E-02            | -1,000 | 27                | ,326                |
| Pair 18 |   | What would you do ?                               | -3,57E-02            | -,570  | 27                | ,573                |

Looking for explanations for the lack of significant differences between pre and post test we have to take into account the short period of intervention as well as the short period between pre and post test. The information and skills acquired through MC program did

not have enough time for internalization, self-reflection and accommodation with existing psychological structures. Due to all these process the effects of training could be visible only after a certain period of time.

In the following table we present the results of the SDQ questionnaire.

**Table 5: The t test of significance on the peers' samples for the SDQ questionnaire scales, in pre and post test, for IV-th classes**

| Peers differences         | Average | Standard deviation | Standard deviation of average | t     | Freedom degree | Level of significance |
|---------------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------------|
| ESEPOST - ESEPRE          | .6429   | 3.1531             | .5959                         | 1.079 | 27             | .290                  |
| EPCPOST - EPCPRE          | .3571   | 1.6825             | .3180                         | 1.123 | 27             | .271                  |
| EHPOST - EHPRE            | .8571   | 3.2285             | .6101                         | 1.405 | 27             | .171                  |
| EPSPOST - EPSPRE          | .1429   | 1.7152             | .3241                         | .441  | 27             | .663                  |
| <b>EPROPOST - EPROPRE</b> | .6786   | 1.7858             | .3375                         | 2.011 | 27             | .052                  |
| ETOTPOST - ETOTPRE        | 2.6786  | 6.2542             | 1.1819                        | 2.266 | 27             | .053                  |

Following the intervention it is evident that there are not significant differences within the behavior troubles perceptions. These results are expected because even in

the pretest the results are within the normal development and consequently we can not expect better outcomes. Looking for explanations for the lack of statistical differences



again we have to take into account the short period of implementation of the program and the short period between the end of the program's implementation and the post test.

The absence of significant improvement could be seen also in the table no.16, where the pre and post test data on the experimental and control samples is compared. The lack of significant differences led to the conclusion that the intervention does not have statistically significant results. Despite this situation we hope that the effects of intervention will become evident in the future considering the prevention aspects.

**Table 6: The t test for independent samples on the results obtained with SDQ questionnaire, the experimental and control group, students on the IV-th classes**

|       | F     | Level of significance | t      | Freedom degree | Level of significance |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|--------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Se    | 3.810 | .057                  | -1.830 | 46             | .074                  |
|       |       |                       | -1.978 | 45.081         | .054                  |
| Pc    | 2.396 | .128                  | .507   | 46             | .615                  |
|       |       |                       | .496   | 37.655         | .623                  |
| H     | .000  | .994                  | .185   | 46             | .854                  |
|       |       |                       | .187   | 42.943         | .852                  |
| ps    | .370  | .546                  | .288   | 46             | .775                  |
|       |       |                       | .297   | 44.797         | .768                  |
| pro   | 1.244 | .270                  | 15.339 | 46             | .000                  |
|       |       |                       | 15.228 | 39.983         | .000                  |
| total | .505  | .481                  | -1.781 | 46             | .082                  |
|       |       |                       | -1.872 | 45.916         | .068                  |

Below there are exposed few of the assertions made by students in the VII-th classes on School Success Profile questionnaire. Taking in consideration the changes occurred during the research we can stress the importance for parents and children to access the psychological counselling service existing within the school. The assertions done by students in the VII-th classes to the SSP questionnaire are important and sensible. In the following we give some of students' perceptions regarding their school.

**Tabel 7: In my school ...**

|  |            | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------|-----------|---------|
| The interest of students is in the first place                               | Not at all | 1         | .5      |
|  | A little   | 9         | 4,2     |
|  | A lot      | 9         | 4,2     |
|  | Very much  | 9         | 4,2     |
| Each student is important  | Not at all | 2         | .9      |
|  | A little   | 10        | 4,7     |
|  | A lot      | 11        | 5,1     |
|  | Very much  | 5         | 2,3     |
| My school is a very good school  | Not at all | 0         | 0       |
|  | A little   | 3         | 1,4     |
|  | A lot      | 13        | 6,0     |
|  | Very much  | 12        | 5,6     |
| The adults in this school are interested in the students' opinions and ideas | Not at all | 3         | 1,4     |
|  | A little   | 9         | 4,2     |
|  | A lot      | 10        | 4,7     |
|  | Very much  | 6         | 2,8     |
| Children in this school receive a good education                             | Not at all | 0         | 0       |
|  | A little   | 5         | 2,3     |
|  | A lot      | 12        | 5,6     |
|  | Very much  | 11        | 5,1     |
| The teachers in this school care about the students                          | Not at all | 0         | 0       |
|  | A little   | 5         | 2,3     |
|  | A lot      | 17        | 7,9     |
|  | Very much  | 6         | 2,8     |
| The principal of this school cares for students' school attendance           | Not at all | 0         | 0       |
|  | A little   | 2         | .9      |
|  | A much     | 9         | 4,2     |
|  | Very much  | 17        | 7,9     |
| This school represents me  | Not at all | 3         | 1,4     |
|  | A little   | 8         | 3,7     |
|  | A lot      | 12        | 5,6     |
|  | Very much  | 5         | 2,3     |

### Limits and barriers of intervention

The development of the initially planned intervention with MC and SF programs was deviated during the implementation process and we had several delays comparing with the initial scale. Finally the intervention was done by:

- adaptation and implementation of MC program with the two classes on the IV-th level, initially selected; this part of the process kept the planned schedule;
- the implementation of SF with the children's parents in the IV-th classes was slightly different comparing with the initial schedule; in one class we succeeded to have 3 meetings and in other class 2 meetings, comparing with 4 meetings with parents planned



in the initial schedule.

- The intervention planned for implementation of SF in the VII-th class, completely failed and we succeed to have only one meeting with parents, out of 4 meetings planned within initial schedule of intervention.

It is obvious that the implication of the parents was not enough to secure the success of our intervention and the reasons will be discussed here but later. We have to mention that when the parents participated they were interested in the topic; they had questions and were ready to tell about their experience. The warm atmosphere during the meetings with parents gave a wrong impression to interviewers who tried to keep the schedule and come back for next meeting. There were only 5-7 parents of students in the IV-th class and 2-3 parents of students in the VII-th class participating to the meetings. This situation shows the increasing distance between parents and school according to the higher level of the students in the school. For smaller children the parents keep part of the responsibility for the child education but as children are growing the parents transfer all the responsibility for students' education to school.

### **Difficulties**

The implementation of MC program was done to students in advanced classes (the IV-th class) without any intervention in favor to prosocial behavior during the years before. The authors of the programs ask for early implementation and continuity in supporting the prosocial behavior of children within educational sittings. In addition to this first difficulty, a new difficulty was created by the application of the program in short time and condensed version. A possible difficulty during the implementation phase could be raised because each material necessary was created individually by the psychologists working in the project. Due to this situation the materials used were not homogeneous. To highlight different aspects within the exercise done with students was again a particular option of each

intervention in the implementation phase and despite the handbook recommendations this situation could alter the results of the experiment.

On the school level we did not succeed to include the school psychologist in the intervention team. This situation is limiting the possibilities to provide training for the school psychologist on assessment and intervention tools and to continue to apply the program after the end of the project.

The parents' rejection regarding the participation in the project, for themselves or for the children, could be raised by the lack of enough explanations regarding the program. The invitations were prepared by the implementation team, given to educators who sent them home to parents through their children. Probably sometimes this channel did not function efficiently and the parents did not get the invitations. There were no phone calls from the parents to ask for additional information regarding the project. Consequently the low participation to the project could be the effect of the lack of information about the goals of the project, the expected results, and the rejection of any novelty. The dysfunctional communication with the parents had consequences in the low participation to the project and also in the late confirmations. During the short time of intervention, because of the less availability of teachers and educators a very flexible attitude based lot of adjustments in the program. The adjustments could decrease the scientific accuracy and the proper monitories and quantification of the data. An important difficulty was the period of intervention: 15Mai-15June. The too short time, unexpected events which occurred, the wait for the summer holiday could diminish the interest in participation to intervention.

Despite the apparently good cooperation between teachers and educators in the school and the research team the intervention with family could not be realized due to the absence of parents. After all we are sure that there is a need for a special strategy to get involved the parents. Consequently to the implementation of programs, the authors elimi-



nated SF program because of the difficulties, the high costs of intervention and the ineffective cost-results balance.

### Conclusions

The prosocial behavior brings bio-psycho-socio-cultural benefices for individuals as well as for the groups and has positive impact on the cohesion and the wellbeing of the group. That is why the educational system should promote the prosocial behavior among children and should raise the parents' awareness for promoting the prosocial development of their child within the family. Making Choices and Strong families is a complex program targeting the development of prosocial skills among young children.

It takes time to prepare the implementation and to organize the continue evaluation of the process in order to avoid the accumulation and difficulties. Within a cultural context marked by lack of trust the preparation and evaluation phases are even more important. It is obvious that the most important condition for implementing the programs is the human resources. Within the Romanian context the basic condition for entire process is the strong determination of intervenient team and their believes regarding the efficiency of the program.

Within the experiment described above the initial plan was not kept which led to an uncontrolled result and diminished the impact. This situation was created by the time circumstances and by the real and unexpected situation in the field.

Despite the partial failure of the pro-

gram with parents the conclusion based on several aspects is in the favor of implementation of such a program. The team is asked to develop a better strategy in order to involve and keep the parents in the program. A better selection of the initial group of participants' parents could foster the success of intervention with parents. The literature emphasize that the best intervention is focused on parent-child intervention. It is time to set-up such programs which can bring together parents and children. Through such interventions the parents' attitude towards school system and towards their children can be substantially improved.

### References:

- Bercea, P. (2000). *Familii puternice: un program dedicat educării părinților* (volum nepublicat);
- Fraser, W.M., Abell, M.D., Schopler, J.H., Hodges, V.G. (2000), *Strong Families. Making Choices: Social problem solving skills for children*. Washington, DC: NASW Press;
- Ionescu, S., Jacquet, M. M., Lhote, C. (2002). *Mecanismele de apărare, teorie și aspecte clinice*, Iași: Polirom;
- Knickerbocker, Roberta L. (2003). *Prosocial Behavior. Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University*, (pp. 1-3);
- Wilson, E. (1975). *Sociobiology: The new Synthesis*. Cambridge: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University;
- <http://www.sdqinfo.com/ScoreSheets/e1.pdf>;
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosocial\\_behavior](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosocial_behavior), 2009



---

# DECREASING SCHOOL FAILURE BY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS



**Simona Pop**

Coordinator of Social-Educational Department  
Asociația Caritas Eparhial Greco-Catolic Cluj,  
bazilio97@yahoo.com



**Raluca Segesvari**

Social worker of Social-Educational Department  
Asociația Caritas Eparhial Greco-Catolic Cluj  
raluca\_segessvari@yahoo.com



**Iolanda Molnar**

Teacher

Group School of Industrial Chemistry "Therapia" Cluj Napoca  
molnariolanda@yahoo.com

**Abstract:**

*School failure occurs more often in disadvantaged groups and is generated by a series of factors such as: poverty, parents with low levels of education, family size and family emotional climate, parent's attitude towards school and children's education, inappropriate parental models. To support children from socially disadvantaged families we used school remedial programs and social, educational and material support for these families. Throughout the school year, the multidisciplinary team that works with these children and their family members aims to achieve the following: Decreasing the risk of school drop-out, increasing the family involvement in the educational process, and improving the material conditions of the families. Through regular evaluations, we were able to follow-up the pupils' evolution, which allowed us to apply appropriate intervention*

*programs, adapted to individuals' needs.*

**Keywords:** *social and educational counselling, family involvement, school remedial, material support*

**Rezumat:**

*Insuccesul școlar se regăsește de cele mai multe ori în rândul grupurilor defavorizate și este generat de o serie de factori, cum ar fi: sărăcie, nivelul scăzut de educație al părinților, dimensiunea familiei și climatul afectiv al acesteia, atitudinea părinților față de școală și de educația copiilor, modele parentale deficitare. În sprijinul copiilor proveniți din familii dezavantajate social am intervenit prin programe de remediere școlară și de asistență socială, educațională și materială. Pe tot parcursul anului școlar, echipa multidisciplinară, care lucrează cu acești copii și cu membrii familiilor din care ei provin, urmărește atingerea următoarelor*



obiective: diminuarea riscului de abandon școlar; socializarea copiilor; creșterea implicării familiilor în procesul instructiv-educativ și îmbunătățirea nivelului de trai al familiilor. Prin intermediul evaluărilor periodice efectuate am putut să urmărim evoluția sau regresul elevilor implicați în activitățile noastre și să intervenim în baza planurilor de intervenție personalizate în funcție de particularitățile fiecărui caz în parte.

**Cuvinte cheie:** consiliere socială și educațională, implicare familială, remediere școlară, suport material

### **Résumé:**

*L'insuccès à l'école se trouve d'habitude parmi les groupes des personnes défavorisées et il a comme cause une série des facteurs : la pauvreté ; le faible niveau d'éducation des parents; les familles nombreuses et le climat émotionnel de celles-ci ; l'attitude des parents vis-à-vis de l'éducation des leurs enfants et de l'école ; et des modèles parentaux déficitaires. Pour aider les enfants qui proviennent des familles sociales désavantagées, dans l'activité de l'Association Diocésaine Greco – Catholique Caritas Cluj, nous avons fait des interventions par les programmes de récupération scolaire et d'assistance sociale, éducative et matériels. Tout au long de l'année l'équipe multidisciplinaire qui travaille avec ces enfants et avec les membres de leurs familles ont comme but: la réduction du risque de l'abandon scolaire, la socialisation des enfants, l'accroissement de l'implication des familles dans le procès instructif - éducatif et l'amélioration de niveau de vie des familles. Par le moyen des évaluations périodiques faites on a pu poursuivre l'évolution où la régression des élèves qui participent à nos activités et on a pu intervenir à l'aide des modèles d'intervention personnalisée, adaptés pour chaque cas.*

**Mots-clefs:** guidance sociale et éducative, participation des familles, cours de rattrapage, soutien matériel

The daily socio-economic conditions

are the cause of more and more problems and issues for families throughout the world. Parents burdened by the care of tomorrow, by their debts, and by their lack of material capacity for a decent living, find it very difficult to identify resources that are needed for a social/ intellectual/ moral child development.

The school abandonment can be more often found between and inside marginalized groups, being generated by poverty and marginalization, and also by the collateral costs that education implies. Even though education is free in Romania, school does not have funds in order to be able to do differentiated help for families in need. The semi-boarding programs, offered by the school are not free ones therefore being financially inaccessible to a large part of the families of pupils.

Because of the long term effects there is a mutual influence between poverty and access to education, this leading to transmission of poverty between generations, with effects so much on individual, collective and social level. In other words, a very poor child will have limited access to education due to lack of material resources and adequate social support.

Access to education of children from poor families is both educational and socio-economical issue. The reasons these children have difficult access to education are equally related to both dysfunctions in the educational system and socio economic issues that start from the impossibility of providing daily food and sandwiches for school, clothing and footwear appropriate for each season and go further with educational expenses that are way beyond the possibilities of their parents.

From discussions we had with teachers of pupils that have benefit from educational programs offered within Caritas Cluj we reached the conclusion that the number of children that are benefiting from support by their parents is in continuous decline. All this leads very often to severe effects such as: absenteeism, repetency, pupils that have to repeat the year, school maladjustment, and even school abandon, all these are phenomena that tend to become a normal social state of



facts. The risk of poverty can be substantially reduced as the education level can be risen, usually you will see a lot more low-educated people being poor than the opposite.

According to The World Bank, UNICEF Romania and the Ministry of Work, Family and Social Welfare analysis, children (0 – to 14 years) and young people (5 – 24 years) are the two categories most exposed to poverty risk. Both in 2008 and in 2009, children and young people represent 43 % of the total poor population. ([www.unicef.org.ro](http://www.unicef.org.ro)). The poverty phenomenon between children and young people calls for a supplemental approach, because it can lead to school abandon and also to a poor physical, psychological and social development.

The spokesman for The School Inspectorate of Cluj, Anca Radu said in March 2009 that the majority of pupils that are not going to school derive from extremely poor families and romani (gypsy) communities ([www.stirilelocale.ro](http://www.stirilelocale.ro)).

In this respect Caritas Cluj responds to a more and more increased need to support children from poor families through socio-educational activities, activities that have begun in the year of 2000.

Hereby, we offer assistance for poor children, regardless of their ethnic or religious background, we offer support to their families in order for them to be able to arise from a crisis situation, and we also offer the alternative of free semi-boarding. Therewith, we offer a daily meal for these children, meal that very often constitutes a valuable help for these kids, because their parents can't afford to make sandwiches for them.

Due to experience accumulated in the past years, and also due to a growing need to offer support for families in need, we have tried to ameliorate the school abandon phenomenon and to improve the standard of living for families with children in crisis situation. Along the years we had beneficiaries such as children with high intellectual capacity but in risk of interrupting school because of the indigence from their families.

We believe that each child is unique

and this child is in permanent need for support, motivation, encouragement, safety, attention and a fair attitude from the people around them. Through involvement in the development of „today's child” we invest in the „tomorrow's child”, that belongs to society, thus his growth and development being a responsibility both at family and social level.

Within the socio-educational projects we had, we offered social work programs; we offered specialized educational services for children from families in need. We tried to reach the following objectives: a decrease of school abandon risk, socialization of children, an increase of family involvement in the educational-didactic process, the improvement of child-family-school relation and of the standard of living.

#### **Activities that lead to achieving the objectives:**

1. **Social and educational counseling for families and, in the same time the preparation of social investigations:** offering information, guidance and support for families in need. In the field work, during the visits at the pupils homes, the social workers have offered information to the parents, information regarding the rights they have as parents, as employees, they also assisted these parents in preparation of the papers necessary in handling different issues (electricity, gas), and also guided them to the local authorities in order for them to solve their problems. Therewith, the social workers have identified the beneficiaries' needs and requests, they have offered alternatives in problem solving issues that the families are facing with, and also contributed to implementation of the personalized interventions plans.

For each and every pupil a individual folder (file) has been created, folder that contained the following working tools: social investigation, visit report, the individual chart of the pupil, the initial, intermediate, and final evaluation, monitoring diagrams of the school situation for each pupil, personalized intervention plan, agreement contracts with the parents or the legal representatives of the



---

children, contract for offering social services, individual questionnaire (applied to parents/legal representatives ) regarding the socio-educational assistance activity.

**2. Development of family-school relation.** The social workers had a major role in achieving the department objectives; they periodically visited the families at their homes. During these visits the main objective was social and educational counselling of the family so that the parents would be aware of the issues that exist in the educational process of the child, and also the improvement of the child-family-school relation. The families were constantly informed with the school situation of their children; these families have benefit of counselling so that the parents cooperate with the school. These actions required a lot of time and persistence and were not always successful. Also, every teacher has periodically been kept informed with the child's situation, (the environment the child comes from, family's health condition or any other aspects that are important for the child's evolution or retrogression).

**3. Support in the making of homework.** This activity is complementary to the educational activity the child benefits from in school. Within this activity, psychological and pedagogical support has been offered for pupils in order to help them with their homework, for recovery from the gaps they had in certain domains, improvement of their vocabulary, learning and assimilation of certain rules of conduct in the society. Concurrent with this support we offered in this matter, we have been working with individual work sheets that were made depending on age and discipline, with different degrees of difficulty. The pupils were always guided and explained what to do, depending on each and everyone's needs.

For students with behavioural problems (ADHD, aggressive behaviour, vulgar vocabulary, lack of communication and collaboration, lack of school interest) there were made, with the family's approval, guidelines for psychological counselling.

**4. Meetings with the parents in or-**

**der for them to develop parental abilities and to enforce the child-family-school relation.** These meetings took place periodically and their goal was to discuss, analyse and try to identify ways of solving problems that each family encounters with in both child education and child-family-school relation.

Over the last years of school the teachers and the form masters have pointed out the following aspects that lead to the problems within the educational framework, and to learning difficulties: lack of interest from the parents concerning school activities, low involvement of these families in the instructive-educational process; pupils from disintegrated families, children with emotional deficiencies. After visits and discussions between the social workers and the parents, and also after participating at organized meetings, these parents were aware of the existent issues and of the importance of these issues.

**5. Leisure and recreational activities** (excursions, trips, visits, parties, arts activities, holiday club). For offering opportunities both of socialization and leisure the following actions and activities took place: celebrating The International Women's Day (8 March), arts activities, Celebration of 1 June – The International Day of the Child , The "Our Christmas evening" Christmas celebration, End of school year celebration, Visiting the Ethnographic Museum "Romulus Vuia" of Cluj-Napoca, Visiting the Botanic Garden of Cluj-Napoca, Visiting the Bears Cave from Bihor County, village of Chiscau; also the organized trip to the city of Sibiu with two main sights: The Astra Open Air Museum, and the Zoo of Sibiu; also the organized trip to the city of Targu-Mures with two main sights: The Zoo of Targu-Mures and the Recea Monastery; organized trip to Cheile Turzii. We here at Caritas feel that a program that combines both the study of school lessons and recreational side as well (this being another way of learning) can effectively contribute in raising the child's school performance, self discipline and the widening of the horizon of knowledge. Also we intended to have these activities based on age categories.



**6. Activities of information, recruiting and training volunteers.** Considering that in the school remedial program it is necessary to work with the pupils either individually or in groups, it is imperative that a large number of volunteers should be involved. These volunteers (both high-school and college, university students) have been trained for the purpose of voluntary work for and with the children (emphasizing on personal development and improvement of skills and abilities that are necessary in the individually and group work with the children).

**7. Material support** - for families with minimum subsistence income we have offered monthly packages with food supplies, sanitary and hygienic supplies, and cleaning supplies. Therewith, school uniforms were purchased for the children, also clothing and footwear supplies and the school materials

needed for an entire school year (notebooks, pencils, pens).

**Results we have achieved from the activities carried**

For a better picture of these activities within the context of adaptive behaviour amelioration of the students in the school and outside school context, we consider that it is very useful to indicate the strengths and the weakness, in terms of prevention and intervention activities from the Socio-Educational Department of Caritas Cluj. It is interesting to highlight that there are a lot of opportunities that allow us to continue to focus on this type of activity in order to accomplish what we want, but there are also risks and we have to find appropriate solutions in order to ameliorate or eliminate these risks. In this context, we propose a SWOT analysis over our department's activities:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Professional employees, appropriate involvement in achieving the objectives</li> <li>▪ Adequate psycho pedagogical support for students with high risk of school abandon</li> <li>▪ Effective collaboration between the work group members</li> <li>▪ Material support for the families of the students involved</li> <li>▪ Amelioration of school situation of the students</li> <li>▪ Useful support to reduce school absenteeism</li> <li>▪ Prevention of school failure</li> <li>▪ A more active involvement of certain families in the child-family-school relation</li> <li>▪ A better social involvement of certain students</li> <li>▪ Organization of diverse useful and beneficial activities for the students</li> <li>▪ Active involvement from certain teachers from the high-school and elementary school «Terapia»</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weakness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of involvement from certain families in terms of supporting their children in their relation with the school and for a positive education</li> <li>▪ Confrontation of the team members with non-adaptive behaviours from certain participant students in the activities.</li> </ul>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Oportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quality services offered to our clients ( beneficiaries )</li> <li>▪ Qualified professional personnel, with desire for involvement in the activities.</li> <li>▪ Possibility for organizing meetings with the families and volunteers that are involved in the activities</li> </ul>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of involvement from certain families in order for them to be able to avoid school abandon for their children</li> <li>▪ Lack of interest from certain students in terms of completing their knowledge and so avoid school abandon</li> <li>▪ Possibility of reduction of funds that are necessary for the continuation and the improvement of the projects of Socio-Educational Department</li> </ul> |



The activities of Caritas Cluj were assessed by some of the teachers that have been involved as following:

„Extremely useful, because the pupils’ families are not involved at all, or very less because of: incapability, lack of time, inconsistency in education”. (C.A.)

“Provides a beneficial environment, in order to increase the quality of school life”. (B.A.)

“Real support for the elimination of school failure.” (C.M.)

“Useful and effective because it helps the students to socialize more easily and to resolve their scholar tasks in better conditions” (M.I.)

As seen in the statistics from Table 1, we can say that from a school year to another, the school situation of the students has improved, considering most pupils have improved their school results, and the number of students that failed to pass the year has significantly decreased. Also, fewer students have abandoned school, fact that denotes a positive influence of our activities.

**Table 1. Results achieved by the students included in the After School Project for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 years of school**

|                       | Total number of participant students at the After School Project | Number of students with improved school results | Number of students that were constant in results ( no regress or progress ) | Number of corigent students | Number of students that repeated the year | Number of students that abandoned school |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| School year 2007-2008 | 76   | 25  | 37  | 10                          | 2   | 2  |
| School year 2008-2009 | 112  | 62  | 39  | 8                           | 2   | 1  |

### Interpretation of the Achieved Results in the “After School Project” Comparative Study for the School Years of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

The study that we conducted over the two school years has pointed out increased positive results achieved after the implication of the participants (students, parents, teachers, volunteers)

We think that it would be very useful to mark out certain aspects that refer to: development of school vocabulary of the students, common problems in the context of home works making, students’ socialization, increasing the self confidence, the improvement of the child-family-school relation. So that the relevance of the selected items would be more obvious we identified more sub-items for each aspect.

Hereby, for the vocabulary development of the students, we had interesting result from a school year to another, also to a correct expression, results obtained at the writing spell, the way the students read, and

also the individual reading. From the graphic below, for the first three items there is a pretty similar situation. At none of these first three items we obtained results higher than 50%, fact that denotes acute lack of exercise in individual reading. At the last sub-item we even observe a decrease of the individual supplementary reading capacity, from 16% to 14%; this leading us to think that the students are not sufficiently motivated for supplementary reading, even though Caritas has made available reading materials for them, volumes of universal and Romanian literature, stories books according to each and everyone’s age and capacity. Nevertheless, the students continue to make mistakes in spelling, punctuation and verbal expression. The conclusion we reached was that the students do not receive adequate and effective support from their families in order to be able to develop adequate behaviours to improve their verbal or written language.



**Table 2. Vocabulary development**

|  | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Correct expression                    | 37%       | 39%       |
| 2. Good results at spelling              | 21%       | 22%       |
| 3. Good reading and speech abilities     | 42%       | 43%       |
| 4. Reading individual supplemental books | 16%       | 14%       |

In terms of students' dependence to the permanent support from the teacher, social workers and volunteers in the making of their home works, this dependence has considerably increased from year to year. If, in 2007-2008 only 11% of the students would ask for help with their home works this percent will be 34% in 2008-2009. Nevertheless we think this increase has positive aspects, seeing it as a way of these students showing their interest for a correct solution for their home works. The penultimate sub-item from this category shows another positive result we achieved in our activities, that being the fact that fewer students delay the beginning of solving their home-works; only approximately a quarter of the students that participated at the actions organized with this purpose were preoccupied with other activities than the binding ones ( school tasks ). This aspect is correlated with the improved school results of the students, according to the statistics presented earlier.

Nevertheless, there is a negative aspect as well, aspect that refers to a frequent diminution of student's interest in their home work making. There will be percent of 43% in both two school years that were analyzed.

**Table 3. Common problems we encountered with in the home work making field**

|                                       | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Refuse to do their home works      | 34%       | 12%       |
| 2. Incorrect, partially and in hurry  | 23%       | 12%       |
| 3. Asks frequently for help           | 11%       | 34%       |
| 4. Delays the beginning of home-works | 55%       | 25%       |
| 5. Loses frequently interest          | 43%       | 43%       |

In terms of student socialization, our point of departure was to study the student's politeness with everyone around them. The number of polite students doubled from one year to another, fact that denotes the stu-

dents have learned adequate rules of conduct. Student's communication with people from around has improved in 2008-2009, considering that 23% of the students seek to make friends, to share their preferences, concerns and interests with the people from around (compared with 10% in 2007-2008). We consider that there are many factors belonging to the family environment that will not allow us in the future to achieve optimal results with the students from disadvantaged families. We also notice that there still is a large amount of students that do not externalize their feelings, do not wish to express their feelings, emotions, and preferences, therefore can not make friends.

**Table 4. Socialization**

|   | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Friendly and polite with everyone                | 17%       | 34%       |
| 2. Seeks friendship with people from around him/her | 10%       | 23%       |
| 3. Is quiet and internalized                        | 13%       | 44%       |

The item that refers to self-confidence of the students is the one that suffered most between 2007 and 2009, and that happened because the majority of the students feel inferior to the others; this aspect tends to increase from 50% to 60%, from a school year to the other, fact that shows us a new picture of the children we work with. This aspect might also offer adequate explanations for the aggressive behaviours of the students, for their vulgar language, and for their lack of involvement in the activities we developed, scarcely from the desire to assert among the others, even in a negative way, opposed to the moral and behaviour conduits that we try to implement between students.

However, approximately the same percentage of the students that participated at the activities had the courage to address questions, and also to express their feelings and necessities to the others, this showing that they are children with high self-esteem, capable of an adequate integration in the school and social context. We feel that it is absolutely necessary to see the possible cause that leads to these results: the family environment



of the students is, at most times, inadequate for their appropriate development, and also insufficient for the adequate development of the student's self-esteem.

**Table 5. Building confidence in their own forces**

|   | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Has the courage to address questions       | 10%       | 15%       |
| 2. Easily expresses his/her desires and needs | 20%       | 22%       |
| 3. Feels inferior to the others               | 50%       | 60%       |

The last item refers to improvement of child-family-school relation. Unfortunately, our results did not have the expected effects as seen in the graphic from down below, where we can point out the sad reality we are confronted with: lack of interest and implication from the families.

At the first two sub-items there can be seen a decrease of the parents participation at the meetings organized by teachers or at the meetings organized by the Socio-Educational Department of Caritas Cluj coordinator. There can be also observed a lack of cooperation from the parents in terms of helping their children with the school issues.

There can be seen a smaller percentage at the last sub-item for the school year of 2008 - 2009 - 54% - compared to 60% for the 2007 - 2008 school year, this showing

us lack of interest from the family. Our main goal for the next school years is to realize a "Parents school", to organize activities for family awareness in what concerns the family role in the child's school life.

**Table 6.. Improvement of the child-family-school relation**

|  | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Frequent attendance of the parents at the meetings    | 20%       | 23%       |
| 2. Parents cooperation in the children's problem solving | 33%       | 37%       |
| 3. Lack of interest from the family                      | 60%       | 54%       |

The results recorded in the graphic before reflect the situation of the participant students at the activities from the Socio-Educational Department of Caritas Cluj for the two years discussed. Observations made during these activities, along with the information from the initial, intermediary and final evaluation files filled by the teachers have formed the basis of students monitoring for the two school years.

**References:**

- [www.stirilelocale.ro](http://www.stirilelocale.ro)
- [www.presaonline.com](http://www.presaonline.com)
- [www.realitatea.net](http://www.realitatea.net)
- [www.unicef.org.ro](http://www.unicef.org.ro)



---

# ROMANIAN FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN COMMUNITY AND FAMILY, A PRACTICE MODEL CONTRIBUTING TO THE SCHOOL SUCCESS



**Adriana Podea**  
PhD Student  
Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca  
Faculty of Sociology and Social Work  
adrianapodea@ymail.com

## **Abstract:**

School success is an outcome that depends upon the partnership work between schools, families and other organizations that have a mission on improving the education for the children in need. FRCCF, the Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Family focuses on equal chances to education and improving school attendance and results for those children who are clients to its Community Centres. *The overall mission of the Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Family (FRCCF) is to support vulnerable and marginalized children so that they can grow in a safe family environment and benefit from the education and health care they need.* Those children that do not have the educational support at home and struggle in school can find this support at the FRCCF Community Centres. Being a nongovernmental organization, with 13 years of experience in child protection and social work, FRCCF developed intervention plans designed to meet the children's needs. In this article we present the results for 2009, of one of the FRCCF Community Centres, Dumbrava Roşie. After the provision of

*learning support and homework supervision, personal development group works, leisure activities, individual or group psychological counseling, tutoring and social care services, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the success of the personal educational plans showed that the situation of most children have been improved.*

**Keywords:** school success, vulnerable and marginalized children, intervention plans

## **Rezumat:**

*Succesul școlar este un rezultat care depinde de colaborarea între școli, familii și alte organizații care își propun să îmbunătățească educația copiilor care se află în dificultate. FRCCF, Fundația Română pentru Copii Comunitate și Familie, își centrează munca pe ideologia egalității șanselor la educație și își propune să ajute la îmbunătățirea prezenței în sistemul școlar a acelor copii care sunt beneficiari ai serviciilor pe care le propune. Misiunea fundației este aceea de a oferi sprijin acelor copii marginalizați și vulnerabili, pentru ca aceștia să se bucure de un mediu familial sigur și să beneficieze de educația și sănătatea de care au nevoie.*



Acei copii care nu primesc sprijin în familie în ceea ce privește educația și care au dificultăți la școală, pot să găsească acel sprijin în centrele comunitare ale FRCCF. Fiind o organizație nonguvernamentală, cu o experiență de peste 13 ani în protecția copiilor și asistență socială, FRCCF a dezvoltat pentru copiii beneficiari planuri personalizate de intervenție, construite în așa fel încât să răspundă nevoilor copiilor. În acest articol vom prezenta rezultatele obținute în 2009, de unul dintre centrele comunitare ale FRCCF, Centrul Comunitar Dumbrava Roșie. După oferirea de servicii cum ar: fi sprijin la teme, consiliere psihopedagogică și psihologică, activități de socializare și asistență socială, analiza cantitativă și calitativă a succesului planurilor de intervenție, ne indică faptul că situația majorității copiilor s-a ameliorat.

**Cuvinte cheie:** succes școlar, copii vulnerabili și marginalizați, planuri de intervenție

#### **Résumé:**

*La réussite scolaire est un résultat qui dépend du travail de partenariat entre les écoles, les familles et les autres organisations qui ont la mission d'améliorer l'éducation des enfants dans le besoin. La FRCCF, la Fondation Roumaine pour les Enfants, la Communauté et la Famille, met l'accent sur l'égalité des chances à l'éducation et sur l'amélioration de la fréquentation scolaire et les résultats des enfants qui sont clients de ses Centres Communautaires. Les enfants qui n'ont pas le soutien éducatif à la maison et qui se trouvent en difficulté à l'école peuvent trouver ce soutien après les heures scolaires, dans les centres communautaires de la FRCCF. Etant une organisation non gouvernementale, avec une expérience de plus de 13 ans dans la protection des enfants et dans l'assistance sociale, la FRCCF a développé pour ses bénéficiaires des plans personnalisés d'intervention, désignés pour répondre aux besoins de ces enfants. Dans cet article nous présentons les résultats de 2009, de l'un des centres communautaires de la FRCCF: le Centre Communautaire Dumbrava Rosie. Après la prestation de services de soutien tels que les*

*devoirs, les conseils psychopédagogiques et psychologiques, les activités sociales et de l'assistance sociale, analyse qualitative et quantitative de la réussite des plans, nous montrons que la situation de la plupart des enfants s'est améliorée*

**Mots-clefs:** réussite scolaire, enfants vulnérables et marginalisés, plans d'urgence

#### **1. Introduction**

In 2007, the authors of a study that tackles the school success issue, conclude after a reviewing six longitudinal studies, that academic abilities are one of multiple factors that influence school success (Duncan et al. 2007). This study highlights the fact that behavioural and school skills progresses could be indicators that can predict other important results linked to the academic environment, such as: the child's engagement in academic activities, school motivation, peer relationship and the relationship with the academic staff. It may be concluded that the general influence is upon the child's ability to commit and engage in the school activities and also to fit in the academic environment. An important observation in the above mentioned study is that the sample used in the research was chosen out of a population with general traits, that meaning that the study results do not apply to those children that have been diagnosed with learning difficulties or other behavioural issues or social problems. This study sums up that the most important factor in the prediction of school success is represented by the early academic experience and the child's abilities to maintain the attention span (Duncan et al, 2007). Surprisingly this study concludes that the behavioural components and the social problems that the children may face, did not have an impact upon the school success. However, the fact that the sample did not include those children that have got behavioural problems and social problems, may be the reason why the authors have got to those conclusions.

In 1994, Aston and McLanahan, conclude that school success is influenced by the



residential mobility of the families. Changing residence during the school year may influence the educational outcomes for children and may lead to school drop out those in high-school. Residential mobility is one of the issues that the FRCCF beneficiary have to deal with. In Aston and McAnahah study there is a link highlighted between the residential mobility of the families to the family structure with an emphasis on the fact that school success is also influenced by the family structure. The children that are raised by both of their parents are more likely to be successful in school than the children raised in lone parent families or families where there is a step parent (Coleman, 1988; Krein, Beller, 1988). Most children that are coming to the FRCCF centres are coming from single parent families or are raised by stepparents. Other researchers highlight the importance of the relationship between pupils and parent in achieving school success. According to these authors, a strong bond between pupil, parent and teacher may reduce the risks that vulnerable families are facing. (Lennox, 2006). For most children attending the FRCCF centres the relationship between school and parents is rarely one that brings educational benefits to the child. On one hand, the teachers not always manage to engage the parents in a working relationship and on the other hand, parents do not always show that they have an interest in their child educational environment. An international project starts off with a plan, focusing on the above idea. The *Step by Step Roma Special School Initiative* project, design a working model meant to have an influence on Roma children school success. The working model focuses on setting high expectations and trusting that the children can achieve. This working model has good results in countries such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia (Lee, Rona, 2001).

The Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Family, (FRCCF) is not aiming at a working under a special school for Roma children project, but sets out its goals to contribute to the school success of those

children that are vulnerable and marginalized. The foundation mission is to facilitate and protect the children's rights to grow up in a safe family and environment. The mission involves facilitating access to education and health services for those vulnerable children, in order for them to develop into healthy adults that can offer a safe environment to their future children. Having over 13 years of experience in child protection, the foundation aims at its objectives by working with the children and their families through its 7 community centres set out in Cluj County, Bihor County and Satu Mare County.

## **2. The Social Problems faced by the Dumbrava Rosie Community Centre Clients**

The social problems that the children attending the Dumbrava Rosie Community Centre (CCDR) are facing, are linked to the extremely low income of their carers. These children receive support from the multidisciplinary team with the aim of equipping the children with skills and abilities needed for school engagement. The children receive support in order for them to be more resilient from the educational point of view and also from a social point of view. The daily attendance to the community centres of a great number of children highlights the fact that the children do perceive that they receive help and support there, but also explains that they may find a refuge within the centres. By a child being enrolled to the centre, it means that the child agrees to participate to the centre's programmes and educational activities, social activities, counseling, all of this having the aim of facilitating school access, school engagement, school success, wellbeing and overall good development on all plans, not only the educational one. What exactly means a social problem for these children can be explained by seeing the FRCCF statistics. Half of FRCCF clients live under the minimum poverty level set out by the World Bank, meaning that they live on under one dollar/family member/day. The children live in a small home where they do not have the space to focus on their



education nor they receive support from parents in this respect. On average, more than 3 family members share a room and almost half of the families do not have a bathroom. (Raportul anual FRCCF, 2009). Therefore the risks that those children face are those of school abandonment as they do not have an adequate place at home to study and on the other side because they lack the parental support in this area. Due to these social realities, FRCCF opened the 7 Community Centres, to respond to these children and their families needs. Therefore, the services within these community centres are adapted to the clients' needs, focusing on social, psychological, legal, medical and educational support. There is also basic support ensured, such as daily food and transport tickets.

### 3. The children attending the CCDR

In 2009, CCDR, had on average, 99.25 monthly attendance. The children were of 7 to 16 years of age and their problems included poor school results, some of them were at risk of being expelled from school due to their school nonattendance, some of them were at risk of dropping out of school. In Graphic nr 1, we can graphically observe the number of the enrolled children during 2009 and we can see that the number differs from one month to the other. The annual average shows that the multidisciplinary team has worked with approximately 99 children per month.

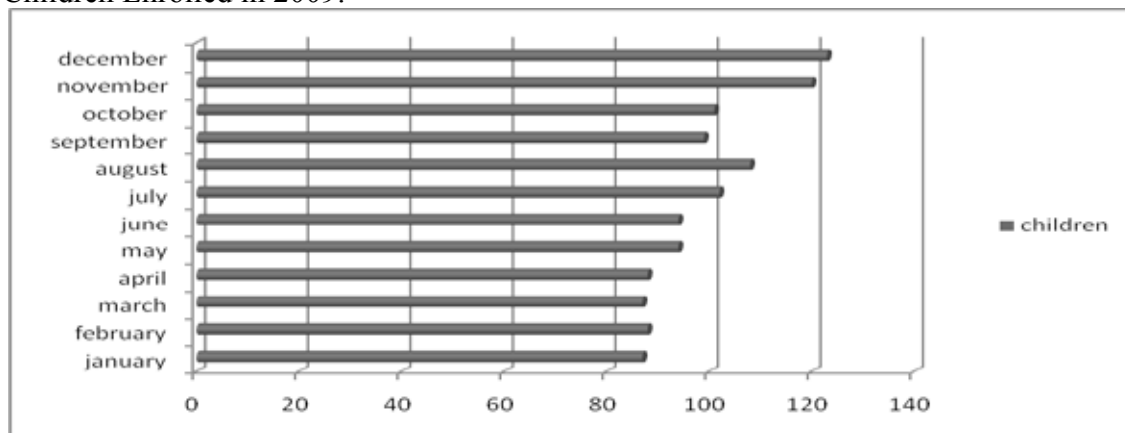
In January 2009, 87 children subscribed to the centre activities and towards

the end of the year this number increased by 36. The Graphic 2, shows that although there has been a monthly fluctuation during 2009, there still was consistency amongst the attendance of the children, this meaning that a great number of children participated to the activities throughout the year. Their presence though varies from one month to the other.

With those children that have had a consistency in their attendance at the CCDR during 2009, and most probably they have had this consistency even before 2009, there are visible results at the end of 2009 evaluations. In these cases, the personalized intervention plan has shown areas of success.

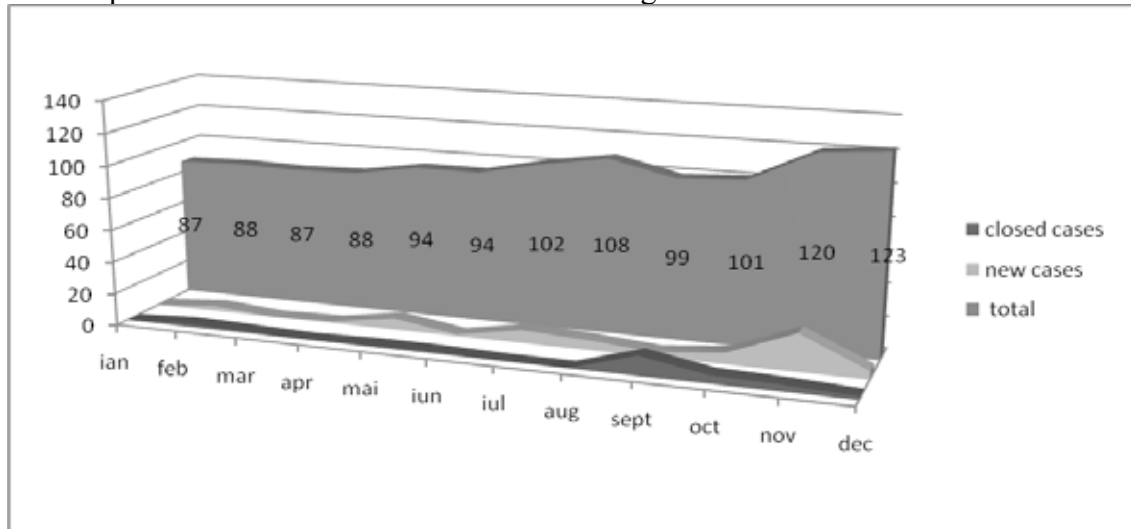
Enrolling new children to the CCDR centre depends upon factors such as the team actions of informing the community and recruiting new beneficiaries. It has been observed though during 2009, that the children that have a consistent presence throughout the year are bringing their friends to the centre, children that together with their families become beneficiaries of the CCDR. This is an indicator of the services quality. The fact that children recommend the centre to other children indicates that the CCDR is a resource for the community. Equally, there are factors that contribute to the lost of some beneficiaries. These may be linked to the family wishes and feelings of not allowing the children to continue attending the centre, others are objective factors, such as the family moving out of the area or the children growing up or no longer needing the service.

Graphic 1. Annual Average of Children Enrolled to CCDR, 99.25. Monthly Distribution of Children Enrolled in 2009.





Graphic 2. CCDR Children Fluctuation during 2009



#### 4. The Services Provided by CCDR that Have an Influence upon the School Success

The multidisciplinary assessment of the child and family allows drawing up an intervention plan. This is reflecting the child's needs and the ways the CCDR plans to respond to those needs. The PPI is an action plan that has a 6 month timescale. At the end of those 6 months new plans may be formulated to address the needs that are still not met. Other times, the PPI can be closed after six months, depending on the case circumstances and achieved goals. The services that build up the intervention are multidisciplinary and are focused on working with the child on a one to one basis and on a group intervention, working with the child's family and also with other agencies that are involved in the case. The home tuition service aims at improving the school results. This outcome is often difficult to measure, due to the fact that most children get to the centre with knowledge gaps that are from previous school years, and therefore the school results do not indicate the progress that is observed at the centre when these gaps are filled in. For example, the first year of secondary school children, that have average school results due to knowledge gaps from primary school years, although at the centre they fill in those gaps, the school results do not necessarily improve; these children encounter difficulties in coping with the fact that in secondary school they have more teachers with different

expectations, in comparison to the one school teacher from primary years.

Homework and tuition services are available to the children that are enrolled to the centre and those are personalized in the PPI. The services are offered by the two special educational counsellors together with the centre volunteers. This service is completed by the special educational counselling sessions, which are held in group or on a one to one basis, according to the child's needs. The PPIs are also completed by the socializing and spare time activities that have an important educational role. Those children that are dealing with psychological issues also benefit from psychological counselling.

Alongside these child focused intervention, the team also works on focusing on the family, by providing social work support and also psychological support to the parents and guardians. These services are also completed by the medical and legal counselling services where and if needed.

#### 5. The Quantitative Analysis of CCDR Results for 2009, from the Educational Point of View

In 2009, the PPIs results have been analysed at the end of the year, using the sample of those plans that were implemented during July 2009 and December 2009. From the sample have been excluded those plans that were for the children who had less than 20 days attendance during the specified period



of time. The results from the July 2009 and December 2009 period also reflect the work prior to this period, most of the PPIs analysed having objectives for the months before July 2009. Therefore the analysis focuses on met and unmet objectives due to the fact that some of the children had been less present at the centre than others, and the objectives for those children had been more difficult to be met. 52 PPIs have been included in the sample.

Table 1 focuses on a quantitative analysis of the educational objectives set out in the PPIs. Meeting those objectives could not have been possible without the provision of the social work support and psychological support aiming at: improving the children's attendance to the centre, increasing the knowledge of school importance for the child and the child's family and also improving the child's behaviour and ability to integrate to the centre.

Table 1. PPIs Educational Objectives Success<sup>20</sup>

| Met objectives - success grade | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulated Percentages |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|
| Valid                          | 4         | 7.7        | 7.7                   |
| 0%- 24%                        |           |            |                       |
| 25%- 49%                       | 10        | 19.2       | 26.9                  |
| 50%- 74%                       | 24        | 46.2       | 73.1                  |
| 75%- 100%                      | 14        | 26.9       | 100.0                 |
| Total                          | 52        | 100.0      |                       |

It is observed that out of the 52 PPIs from the sample, more than 70% had a success grade between 50% and 74%, this meaning that over half and up to three quarters of the set objectives had been met for over 70% of the sample. It is important to mention that the success grade is not necessarily reflected in the school grades. Due to this is necessary that a qualitative analysis of the services is required, the reasons for this being:

1. The children school nonattendance does not always coincide with centre non attendance. Therefore if the children miss school and attend the centre they continue with making progresses

that are not visible to the school teachers.

2. School absences are not always reflected in the school registers, this meaning that not all children that are missing out on school can be subjects to disciplinary action due to school non attendance.
3. Children are failing classes for which they do not receive specialized support at the centre: such as arts.
4. Some of the times the knowledge level does not coincide with the grades received in school. This may work in both ways, children receiving good enough marks when in fact they do not have the knowledge to pass the class or, they continue with receiving poor grades although they have improved at that certain level subject.

## 6. Exceptional results - qualitative analysis

In 2009, one of the FRCCF projects at CCDDR, included a total of 136 children. 100 of these children had a good attendance at the centre and they have benefited of PPIs. Out of these 100 children 12 have been at great risk of failing the school year, their grades have been poor. At the end of 2009 school year, these 12 children passed the school year. One of these 100 children had abandoned school and following the centre intervention the child has been reinserted into mainstream education and now attends school.

Other results are more difficult to measure. These are the observed daily progresses that the children make at the centre, by the fact that their attendance continues to grow and also by the fact that part of the children are doing their homework on their own without the need of great support throughout the hours spent at the centre.

## 7. Conclusions

Due to the factors highlighted above, it is essential to carefully consider the definition of school success for the children at CCDDR, children that are facing social prob-

<sup>20</sup> Table provided by special educational counsellor Lilibana Lobonea



lems. A school success for some of them is that they are engaging in the centre activities, they do their homework and they enrich their abilities. For others, school success may be that from one semestre to the other they make a progress from failing in 3 subjects to only failing at one. For other children success may be that they are reinserted in school after dropping out of school. For the most of them school success is having a good grade after being at risk of failing in a subject and for the majority of the children the school success can be measured in the following years as they now develop learning skills and educational abilities, they integrate and conform to the group learning environment and also develop personally.

Working models such as the one initiated by FRCCF, have a great influence upon the children academic progress and also upon their social development. It is necessary that mainstream education becomes more actively involved, as communitary centres do not replace the mainstream education. The intervention plans that are set out for the FRCCF children are not extended in the school day to day programme. Focusing on the child individual need in schools, alongside after school services provision, may even more contribute to maintaining children in school. Working together for the child's best interests and supporting the child to meet his best potential (an ideology from the Working Together Framework, within the child protection system in the United Kingdom) may offer a starting point towards building an interdisciplinary intervention that is lead by active involvement of both governmental and non governmental agencies.

## References:

- Aston, N. M., McLanahan, S. (1994). Family Structure, Residential Mobility and School Drop Out, A Research Note. In: *Demography*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 575–584;
- Department of Health, Home Office, Department for Education and Employment. (1999). *Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*;
- Duncan, G.J., Dowsett, C.J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A.C., Klebanov, P., Pagani, L.S., Feinstein, L., Engel, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sexton, H., Duckworth, K., Japel, C. (2007). School Readiness and Later Achievement. In *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 1428-1446;
- Fundația Română pentru Copii Comunitate și Familie. (2009). *Raport anual*. <http://www.frccf.org.ro/Raportanual2009ro.pdf>
- Lennox, T. J. (2006, December). Building Social Capital in Vulnerable Families Success Markers of a School-Based Intervention Program. In: *Youth Society*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 155-176;
- Lee, L., Rona, S. (2001). *School Success for Roma Children, Step by Step Schools Initiative, Interim Report*. New York: Open Society Institute;
- Reali, Aline M. M. S. R., Tancredi, Regina M. S. P. (2003). *School - Family Relationships and School Success: Some Lessons from a Teacher Education Program*, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL; <http://www.frccf.org.ro>  
<http://web.worldbank.org>



---

# THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL EDUCATION IN PROMOTING THE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN



**Alina Georgeta Mag**  
Department for the training of teachers, the  
“Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu  
magalina@gmail.com

*“Mankind owes it to children to offer them the best of what there is to offer”*

**Abstract:**

*Recent studies in developmental psychology have emphasized that the child well-being is crucial to the general development and affects all mental processes. The mental and the emotional health of a child, as its state of imbalance, depend directly and immediately on the quality of the education system, on its offered values and on the way of (how to) assimilating them. The children can have mental and emotional health problems, which affect how they think, feel and act. A model of intervention for the optimization of the educational relations and the promotion of healthy development of children is represented by the emotional education. The basic idea is that teachers should work with their own emotions and the emotions of children to bring more joy in educational relationships, to reduce stress and to educate adaptive behavior. This article aims to bring to the attention of teachers the need of practicing emotional education in kindergartens and schools for the well-being of children, so important for their mental and emotional health. Teachers*

*should be sensitized and trained through training programs to help children develop their emotional competencies from early years. Emotional education benefits are visible long-term and enhance children's chances of having a balanced and healthy development.*

**Keywords:** *emotional education, healthy development, self confidence development, training programs*

**Rezumat:**

*Studii recente în domeniul psihologiei dezvoltării au subliniat că starea de bine a copilului este decisivă pentru dezvoltarea lui generală și influențează toate procesele psihice. Sănătatea mentală și emoțională a unui copil, ca și stările de dezechilibru ale acestuia, depind în mod direct și imediat de calitatea sistemului de educație, de valorile oferite acestuia și de modul de asimilare a lor. Copiii pot avea probleme de sănătate mentală și emoțională, care le afectează modul cum gândesc, simt și acționează. Un model de intervenție pentru optimizarea relațiilor*



educaționale și promovarea dezvoltării sănătoase a copiilor îl reprezintă educația emoțională. Ideea de bază este ca profesorii să lucreze cu propriile emoții și cu emoțiile elevilor pentru a aduce mai multă bucurie în relațiile educaționale, pentru reducerea stresului și educarea comportamentelor adaptative. Articolul de față își propune să aducă în atenția cadrelor didactice necesitatea practicării educației emoționale în grădinițe și școli pentru asigurarea stării de bine a copiilor, atât de importante pentru sănătatea lor mentală și emoțională. Profesorii trebuie sensibilizați și pregătiți prin programe de formare pentru a veni în sprijinul dezvoltării competențelor emoționale ale copiilor cât mai de timpuriu. Beneficiile educației emoționale sunt vizibile pe termen lung și sporesc șansele copiilor de a avea o dezvoltare echilibrată și sănătoasă.

**Cuvinte cheie:** educație emoțională, dezvoltarea sănătății, dezvoltarea stimei de sine, programe de training

#### **Résumé:**

*Des études récentes en psychologie du développement infantile ont souligné que le bien être des enfants est cruciale pour le développement global mental et affecte également tous les processus physiques. La santé mentale et émotionnelle de l'enfant, ainsi que ses états de déséquilibre, dépendent directement de la qualité du système éducatif, des valeurs offertes par ce système et de la façon dont ces valeurs sont assimilées. Les enfants peuvent avoir des problèmes de santé mentale et émotionnelle, qui affectent leur façon de penser, sentir et agir. Un modèle d'intervention pour l'optimisation des relations éducatives et la promotion du développement sain des enfants est représenté par l'éducation émotionnelle. L'idée de base de ce modèle est que les enseignants doivent travailler avec leurs propres émotions et les émotions des enfants afin d'apporter plus de joie dans les relations éducationnelles, réduire le stress et améliorer l'éducation des comportements adaptatifs. Cet article vise à porter à l'attention des enseignants en*

*exercice le besoin d'une éducation affective dans les écoles maternelles et primaires pour le bien-être des enfants tellement important pour leur santé mentale et émotionnelle. Les enseignants doivent être sensibilisés et formés dans le cadre des programmes de formation pour aider les enfants dès le plus jeune âge. Les bénéfices de l'éducation émotionnelle sont visibles à long terme et augmente les chances des enfants d'avoir un développement équilibré et sain.*

**Mots-clefs:** éducation affective, développement sain, développement de confiance en soi, programmes de formation

#### **Introduction**

Each of us steps into life with a variety of abilities and we contribute to the diversity of life. The individual differences are the resources for an efficient and productive contemporary education, and the diversity of our children means the prosperity of our school and of our society. Children are the true treasures of life. On observing them, sometimes gradually, other times in a rush, stepping together with them in the journey of knowledge – we discover with great emotion in their eyes the sparkle of the longing to learn and to express themselves; this is an exceptional gift for the teachers.

The diversity of intelligence types, of learning styles, of interests, of children's social and emotional characteristics make the teachers richer in teaching methods and methods for creating a study environment for a wide range of educational needs. All children need and deserve to be educated by means of a motivating, pleasant, creative and attractive process. These types of activities allow them to engage themselves, to be actively involved and to interact with the ones around them, giving a meaning to education.

Children are fascinating and extremely important – these are two good reasons to wish to discover more about them. They are fascinating because they resemble the adults, but at the same time are different from the latter: on the one hand, they have the potential to develop the entire range of human abili-



ties, which they value at maturity, and on the other hand, they have their own abilities and requests that are specific to every age, needs that need to be satisfied. Children are fascinating because the essence of childhood is the change. To try to understand the mechanisms that form the basis for this change represents an interesting activity out of the intellectual point of view and at the same time it is useful for the educational aspect (Schaffer, R. H., 2007, p. 2). That is why it is important to understand “what it is that sets children going”.

The parents and the teachers are the most important people in the life of the little ones. In order for a child to grow up healthy and happy, it is highly important that his/her social and emotional needs are really understood and respected. If we wish to create a healthy society in which people should integrate and cooperate, we must build collaboration relationships that are coherent and constructive between parents and teachers, and the parents must play an active part in respective the needs of their children, both at home and in the school environment.

### **About emotions and the emotional education of children**

Emotions are very important. There is uncountable proof indicating that feelings are the most powerful resources which the human being is endowed with. Researchers claim that the period of time in which a person laughs, smiles and talks to the ones around him/her is benefic for one's health. In these moments of relaxation certain chemical substances called “endorphins” are released into the organism and these strengthen the immunity system. Emotions give us self consciousness, helping us to know ourselves and the others, to communicate. They tell us which the essential things in life are – the persons, values, activities and the necessities that motivate us, give us ambition, and help us cultivate self control and perseverance.

Recent studies have drawn the attention especially on social and emotional abilities of children. The state of wellness of the small child is decisive for his/her general de-

velopment and influences all psychical processes. These abilities have a role that is so important in the healthy development of the little one, that the parents and the other persons involved in his/her education must be well informed as to the problematic of their acquisition as early as possible.

Children learn about emotions especially in the context of relationships. Interpersonal relationships that are close are invariably emotional “affairs” – full of love or hatred, of pride or of shame, sadness or joy and during the interaction with the others, children have the opportunity to observe not only how other people react to their emotions and feelings, but also how their own emotional behavior affects the others. These represent some of the most important experiences which the child can benefit from view of the adjustment within society and of his/her mental health. (Schaffer, R.H., 2007, p.124).

There are three aspects that are considered the most important:

- *the conscience of one's own emotional status* – children must learn that under specific conditions, they live a certain emotion, must recognize what they feel with regard to that specific emotion, how they express themselves to the exterior and which label to attach to it, so as to be able to speak about it; the beginnings of this sophisticated performance can be noticed from very early ages;

- *the control over the exterior expression of one's own emotions* – all societies have rules regarding to what is acceptable as to the way of expressing one's emotions; this is expressed most evidently in the case of aggressiveness, which must be drained into ways that are not disruptive for social life; the same, in some cultures, the too obvious expression of joy and of pride is also discouraged; that is why, children must learn to dissociate between internal feelings and the exterior expression of the latter, which constitutes an important aspect of their socialization;

- *the recognition of feelings in the others* – the ability to “read” the feelings of others from their behavior represents an essen-



tial part of social relationships; the identification of an emotion by its exterior expression and the understanding of what someone feels when acting in a certain way, makes the children capable to respond accordingly; therefore, family experiences can be then applied also in other situations.

The emotions are a constant present in our daily life, but science has postponed analyzing them. Initially, emotions were conceptualized only under negative terms – like disruptive processes which interfere with the efficient functioning of people. The positive vision is quite recent, and this considers that emotions have a clearly defined role for the promotion of development and adaptation and that, above all, they are an essential part of interpersonal relationships. The emotional development of children represents today an extremely intense field of research, and, as a consequence, the knowledge as to the nature of this grows very rapidly. All emotions have adapting value of a certain kind and all serve to useful settling functions, intrapersonal and interpersonal (Gottman, J. and DeClaire, J., 1997). Emotions have a biological basis, being a part of the born equipment of the human being. Even from the first weeks of life, one can identify more basic emotions, while others appear later on, in certain moments of ontogenesis, for instance the sense of the self, which is formed only after the first year of life.

Children do not only live the emotions, but they also think of them. Once they become capable of speaking, they can name them, reflect on them and talk them over with others. Moreover, starting with the third year of life, they can make interferences as to the internal states of other people, becoming more and more capable of understanding the causes for other people's emotions and to anticipate their consequences. This facilitates the construction of a sophisticated theory as to the causes for which people act in a certain way, leading to the acquisition of certain complex "mind-reading" abilities.

The emotional development is shaped by social experiences, and this can be best no-

ticed when comparing emotion "expression rules" which children of various cultures acquire, that is the norms for expressing private emotions under specific circumstances. This process is stimulated by the conversations regarding emotions, at first with the parents and then with other children. These show that even very young children show great curiosity as to the motives for their own feelings and for those of the others. In the families in which such conversations appear frequently, children seem to be more developed as to the understanding of emotions than the ones from other families (Berry Brazelton, T. and Sparrow, J.D., 2008, p. 421).

The same way individuals differ at the level of intellectual competence, they also differ at the level of emotional competence. A very important component refers to the ability to adjust and control one's own emotions, because failure in acquiring such ability may have disastrous social consequences. If children cannot recognize the meaning of other people's emotional signals, they will encounter major difficulties in participating in interpersonal exchanges.

### **The necessity for social-emotional development at an early age**

In the complex and complicated world that we live in, dominated by the search for professional and personal success, people need first and foremost mental and emotional balance. The research in the field of psychology has shown that a high level of intellectual abilities (IQ) can significantly contribute to good results in various fields, such as the school, but it is not sufficient for well adjustment and it also does not provide success in life. The research performed mostly in the United States have revealed the fact that a much greater number than expected, of extremely intelligent pupils/ students (with the IQ much above the average) have failed as grown ups in their professional and personal life, as compared to the ones having intermediate levels of IQ. The conclusions have proved that, even though intellectual abilities are highly important, emotions represent a



source of essential information for survival. The affective feelings play a determinant role in the process of adjustment and of reaching success in life (Gottman, J. and DeClaire, J., 1997).

Whereas adults do not speak openly of their emotions and no one shows what he/she feels, children learn that expressing their emotions and speaking freely about them is inadequate and represents even a sign of weakness. Unfortunately, Romanian cultural patterns express this tendency. Children from our kindergartens and schools rarely express their feelings, because they learn even as small children to suppress them. If the teachers also ignore the expression of their emotions, young people from our society are expected to be problematic.

The parents are the first who contribute to the development of emotional abilities of children, by expressing their own emotions in the family, by their reactions and behavioral response to his/her emotions and by creating contexts in which they speak of emotions. The educators, of course, continue this highly sensitive process in kindergarten. Children need first and foremost, affective security and appropriate education. But very few educators realize what the effect of children's emotional problems is. We must accept the fact that they are individuals with a personality different from our own. Each child is no one else but him/her, a unique and original being, whose needs and rights must be understood and respected in order to grow up and become a responsible adult (Elias, M. J., Tobias, S.E. and Friedlander, B.S., 2007, p. 17).

The purpose of emotional development is the gain of self identity and of the welfare of the small child. A happy child is a complete child of complete parents and of complete educators who have deep understanding of his/her emotional needs. In order to succeed in teaching the children to trust themselves, to build an image of themselves that is positive, we must support their emotional development.

### **Children's mental and emotional health**

A series of studies have demonstrated that success in life, mental and emotional health depends on the efficiency of early relationships. The social - emotional development represents the fundament of the relationships and interactions which give meaning to children's experiences from at home, from kindergarten, from the community. It significantly influences children's success in life and in school (Elias, M. J. et.al., 2007, p. 109). The welfare of the child is decisive for his/her general development and influences all psychical processes.

Children who learn very early to speak freely of what they feel, to think independently, to assume responsibilities, take decisions, express their point of view, because they have educators who offer them opportunities in which to express their own way of being and of feeling, without imposing any solutions on them, will also have very early confidence in their own abilities and will develop in a healthy manner. On the other hand, the ones who do not benefit from this kind of self-assessment from an early age, being excessively tutored, they will develop their docility, the obedience without reasoning or will have a very weak decision-taking power.

The mental and emotional health of a child, as well the unbalance status of the latter depends directly and immediately on the quality of the educational system, of the values that are offered to it and the way in which these are assimilated. It is significant how a child can adjust his/her wishes, ambitions, abilities, ideals, feelings and the conscience in order to cope with life's requirements. The inner world of the child is different from that of the adult. Adults are often mistaken when they try to impose their own way of thinking on children, instead of striving to understand the children's own way of thinking and feeling. Children can have problems of emotional and mental health which affects their way of thinking, feeling and acting in their further evolution. These problems are real, painful and they often limit their current or future abilities of being "productive". The emotional and behavioral unbalances can continue in



time and can become highly severe, leaving deep traces if not treated. A low self esteem is the most frequent symptom of emotional problems that is met amongst children.

All psychological functions of the child develop within the social context. The course of the development depends a lot on the adults that are responsible for his/her care. The main function of the relationship with the adults is that of offering them security, protection, of facilitating the acquirement of knowledge and abilities. The social relationships of the child form the capacity of trust, of easily interacting with the others and of recognizing several social roles. The interactions with his/her close ones play a central part in their social-emotional “health”, offering the feeling of stability, security and belonging.

Quite a great number of children cannot cope with the rhythm or the pressure that the parents or the teachers impose on them. They have low tolerance for frustration and can express aggressiveness, opposing behavior, unexplained fears, and dissatisfactions. Under the influence of stress, they can end up avoiding their friends or they encounter difficulties in expressing their feelings and become unconfident. They are being pushed aside by their colleagues, start becoming anxious, isolating themselves or they can develop deviant compensatory behavior. Stress can be felt very intensely by a child, being provoked by the fear of not failing, of not letting the others down, of not being labeled. This is a direct provocation of the survival instinct and entangles physical and chemical reactions. Too much stress, for a long period of time can be harmful, affects the immunity system and therefore there can appear the risk of illnesses (Dumitrescu, M. and Dumitrescu, S., 2005, p. 24).

The obstacles that come in the way of reducing the stress of the children – are the unrealistic expectations of the parents or of the teachers, the excess of information within a short period of time, disciplinary methods excessively based on punishment, the lack of the formation of the social – emotional abilities that are necessary in order to stand up to

the provocations encountered in one’s own life.

What can teachers do in order to help children? First and foremost, they need calm, peaceful, empathic persons, who should relate to them in an adequate manner, to give up on criticism, punishments and to immediately reward even the smallest success, proving sensitiveness in the relationships with the others, encouraging them to express their opinions, desires freely, to act independently, to learn how to solve on their own certain personal problems, to take decisions, without having the solutions being imposed on them.

In the professional literature there are recommended some general strategies of adjustment to stress: positive thinking, efficient time organization, learning some efficient methods for solving conflicts, the development of a healthy life-style. The stress adjustment strategies can be centered on emotions (reducing the emotional tension) or centered on the problem (modifying the situation). In kindergarten, all these recommendations are possible if the teachers offer the children a warm, calm environment, and some “quality” time when the children can enjoy all their attention, sharing pleasant and relaxing activities (Dumitrescu, M. and Dumitrescu, S., 2005, p. 73).

The healthy interactions between the teacher and the child are the basis for emotional education. The specialty studies claim that what we learn of relationships and emotions in early childhood – when our central system is growing most rapidly – is “engraved” in our neuronal connections. Just like learning foreign languages, the new emotional competences can be acquired also later in life, even though with a much greater effort. The assimilation rate is bigger in early childhood and that is why, as teachers, we have both the chance and the responsibility to significantly influence the emotional intelligence of our children (Gottman, J. and DeClaire, J., 1997, p. 20).

**The rights and the needs of children ... from the point of view of the adults**



Meeting the needs of all the children, we can support the development of a healthy life environment. *But how and when can we encourage children to express their uniqueness? Is the small child a miniature adult? Is he/she too small to express his/ her thoughts and feelings? Does anyone listen to his/ her point of view; can he/she have an opinion? Does anyone take it into consideration? Do the adults know the child's development needs? To what extent are the thoughts and feelings of children visible in Romanian school system? Do all children have opportunities to learn and express their own thoughts, feeling and opinions? Are the classes in kindergarten and in school occasions to express their emotions? Does the family represent a frame for the free expression of children's emotions? What barriers keep the little ones from expressing their emotions?*

To these questions the answer seems simple, even though it is so complicated. Declaratively, all adults have good intentions, but in fact, the child remains a helpless being, that the adults sometimes forget about, or, even worse, impose ill treatment on, which in their view seem to do good. The small one must obey unconditionally. There where education does not have a solution, the stick does, say some adults. The relationship between the adult and the child has very frequently rules established only for the child.

Most people can help children reach a functional maturity, but we are all deficient, one way or the other, in offering our children an optimal environment for emotional development. The development of our basic emotional ensemble is established in layers throughout the first seven years of our life. The models offered here are not necessarily definitive; anyway, emotional learning is much stronger at this age due to the accentuated openness and to the vulnerability of children. When, during each stage, the emotional needs of a child are fulfilled, the ground for intelligent emotional answers is set, which will become automatic and spontaneous later on in life.

Adults have many prejudices when it

comes to children... They believe that due to the lack of experience, these do not know what is right and what is wrong, or how to solve a problem. Children are but not only the future, but also the present, and they have the right to freely express their emotions and thoughts... Not granting them their right, comes from the pride and the mentality that a child cannot think, feel or act as an adult. And still reality confirms that the little ones have attitudes, abilities and the necessary information, in order to take decisions. The nowadays children are the generation that will think that there is the possibility that a small child can figure out solutions, even to the complicated problems of the adults. In this sense, we must also change our way of thinking. We must understand that, by promoting the children, and helping them to fulfill their plans, we will also have something to gain as teachers, as well as the parents, and the entire society that we live in, because this is how we progress more and more visibly.

The rights of the child are a law and are especially designed to meet their needs for development. If these are not respected, they do not value more than some mere pieces of paper. Even though granted by the state, we still confront ourselves with numerous breaches of the children's rights, consciously or due to inherited conservative way of thinking or one functioning due to inertia. An example as such is the breach of the child's right to free expression. Thoughts and emotions are the direct way of expressing one's personality. Unconditioned obedience and discipline based on constraints and interdictions breaches the right to choose, the right to free expression and to free living, stifling the child's creativity.

We often realize that in our kindergartens, children do not play enough outside, do not run or do not make noise, do not ask questions, because they are not granted this perspective. When they are 4 years old, they sit around small tables, filling in work sheets on several themes like some small pupils. Static activities prevail more than the dynamic ones. In their works from the exhibi-



tions, clichés abound, as well as works having the same theme, the same shapes and the same colors, used by the entire group in many cases. Evidently, knowing the child's rights is not enough if treated with indifference.

There is a negative aspect of education, which is started early and appears as a consequence of the excesses that it implies by forming an almost complete dependency on it. Unfortunately, in our kindergartens and schools there is popular a culture of dependency and of relating to what others believe or do, of trusting more what others do than your own deeds. This is where all the ones get who were not taught as small children to express their feelings, to think independently, to take decisions, to be responsible of their actions, who have not learnt that what they do on their own is more important, because their teachers did not offer them the necessary opportunities, but on the contrary, have limited their freedom (Cucos, C., 2008, p. 89).

Children's rights are often disregarded in kindergarten and in school. Unfortunately, in many families they undergo the same treatment. They are used to obedience due to fear, their freedom is limited, certain directions for thinking or personal action are imposed on them, the adults being the ones deciding in almost all matters for them. The problem arises then, when being teenagers or even later, they cannot decide or do nothing because they were not trained in that respect, because they have not been shown the way or they were not allowed to say what they think or what they want to do at a certain moment. These children always wait that someone from the outside comes to value everything they do, that someone should give them a hint.

Children need adults who should support their free expression; to offer them the resources they need, including those of informational nature, to appreciate and to use the results of this process. Naturally, the inner feelings of children are valuable; their vision on their own problems is original, lacking the rigidity and the influence of the research activity in the field. Not granting the necessary attention to the emotions of a child, the lack of support, of help, giving too little informa-

tion comes to complete the picture of an inefficient relationship between the adult and the child.

Small children need support, but at the same time, they need autonomy and the feeling of becoming responsible. If they do not have from an early age such an exercise of thinking and of personality affirmation, the impact at further levels will be a negative one that is difficult to recover. Teachers should respect their rights and to understand their specific needs from an early age, to grant importance to early responsibility, autonomy, implication and child evaluation.

The educational relationship is efficient to the extent that it leads the child to self-discovery, in the perspective of a natural evolution, according to his/her way of being, not one imposed by the teacher. The little ones must be educated in the sense of freedom, without understanding by this an exaggerated freedom, but rather that of taking over the responsibility for one's own destiny. Education must teach them to orientate autonomously in their own spiritual landscape. It is best if we teach them to think for themselves, independently, to teach them how to learn, to ask questions, to raise problems, in order to evolve naturally towards knowledge. The teachers should leave the children freedom to decide regarding their own person and to choose on their own between more variants, not to oblige or constrain anyone, not to force themselves into one's soul, but rather to be a much more discrete presence (Cucos, C., 2008, p. 84).

### **How do adults support the self confidence of children?**

The way in which we are raised has a huge impact on us. All the customs and the rules that have held the supremacy in our environment while growing up influence the way in which we see the world today and sets its imprint on the values that we transmit to the young generation today. We notice that the traditional growth and education methods no longer fit in the nowadays times. The little ones prefer activities that the parents are not



used to, request information that the latter do not have, they want something else from life. What makes the difference? The children need our presence, our support, they want to make us a part of the experiences in their life, but seen through their point of view. The adults need to understand that there are other options, that what they used to want when they were children no longer coincides with the needs of the nowadays children, that the little ones are beings capable of trust and can be trusted, just like the “grown-ups”. They are smaller in height, but their openness to the world is the other way proportional with their dimension. Let us learn to listen to them and to respect their emotions and opinions, to trust them and to be near them when they need it.

### **Influences on the development of the self esteem**

Let us try to imagine how a child really feels when he/she is told things like “you are too little, you cannot know...” Which will be his/her future attitude when he/she is to hear the same remarks from other people, which will be his/her expectations from himself/herself? These affirmations hurt and generate resistance attitudes, of passiveness or of stubbornness from the child, attitudes which are fully justified.

Each child has needs, wishes and emotions. A child’s later attitude towards life depends on the way these are received, on the experiences that the child lives in his/her relationships with the persons from his/her immediate environment. If the emotions and his/her thoughts are not taken into consideration, the child grows up without confidence in his/her own forces.

Each gate in himself/ herself is “*an opinion on one’s own person*” originating in the narrow space of childhood and it develops according to the impressions coming from the outside. “The opinion” which is at the basis of the image on life of a person, determining his/her ideas, feelings, will and deeds is the image of the self. In order to form an image of the self as positive as possible, it is necessary to encourage the expression of emotions

from early childhood, to use the child with responsibilities and with taking decisions even as a small child, and also to stimulate all initiatives which come from his/her side.

### **Why is it important to listen to small children?**

Children must learn from early childhood to express their feelings and thoughts which affect their life directly. Regardless of our role in the society, regardless if we are factors of decision or members of the community, teachers or parents, we have a lot to gain if we listen to the children. They have the right to be actively involved in all problems that concern them. By allowing them to tell what they feel and think, we can obtain important benefits:

- we will have children who feel strong and responsible for their lives;

- we will have a better protection of children against the abuse and violence, since this type of things come out much easier then when they know how to react;

- we will strengthen democracy, because when children are respected for their opinions as children, they discover the importance of respecting the opinions of others and begin to understand the processes and the values of democracy, fighting racism and the discrimination forms, and they learn what tolerance means;

- we will take better decisions as teachers if we take into consideration the impact of these decisions on the life of the children.

It is necessary to change the attitudes and the convictions, to gain competences in the positive emotional education of all the ones who are responsible for respecting the rights of the little ones. Promoting a positive discipline in which the child is treated as a person who has his/her own emotions and opinions, whose participation in the decisions that are taken for him/her is promoted as a normal way of relating to people, representing the guarantee of success in order to change the general mentality and in order to guarantee that his/her rights are respected. The more early ways of stimulating these potentials there are, the more their existential experi-



ences will be more valuable. Therefore, there grows the potential profit forecasted by the purpose of self knowledge and of the abilities to establish harmonious relationships with the others.

By encouraging the expression of emotions starting from early childhood offers the children real chances of being understood and respected, but most of all, the chance of developing healthily:

- they can bring a unique source of information and proof regarding the nature of their relationship experience;
- can bring information related to the complexity of their social life, the dilemmas they are confronted with, the options they make, that the adults maybe do not see or do not want to see;
- children who are granted these powers will feel more confident to talk and express what they feel or think about a problem;
- children can make their problems more visible, which helps the improvement of the teacher's responsibility;

#### **A new pattern of intervention**

It is well known that the adults relevant in their lives (parents, grandparents, and teachers) are role models who they copy without issuing assessments. Therefore, it is preferable that the models they can copy should offer as many examples of adjusting behavior as possible, reducing this way the risk of taking over some less favorable habits. A new model of intervention for a healthy development of the children is the emotional education, as a starting point in the construction of the relationships with the children.

Even though we believe that we know how to relate to the little ones, very often this is subjective and it is not based on real arguments. The relationship competences are aspects of one's personality that can be trained and developed continuously. Therefore, educational relationships with the little ones will continue to improve. By perfecting ourselves, we will permanently enjoy the benefits of a more efficient relationship, of more understanding, affection, respect, authority, more

confidence in ourselves; we will feel more enthusiastic, having more energy and being more motivated. The relational competences play a more important part than one would believe. A series of studies have demonstrated that success in life, mental and emotional health depends on the efficiency of relationships. The psychological effect of an efficient relationship extends and persists a long time after this ends (Schaffer, H.R., 2007, p.125).

Emotional education is necessary in order to optimize the relationships between the teacher and the child. We need emotional intelligence in all relationships in our life. But there is no other relationship as provocative, requiring better self-knowledge or causing us to wish for further development than this. And, since the quality of a child's development depends on the quality of our relationship with him/her, we should be most preoccupied with how to use emotional education in order to insure an optimal interaction with the little ones. Children must feel comfortable, safe and understood in the relationships they have with us. This environment will give them the possibility to express their thoughts, emotions and to find solutions to their problems.

Firstly, in order to administrate as efficiently as possible the relationship with the children, it is necessary to optimize our own abilities to relate to the other adults. This knowledge and these abilities can be then transferred successfully to the early educational relationships. The abilities of the adults are reflected first and foremost in the relationships they have with the little ones. The more emotionally balanced they are, adjusted perfectly to the requirements of the environment, the more this will be observed in the way in which they behave with respect to the children (Elias, M.J. et al., 2007, p.81).

The relationship with little ones can be optimized by means of emotional education. The basic idea is that teachers should work with their own emotions and with the emotions of the children in order to bring them more joy in the educational relations, in order to reduce stress and to train the ad-



justment behavior. A high level of emotional self-knowledge helps us first and foremost to understand our own selves, and then to relate to the others, in order to understand them better. This way, it is much easier to inspire and motivate the children.

The emotional education concentrates on understanding one's own being and that of the behavior, on expressing positive emotions and the acceptance of the negative ones. Therefore, children have the opportunity of becoming more powerful, emotionally speaking, during this process. It is only this way that they can adjust in a world which is constantly moving and constantly changing. This dimension of the personality has been ignored for a long period of time. The emotionally trained children become more open, more optimistic; they become healthy in terms of their emotions.

It has been noticed that a good relationship between the pedagogue and the child has multiple implications. First and foremost, the pedagogues who build relationships with the children, based on respect and trust, have fewer difficulties in keeping the order and succeed more easily in getting the children involved in the group activities. On the other hand, a secured relationship of attachment has positive effects on the ones that come from different families with problems. The pedagogue's attitude can compensate the lacks of family and can help the children adapt, emotionally and socially, with great success.

It is important to keep in mind that we interact with children that come from different kind of families, with different life stories. Any improper behavior of a child does not stand for a defiance addressed to us, but rather the result of some diverse problems in their families, delays in the improvement of some capacities or difficulties in dealing with their own emotions. In order to work with the children, including the most difficult ones, it is necessary to have an active involvement in the development of a positive relationship with them. Building a relationship of cooperation pedagogue - child based on trust and the children's feeling of unconditioned accep-

tance are essential for the development and the optimization of their social and emotional abilities. Moreover, starting with the age of 3, most of the children spend much time at the kindergarten. Here, most of the problems come out of the fact that the little ones did not form their emotional and social abilities.

The main emotional and social abilities are the capacity of interaction and start playing with the others, of cooperation, of understanding the others' emotions, to ask for and offer their help, of emotional self-control. All these abilities are part of the child's process of growing up and have an adaptive role (Elias, M.J. et al., 2007, p.156). Some children do not develop such abilities, because the pedagogues highlight their cognitive capacities. These come along with positive emotional feelings of the little one, of which not all adults are aware and fail in communicating with the child, at the moment he deals with a failure. Or, there are cases when the behavior issues are not so important, when it comes to the school results. The children are different from an intellectual point of view, as much as they differ in their emotional reactivity. We need to accept each child the way he is and love him unconditionally.

Which are the real ways for building a positive relationship with the children? The proposed intervention pattern, that of bringing efficiency in the relationships by means of their emotional education is being developed in more stages: the pedagogue becomes aware of the child's emotion; he understands that emotion as an opportunity for getting the relationship stronger and for the learning process, as well; he listens, with empathy, and agrees with his feelings; helps him to find the proper words in order to classify what he feels and supports the process of solving the problem. If we want to succeed in offering an emotional education to the little ones, we need to show an intelligent emotional and pro social behavior. Thus, the children who are emotionally trained are better members of the society, have better friendships, they learn better, they deal better with the negative states of mind and have greater chances



to choose their own behavior, that will bring about the success in the relationships with the others.

Some strategies of improvement for the relationships with the children that are based on the emotional education:

- Gather as much information as possible referring to the children in the group - we simply cannot build a relationship with another person, if we do not make the effort of finding out about the things he likes and keep them in mind. In the relationship with the children in the group, try to notice which are their preferred activities or toys, which are their best developed capacities, how they emotionally react, which are the extra-curricular activities that they are involved in or find out their date of birth.
- Teach the children about the emotions – the emotional intelligence means, first of all, to observe the emotions, to find a name for them, to recognize them in yourself and in the others. The vocabulary of emotions can be learned any time one finds the proper moment, or by creating special occasions. The teacher can come up with games, where children are asked to recognize emotions or to speak about what they feel. There are images or puzzles, games with girls or boys who cry, laugh, are scared or angry;
- Listen to what the children have to say – encourage them to speak and to express themselves, by showing that you are interested in their thoughts and emotions. Thus, you will be able to build easier friendship relationships and let them know you better;
- Discuss with the children and the gesticulation language – when working with the children, the proper transmittal of the messages is very important. A hug, a pat, a smile or a joke can be relevant sources for building the relationship pedagogue – child.
- Involve yourself in the game – the game offers them the possibility to show their feelings, being the context that gives them a feeling of comfort and safety. It is advisable to take advantage of such circumstances. The reason is simple: the game brings you to the same level with them and helps to gain their trust. The relationship pedagogue – child is unequal, when you represent an authority, but your involvement in the game helps balance the situation. You must allow the children “lead” the game – the activities of such free game allow them to express themselves the way they want. In order to respect their independence, it is advisable for you not to impose the game. The children need situations of own thinking and decision making. Moreover, this way you let them feel the trust you have, in regard to the choices they make. Be creative – do not be afraid of being frisky. You can use a microphone-toy to announce their entering the kindergarten. You can use a “magic wand”, for making the stories book appear. Here are only a few examples of benefic attitudes for the children’ good state of mind. These can help you build the relationship of trust that you need;
- Praise the children anytime they express their emotions – it is advisable to show your enthusiasm anytime they express their thoughts and emotions. It is important to transmit your approval by gestures. You need to praise and encourage anytime you can: “I am very proud of you, that you told us what you felt when you told us the story!” These are ways of proving to the child, when he tell us what he feels, that we notice the emotions he felt and that we agree with them;
- Teach the children to recognize the others’ emotions – they can be taught how to recognize the others’ emotions, which involves the observation of the mimicry, of body language, the listening of the voice tone, the understanding of the context;
- Teach the children the emotions’ vocabulary – in order to better perceive the own emotions and the others’, as well, it is necessary to know words that stand for the emotions;
- Give the children emotional support and lead – sometimes, the little ones cannot express exactly what they feel, instead they can show what they feel by their behavior or even by physical symptoms. We do not have to concentrate on these symptoms only, but we need to try to



understand their emotional needs. It is advisable to be near the child, by giving him the emotional support he needs, and by showing that we understand his pain. To talk to him: “I realize it hurts!”, “I understand you need more time!”, “You are right, it is very sad what has happened”;

- Involve the parents in the education of the children – speak to them about the emotional needs of their children. Encourage them to continue the emotional education within the family.

The training of the emotions is built on empathy, trust and leads to closer relations between children and adults. By becoming trainers of the emotions we invest in the future of the children, which can have long-term benefits.

### **Emotional education – the chance for healthy development**

Children are always the same, regardless of the age they live in. The world has reached nowadays a level that is more favorable to human development, to the development of the technical-scientific and of the cultural-educational aspects, the communication and information degree having grown exponentially. We must only reach out with more consideration to the ones next to us, to listen to the children, to fight for justice, for principles and for values. Then, we will be neither little, nor big, but citizens. The rules, the laws, the rights must be learnt, and what is even more important, they must be respected. They must be respected, even if the little ones do not know how to protest or to defend themselves.

By respecting the needs for development of the children, we have the chance of a new beginning, we can regain essential universal values for peace, justice and welfare. It is necessary to leave out the uncertainties of the childhood history, in which the little ones were victimized, abused and even killed. It is necessary to study the sources of modern democracy, the Convention for children’s rights and to look confidently towards a cleaner future in terms of the moral aspects. The rights of the children constitute the basis of the ex-

istence and of the coexistence of mankind, by which we define ourselves as human beings. The history of the children’s rights is in fact the history of the fight for principles.

According to the concept of this paper, children who learn even from early childhood to express their emotions and thoughts, to argue for their point of view, to give arguments, they have the chance to improve the confidence in their own strengths, to learn very early how to take decisions, to solve problems, to choose between several options, being prepared to cope with the present and future society. If their rights are not exercised at the very early age, there is the risk that they become dependent on the approval of the adults, to always wait for them to intervene, to decide for them, to impose on them their way of being, thinking and feeling, just as it frequently happens in children’s education.

The teacher is nowadays seen as a tutor who collaborates with a partner who is more and more independent out of all points of view. Education becomes efficient then when it sets the child in its center, as an active and motivating part to his/her own process of becoming an adult. In this respect, education must be adjusted and reconstructed according to the psychology of the nowadays child, and the respect for the rights of the children must become the main preoccupation of those who are meant to take care of their education.

### **The effects of emotional education in the long run**

The scientific studies referring to the effects of early emotional education, (Schaffer, H.R., 2007, p. 138), have highlighted a series of important elements:

- emotional education with little children has first and foremost a *preventive role*-it prevents the mental and emotional health problems, giving the children a chance to develop harmoniously; at the same time, it also allows the amelioration and the correction of some emotional problems or behavior deviations which have already appeared;

- early emotional education has a *positive effect on the child’s abilities* and on his/her *future school career*; the effect is positive



on the intellectual and social abilities, independent from their source environment, then when the institutions from before the schooling period really promote quality, both regarding the physical environment and the interactions adult/child. The children who have benefited from quality early education feel more attracted to the school, they show positive attitudes towards learning, they obtain better results, they are motivated and wish to end up the entire school cycle, which leads to a decrease in absences from classes, to the increase of the schooling rate and to reducing the school abandon;

- early emotional education contributes to the *equalization of the children's chances* (children in risk situations, who come from disadvantaged socio-cultural environments), to their progress;

- early emotional education has *positive effects on the future social integration* of the teenager and of the adult, giving the children the *chance to be successful and happy*.

Research in the field has shown that the greatest benefit of early education appears at the non-cognitive level. There have been identified more positive and significant relations between going to kindergarten and the behaviors centered on a task, the social-emotional development, motivation and positive attitudes towards learning. The effects at affective level are decisive for the psychic balance of the child throughout his/her entire life (Gottman, J. and DeClaire, J., 1997, p. 24).

### **The relevance of the professional training programs in the field of emotional education**

The studies of psychology from the last decade assert clearly that emotional intelligence and the ability to establish relationships with the ones around you represents the main success factor in life (Schaffer, H. R., 2007, p. 151). For a development that should be as harmonious as possible, it would be appropriate to take care of the mind and the emotions of the children. Emotional education of children represents a new opportunity for the professional development of the teachers.

The context of the new curriculum imposes the learning of new pedagogical approaches in the relationship with the pre-school children. In this respect, we need an innovational approach regarding the formation programs that should meet the social and emotional needs of children (Culea, L., 2009).

Trying to rethink the system of educational relationships within the context of early education is a very difficult process, long lasting, because it implies first and foremost a change of attitude. The change in education is possible only under the premises that the teachers understand it and act consciously in view of its implementation. The implementation of emotional education needs new abilities of establishing relations, which mean for the teacher the following: change of attitudes, change of the relation with the pre-school children, with the parents, toward the other fellow-teachers and towards the community, the change in the way of approaching the teaching process, etc. All these changes are possible only in the case in which the teachers benefit from training programs that are meant to prepare them for the new paradigm.

### **Children's right to healthy development**

Empathy is the key to understanding the feelings of another person. It represents the capacity to identify with the emotional feeling of another person, of setting yourself in the other person's shoes. When we succeed in listening to the children, they feel understood and they feel that we offer them emotional security. First and foremost, children want to know that we accept them just the way they are. They need a lot of attention. If they do not feel accepted, they are emotionally hurt. They need affection, love, tenderness and support in order to reach the level of feeling good.

The role of the teachers is to realize the fact that the little ones have complex social-emotional needs that must be supported out of many points of view. It is highly important that the feelings of children should be taken into consideration on all occasions that can influence their life and development.



They must be encouraged from an early age to argue for their point of view and to freely express their emotions. It is only this way that they can make their voice be heard in society, the only way they can contribute to the creation of a social culture that should take into account the opinions of children, and the only way they can promote actions that should facilitate their involvement in the decision making process.

Children surprise us due to their perspicacity, being a source of meaning for the identification of their development needs. Playful, tender and full of energy, they are much better observers of reality than they seem to be. They feel and live everything that happens. That is why one must never underestimate the “subtlety” of their perception. They seem innocent, but, in fact, they understand more than we expect. Adults often have the illusion that the little ones do not “understand” the conflict states and the problems from their immediate environment. It is much more comfortable to think that they do not grasp the criticisms at their true intensity and that they are not paying attention to the adults’ subtleties. Evidently, this conception is erroneous.

The little ones, whom we believe that are absorbed in their own world, prove to be well connected to the adult world. When asked of what they think, what they feel, transformed in judges, the children know how to grasp the reality with affirmations that surprise us, touching vulnerable issues for the grown-ups. The fact that children take attitude shocks us. Their responses can be acid and stormy. These are relevant in order to understand their emotional feelings as compared to those of the adults. They can mean the revolt against an unequal behavior in terms of moral issues (when, for instance, adults impose rules that they do not even respect themselves). Children are the finest observers of the adults, that is why they need to be listened to extremely carefully.

## Conclusions

We are human and stick together only

by understanding and respecting the social and emotional needs of the children. The children’s happiness and the life quality depend on them. Respecting their emotions and opinions represent the basis on which they can build their life, trusting their own powers. The thoughts and feelings of a child are as vital as air and water. By showing trust in the child’s feelings, we allow him to be authentic and to benefit from a healthy life.

By promoting and respecting the express of the feelings from the very beginning, we fulfill a basic condition, of helping a child trust himself and the others. Only in this context can a child be happy. But let us not forget that childhood is a treasure. The children have an open heart and the joy of life. They need love, understanding and freedom. What other kind of ambition than that of a fragile body, looking for justice, can therefore move mountains and fight with firmness for the freedom of expression? And then why not trust this young force, full of profundity? Why not offering children all over the world the chance to prove that volition can break down any obstacle that the dream of an innocent soul can find its reflection in this world, shaded by doubts? Why place an obstacle in the way of emancipation, of openness towards future, when we have the noblest resort: the children! They have the chance to go beyond the grownups’ conflicts and the prejudices. For this to happen, they must learn, ever since they are small, to trust their own feelings and to express them. A child does not know what malice is, he does not reject another child, because of that one’s skin color or traditions of his family. He does not know what racism, prejudice or discrimination. Why then must we endanger this world of innocence? Why cannot we trust the power of their thoughts and emotions?

It is a striking fact that most of the children can create a perfect world, only by using some paper and crayons, while the adults cannot manage this, although they possess the necessary latest technology. Even more troubling is that the small ones strongly believe in their creation, while the grownups



gave up on this long time ago...

Still, life teaches us that we can learn from children. We can learn from the children what democracy and tolerance is. The secret lies in how we listen to them. The children can teach us a lot. It depends on us to trust them, to understand and to respect their emotions, for them to have a “pretty happy childhood”. We have to find out their perception on life, to understand and to discover with him those meanings that make him vibrate. We need to authentically catch his reactions, emotions, wishes and desires, by proving a good understanding and empathy. Why? Because it is not sufficient for a child to have a “happy childhood”, he must be able to say he has a “happy childhood”.

The promotion of the good state of mind and of the emotional health of children, by means of educational relationships, focused on providing their specific needs must become a priority of the early quality education. All these suggest to us, the pedagogues, that we must do everything we can to help the children to assimilate those basic capacities for life – the social and emotional abilities. These “lessons” are learned during the daily interactions between the pedagogue and child. We all need, now more than ever, mental and emotional balance.

#### References:

- Brazelton, B. T., Sparrow J. D. (2008). *Puncte de cotitură – de la trei la șase ani. Dezvoltarea emoțională și comportamentală a copilului tău* (Touchpoints 3 to 6), Bucharest: Publishing House of the Generation Foundation;
- Cucos, C. (2008). *Educația – iubire, edificare, desăvârșire*. Iași: Polirom;
- Culea, L. (2009). *Aplicarea noului curriculum pentru educația timpurie – o provocare?* Pitești: Diana Publishing House;
- Dumitrescu, M. & Dumitrescu, S. (2005), *Educația pentru sănătatea mentală și emoțională – ghid metodologic pentru pregătirea cadrelor didactice*, Bucharest: Arves Publishing House;
- Elias, M. J., Tobias, S. E. & Friedlander, B. S. (2007). *Inteligența emoțională în educația copiilor*. Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House;
- Gottman, J. & DeClaire, J. (1997). *Raising an emotionally intelligent child*. New York: Simon&Schuster PaperBacks;
- Minulescu, M. (2006). *Relația psihologică cu copilul tău*. Bucharest: Psyche;
- Schaffer, H. R. (2007). *Introducere în psihologia copilului*. Cluj – Napoca: Publishing house of the Association of Cognitive Sciences from Romania.



---

# TODAY'S CHILDREN ARE TOMORROW'S PARENTS INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

## Short description of the journal

The *Journal Today's Children are Tomorrow's Parents* (TCTP) started in Romania, in 1999. The journal is an useful resource of information for professionals working in the childhood area. Each issue of the Journal is based on a specific topic concerning the prevention of any kind of violence against the child. After more than 10 years of appearance, TCTP journal, arrived at 27<sup>th</sup> issue, included in the international database EBSCO, is bringing into the author's attention few recommendations.

## Types of contributions:

Papers will be considered providing that they have not previously been published or admitted simultaneously elsewhere for publication.

**Original, Theoretical, and Empirical Contributions:** The paper should conform the APA (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association) standards, with a legible abstracts of 100 to 280 words). Furthermore the paper should include a clear introductory statement of purpose; historical review when desirable; description of method and scope of observations; full presentation of results; brief comment/discussion on the significance of the findings and any correlation with others in the literature; section on speculation and relevance or implications; summary in brief which may include discussion. Section of references is required.

**Brief Communications:** Shorter articles of 5 to 7 pages (abstracts and/or references optional).

**Articles on Clinical Practice:** Authors should provide an account of previous clinical theory in an organized and up-to-date manner distinct from the clinical case material. Further, the clinical case material should occupy no more than a third of the paper. The first third should include only relevant background theory, while the final third should aim to discuss the descriptive presentation of the clinical case material against the background of existing theories and/or modifications needed to accommodate the clinical material.

**Invited Reviews:** Plans for proposed reviews and invited in draft outline in the first instance. The editors will commission reviews on specific topics. Reviews submitted without invitation or prior approval will be returned.

## Submission Requirements:

All submissions should include an abstract, and ordinarily be 15 to 20 pages in length, though occasionally longer papers are considered. In order to facilitate blind peer review, authors are encouraged to prepare a cover sheet that includes identifying details not included in the manuscript which will be sent out for review, less the cover sheet.

E-mail submission to the Editor is preferred; please send an electronic copy of your manuscript to: [anamuntean25@yahoo.com](mailto:anamuntean25@yahoo.com). All correspondence, including notification of the Editor-in-Chief's decision and requests for revision takes place by e-mail.

Manuscripts may be submitted in Romanian, French, or English and the author will be informed about the languages of the publication. The Romanian Authors will be



asked for providing the translation into the language of publication.

Authors are responsible for obtaining written permission from copyright owners to reprint any previously published material included in their article.

The editors reserve the right to refuse any manuscript submitted, whether by invitation or otherwise, and to make suggestions and modifications before publication. Submitted papers must be in final form when submitted; manuscripts will be returned for reworking or retyping that do not conform to required style and format.

**Abstract:** A structured abstract (objective, method, results, conclusions, practical implications) should not exceed 360 words in length covering the main factual points is required. Use complete sentences, and spell out acronyms at first mention.

**References:** Style and formatting of bibliographic citations in the text and the reference section must adhere to the guidelines of APA (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association). The Journal uses an alphabetical style rather than a numeric style both in the text and bibliography. No abbreviations of journal titles or use of et al. is permitted in the bibliography.

**Tables/Figures:** Cite each table/figure clearly in text. Tables should be arranged one to a page with a self – contained title that is understandable without reference to the text. Figures should be computer generated one per page, with legends. Tables and figures should be submitted as separate files named Tables of Figures.

#### **Citations in text:**

Citations in text must match reference citations exactly. Groups of citations with the text must be in alphabetical order within the

group.

List all authors the first time a work is cited unless there are six or more authors. In bibliography use et al. after the sixth author's name and initial to indicate the remaining authors of the article. In text list the first author et al year (Jones et al., 2009) for first and subsequent citations.

For citations with three or more authors, list all authors the first time the work is cited, then author et al. for citations thereafter. When two authors list both and do so every time reference are cited. If two or more citations with the same authors for the same year, list as many authors as needed to differentiate citations followed by et al.

If two or more citations with exactly the same authors in exactly the same order for exactly the same year, use 2009a, 2009b etc. to clearly link text citations to correct reference citation.

If reference is within parentheses, use ampersand. If not within parentheses, use and.

#### **Citations in the references:**

The use of et al. is not permitted in the reference section under any circumstances. Abbreviations of journal titles is not permitted. Please write out completely. Citations should be in correct alphabetical order. Watch punctuation closely, particularly in strings of authors (and initials), and in journal volumes, issues, and page numbers.

#### **Examples of citations in Reference section:**

##### **Journal articles:**

Egeland, B. (2009). Taking stock: Childhood emotional and developmental psychopathology. *Child Abuse and Neglect*. Vol. 33, Nr 1, pp. 22-27



---

### **Authored books:**

Sroufe, L. A., Egeland, B., Carlsson, E. A. & Collins, W. A. (2005). *The Development of the Person. The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaption from Birth to Adulthood*. New York: The Guilford Press.

### **Edited books:**

George, C. & Solomon, J. (2008). Attachment and caregiving behavioral system. In J. Cassidy & P.R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*. Second edition. New York: Guilford Press.

### **Chapters in books:**

Cicchetti, D. & Valentino; K. (2006). An Ecological-Transactional Perspective on Child Maltreatment: Failure of the Average Expectable Environment and Its Influence on Child development I D. Cicchetti & D.,J.

Cohen (Eds.). *Developmental Psychopathology. Volume 3: Risk, Disorder and Adaptation. Second Edition*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

### **On-line citations:**

Ascione, F. R. (2001). Animal abuse and youth violence. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington, DC; Departement of Justice. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Retrieved September 26, 2003 from <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

### **Presentations at conferences:**

Lundén, K. (2007). To identify children at risk for maltreatment  
Paper presented at the Second International Forum on Psychological safety, Resilience and Trauma, September 2007, Timisoara, Romania.



---

# INFORMATION PAGE

**The Second International Conference for *Psychosocial Perspectives on Quasi-Coercive Treatment Of Offenders*  
*Modern trends in juvenile delinquency - Resilience of the delinquent child*  
SPECTO 2011  
Timișoara, 5-7 May 2011**

Changes in legislation and practice regarding child protection in general and especially delinquent child have led to a significant rise in the numbers of studies and research in the field, bringing to the forefront new challenges to criminal justice and social protection/child welfare professionals.

SPECTO 2011 unites researchers, teachers, administrators and policy makers from social work, sociology, psychology, applied social sciences and education as well as specialists in criminal justice.

SPECTO 2011 Timisoara will focus on the latest scientific developments in the promotion of alternative sanctions and special treatment for delinquent child protection. Conference events include plenary lectures, symposia, workshops, and poster sessions showcasing new research in the field.

This Conference will address disciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-national challenges in the social sciences, and in particular the relationships of science to society. Topics will explore the nature of sanctions that can be applied to delinquent children, considering connections between them and causes for committing criminal acts.

Ultimately, the challenge and priority is the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Key themes addressed by the Conference include psychological and social approaches to juvenile delinquency and the main institutions involved in prevention, treatment and reintegration of delinquent children.

This Conference aims are to explore, in an interdisciplinary spirit, linkages between different areas of research, teaching and practices in crime prevention and the quasi coercive treatment of the delinquent child as well as the resilience of them.

We look forward to welcoming you to Timisoara, the capital of the Banat region from west of Romania.

***On the behalf of the organizing committee***  
***Mihaela Tomita, PhD***  
***Chairperson of the Organizing Committee***  
***ceptim2005@yahoo.com***



---

## **The Annual Conference of the Sociology and Social Work Department of the “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu**

The annual Conference of the Sociology and Social Work Department of the “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu will be organized between 15 and 16 October 2010. The Conference aims to bring together specialists in social sciences across the country, interested in topics defined by the 12 sections of work:

- Local Government and Local Development in Romania.
- Identity in action: tolerance, discrimination, segregation and social cohesion.
- Liberty and social constraint.
- The change of social values: contextual or generational effects?
- From the School of Transition to the Transition of School: 20 years of higher education in Romania.
- Social determinants of health and disease. Health inequality
- Family and child in Romania.
- Organizational change: dimensions, sources and effects
- Violence, abuse and trauma in present-day society
- Electoral politics in post-communist society
- Romanian international migration: trends, mechanisms, future?
- Rural and urban communities - dynamics, resources, capital, participation

Information about the conference and a detailed description of the sections can be found on the website: <https://sites.google.com/site/depsswconferences/>

**Location:** Sibiu, România

**Contact:** [csds@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:csds@ulbsibiu.ro), [depssw.ulbs@gmail.com](mailto:depssw.ulbs@gmail.com)

