

**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA**  
**Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences**

**PhD thesis title:**

***Socio-emotional education – workshops for pre-school children***

SUMMARY

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### **KEY WORDS:**

**Socio-emotional education programme, behaviour management, pre-school children, emotional skills, workshop.**

# CHAPTER I

## SOCIO-EMOTIONAL EDUCATION AT PRE-SCHOOL AGE – HISTORY AND PERSPECTIVES

### I.1. The concept of social and emotional education in the contemporary world

Etymologically, the word „education” comes from the Latin *educō, educere*, which means, on the one hand, the action of „taking out from”, „lifting”, „raising”, hence the significance of the educational action as modifying, transforming and supporting the passage from one stage (primary, hereditary or acquired) to another, newly acquired in the developmental chain; or the action of setting up the direction from the inside in order to match individual conduct with the social, community norms. On the other hand, the same term indicates the action of „growing”, „looking after”, „nourishing” (plants, animals, people), therefore education has been considered to be the activity by which the conditions necessary for growing (physically and biologically) are created, as well as the ones necessary for the moral, spiritual and psychological growth.

**Education** is a set of measures taken systematically in order to mould and develop children and young people’s intellectual, moral and physical characteristics or people and society’s ones etc.; To educate somebody = to bring up somebody. (<http://www.dexonline.news20.ro/cuvant/educatie.html>)

Generally speaking, **education is the process (action) by which human personality’s moulding and developing are achieved.** It is a necessity for the individual as well as for society. Therefore, it is a specifically human activity, developed in the context of man’s social existence and it is also a specific social phenomenon, a feature of society, a condition of society’s development and progress.

**Emotion** (in French *émotion*, Italian *emozione*, English *emotion*) [http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emo%C8%9Bie\\_-\\_cite\\_note-dex-0](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emo%C8%9Bie_-_cite_note-dex-0) is an affective reaction of medium intensity which lasts for a short while, often accompanied by modifications in the organism activity, showing the individual’s attitude towards reality. Emotion can be classified as a system of defense, because psychologically it affects attention, the individual’s ability and speed of reaction as well as his/ her general behaviour. From a physiological point of view, emotions control the response to different situations, including facial expression, voice, the endocrine system, in order to prepare the organism for certain consequences.

Social education is a set of actions designed and developed on the basis of some principles adding to all the society’s influences and aiming at forming competence for life.

In each of the studies presented in this paper, we can observe a strong connection between social and emotional education, between the child’s social and emotional development. Most often, social behaviour is based on an emotion; desirable behaviour is based on positive emotions, whereas negative emotions can cause bad behaviour, such as aggressiveness and violence.

Consequently, there is an interdependent relationship between the social and emotional development, so we plead in favour of the collocation **socio-emotional education.**

Socio-emotional education covers all the learning activities (the concept of learning has a broad meaning) which lead to acquiring the individual experience of social and emotional behaviour, to acquiring emotional skills (understanding, expressing and adjusting their emotions) as well as social abilities, such as initiating and maintaining relationships and integrating in a group (social, professional, community, etc.).

In this doctor’s degree paper, we use the following **work definition: pre-school children’s socio-emotional education represents all the learning activities (broadly speaking) in which they are involved in order to ensure the premises and the conditions**

**for the issuing and manifestating of desirable socio-emotional behaviour at this age, behaviour representing the basis for their future socio-emotional conduct, as well as the basis of their socio-emotional behaviour.**

## **I.2. Objectives and principles of socio-emotional education**

The analysis of the studies in specialty literature on moral, civic, affective, community, pro-democracy, sustainable development education has afforded us the shaping the following principles and objective specific to socio-emotional education.

Principles of socio-emotional education:

1. The principle of using and valuing the learner's positive resources in order to put aside the negative traits;
2. The principle of individualising socio-emotional education depending on the structure of each child's personality and on the age characteristics, educational context and the socio-professional area;
3. The principle of interdisciplinarity and integrated learning;
4. The principle of correlating the group's educational needs with the teacher's educational offer;
5. The principle of assuring quality in education.

The objectives of socio-emotional education:

1. Emotional admitting, accepting and adjusting as a basis of acquiring social skills;
2. Increasing the adaptation skills to school and society's requirements;
3. Developing intra- and inter-personal skills to facilitate success in life;
4. Acquiring implementation skills for adequate strategies in critical and/ or stressful situations;
5. Increasing mental health and reducing the risk of deflective behaviour.

## **I.3. Tendencies and perspectives in socio-emotional education in Romania and in the world**

### **I.3.1. The issue of socio-emotional education programmes. General aspects.**

The programmes having as their main objective the development of emotional intelligence are covered by the term - Programmes for Developing Social Skills. This term offers a common conceptual basis for the programmes regarding a vast set of objectives. They refer to knowledge, behaviour, skills and competence which children acquire through social and emotional education.

Current social and emotional development intervention programmes aim at a wide range of behaviour objectives. These are:

- ❖ improving communication, life and social skills (strategies for problem solving, assertive communication skills);
- ❖ modifying emotional self-adjustment and negative emotions management techniques;
- ❖ establishing and maintaining good relationships inside the age group;
- ❖ adopting adequate conflict solving strategies;
- ❖ adopting health supporting behaviour (preventing alcohol, tobacco, illegal substances consumption);
- ❖ adopting alternative healthy behaviour in order to reduce aggressive conduct;
- ❖ developing self-esteem;

- ❖ improving verbal communication.

We agree with the idea that promoting social and emotional education should address all ages, considering the principle of lifelong learning, as there is never too late to become aware of our own feelings and emotions (thus becoming able to self-control), as well as of the others' emotions and feelings.

### **I.3.2. The influence of socio-emotional education upon the individual**

Social abilities and academic performance in children (Eisenberg et al. 2000).

Helps children adapt to pre-school and school requirements.

Prevents emotional and behaviour problems.

Assures adaptation at adult age.

Good social relations in adulthood.

Much better relations inside the family.

Better performance at work.

Good physical and mental health.

Prophylactic physical behaviour.

### **I.3.3. Socio-emotional education programmes in Romania**

- a) The educational programme „Da, Poți!” („Yes, you can!”)**
- b) The educational programme: *Developing life skills in children and teenagers belonging to disadvantaged groups***
- c) The programme *Fast Track* – programmes for the multifocus prevention of defective children in emotional and social competence.**

### **I.3.4. Socio-emotional education programmes in the world**

#### **I.3.4.1. Programmes developed in schools**

- **PATH model (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)**
- **Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)**
- **Improving Social Awareness, Social Problem Solving Project (ISA/SPSP)**
- **Seattle Social Development Project**
- **Yale-New Haven Social Competence Promotion Program**
- **Oakland's Child Development Project**

#### **I.3.4.2. Programmes for pre-school children**

- **Social-Emotional Intervention for at Risk 4 year-olds**
- **Preschool PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)**
- **„Second Step” (violence prevention).**
- **Head Start /ECAP Curriculum**
- **The Incredible Years.**
- **Peaceful Kids Conflict Resolution Program.**

#### **I.3.4.3. Programmes for parents**

- **The Circle of Security Program**
- **The Seattle Approach**

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EDUCATION – PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN PRE-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

#### II.1. Diachronical approaches of socio-emotional education in the Romanian pre-school curriculum

The Romanian pre-school curriculum draws early education teachers' attention on the 0 to 7 year-olds' development. Social development envisages *the development of interaction skills with adults, peers, accepting and respecting diversity, pro-social behaviour development*.

Emotional development refers to *the development of the self concept, the development of emotional self-control and emotional expressiveness*.

The programmes of instructional and educational activities in pre-school institutions, which have been the basis for education development in kindergartens.

1. „*The curriculum for instructional and educational activities in kindergartens*” was published at Editura Didactică și Pedagogică Bucharest in 1971; it is an improved version of the 1963 curriculum, the first pre-school curriculum considered to be original at that time, based on Romanian pedagogical experience.

2. In 1975, „*The curriculum for instructional and educational activities in kindergarten*” was „re-examined”.

3. „*The curriculum for instructional and educational activities in kindergarten and in the „Country's hawks” Organization*” (Ministry of Education and Instruction, 1987).

4. *Education Plan and the curriculum for instructional and educational activities in kindergarten* (Ministry of Education and Science).

5. *The curriculum for instructional and educational activities in kindergarten* (Ministry of Education, 1993).

6. *The curriculum for instructional and educational activities in kindergarten and Pre-school education Regulations* (Ministry of National Education, 2000).

The curriculum for pre-school education promotes the **concept of the children's global development**, considered to be central during early childhood. The children's global development perspective stresses the **importance of the children's development areas**, stated in the *Fundamental landmarks of early education and development in children between 0 and 7 years old*, also illustrating their connections with the content of the experiential areas in the curriculum structure. It was for the first time that we could speak about the *AREA – Socio-emotional development and its dimensions*.

- **Social development:** the development of adult interaction skills, interaction with peers, accepting and respecting diversity, pro-social behaviour development.

- **Emotional development:** developing the concept of the self, developing emotional control, developing emotional expressiveness.

#### II.2. The importance of socio-emotional education at pre-school age

Pre-school age is a long enough period of time, when important changes occur in the children's affective life. Pre-school children's emotions and feelings accompany all their manifestations, whether they are games, songs, educational activities or accomplishing the adults' tasks and instructions. They play an important part in the children's life and have a strong influence on their behaviour. Emotion is experiencing an important personal event.

In order to favour good social adaptation and preservation of good mental health, children should be taught to learn how to recognise what they feel to be able to speak about their emotions; they have to learn how to distinguish between inner feelings and external expression and last, but not least, to learn how to identify a person's emotion by his/ her complexion, to be eventually able to respond adequately.

### **II.3. The content of socio-emotional education – an integrative part of pre-school education content**

Socio-emotional education has a basically social content, determined mainly by our own pertaining to society and to ourselves. We hereinafter introduce some characteristics of the socio-emotional education content:

- Macrostructurally, it both depends on and derives from the aims of education: the educational ideal, educational purposes and objectives, being mentioned in education plans, curricula, etc.;
- Microstructurally, it is found in the content of learning, reference and operational objectives, general and specific competences;
- It is inter-related with and inter-dependent on the other educational curriculum structural components, allowing us to say (according to M. Ionescu, 2007) that it could be a component of the educational curriculum;
- It depends on the level of a country's social, cultural development, etc.;
- It includes formal, non-formal and informal educational actions, being part of the education general content;
- It comprises authentic social and affective values, specific to a certain type of culture;
- It develops according to the society's dynamics and the progress of science, especially of education sciences;
- The results obtained in socio-emotional education do not entirely match the results obtained in the education process, but they influence academic results;
- It has a major influence upon moulding and developing children's/ students' personality.

*The fundamental landmarks in the learning and early development of 0 to 7 year-olds* represents an important document of educational policy, offering reference points to the adults interacting with the children during this age span (teacher, parent/ legal supporter) with a view to assisting their full and normal development.

The document is structured on development areas, as follows:

- Personal hygiene, health and physical development,
- Socio-emotional development,
- Abilities and attitudes in learning,
- Language and communication development, premises for reading-writing,
- Cognitive development and knowledge of the world.

Regarding socio-emotional development, we may say that it involves the start of the child's social life, his/ her ability to establish and maintain interaction with adults and other children. Moreover, social interaction facilitates the way children see themselves and the outer world around them.

- **Social development:** developing adult interaction abilities, developing peer interaction, accepting and respecting diversity, developing pro-social behaviour.

- **Emotional development:** Developing the concept of self-awareness, developing emotional control, developing emotional expressiveness.

In order to assure children's socio-emotional development, all instructional and educational approaches should focus on:



- moulding and developing in children adult and peer interaction skills;
- accepting and respecting diversity;
- developing pro-social behaviour;
- recognising, expressing and self-control emotions and emotional expressiveness;
- developing the concept of self-awareness.

## **II.4. Moulding and developing emotional behaviour and emotional abilities in pre-school children**

### **II.4.1. Emotional abilities**

Developing emotional abilities in children is important because it supports moulding and maintaining relationships with others, it assists children in adapting to kindergarden and school life, preventing emotional and behaviour problems in early and middle childhood.

We hereinafter show the specific emotional competence and behaviour which preschool children developed at this age, conduct which is relevant for our research – see the assumption of the research and subchapter IV.2.2.

Table 2.II. *Emotional competence developed during preschool period*

Nr.	Specific emotional competence	Examples of behaviour
1.	Recognising emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identifying their own emotions in different situations;</li> <li>- identifying other people's emotions in different situations;</li> <li>- identifying emotions associated with a specific context;</li> <li>- identifying emotions based on nonverbal components: facial expression and posture.</li> </ul>
2.	Expressing emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conveying affective verbal and nonverbal messages;</li> <li>- naming situations where differences in emotional state appear;</li> <li>- expressing empathy towards other persons;</li> <li>- expressing complex emotions such as shame, guilt, pride;</li> <li>- taking into account each person's characteristics in social interaction.</li> </ul>
3	Understanding emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identifying the cause of emotions;</li> <li>- naming emotions consequences in a certain situations.</li> </ul>
4	Adjusting/ Self-adjusting emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- using emotional adjusting/ self-adjusting strategies.</li> </ul>

Many behaviour problems are caused by a negative emotional state and by a lack of emotional adjustment. Consequently, we can assert that emotional adjustment is associated with an increased social competence, detailed as follows: socially adequate behaviour popularity pro-social behaviour and few behaviour problems and aggressiveness.

There are three types of emotional adjusting/ self-adjusting strategies which can be used in kindergarten: problem solving strategies, emotional strategies and cognitive strategies.

## II.4.2. Social abilities

Studies point to the fact that the children whose social abilities are highly developed will better adapt to school environment and will have better scores. But children whose social skills are not fully developed, are likely to be rejected by the others and to develop behaviour problems; therefore, children who are isolated from the group have a higher risk of early school quitting, delinquency, emotional problems – anxiety, depression.

The basic social competences described in specialty literature are: initiating and maintaining group relations and integration. We are introducing a thorough description of each skill and some suggestions to develop it.

Table 3.II. *Social competences developed during pre-school period:*

Nr.	Specific emotional competence	Examples of behaviour
1.	Compliance to rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- respects instructions, without obeying them;</li> <li>- keeps quiet when asked to;</li> <li>- responds adequately to adults' requirements;</li> <li>- gathers the toys at the end of the game, without being told to;</li> <li>- easily accepts the changing of the game rules;</li> <li>- obeys the rules connected to a social situation.</li> </ul>
2.	Initiating and maintaining relations (social relationships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- initiates and maintains interaction with another child;</li> <li>- listens actively;</li> <li>- shares objects and experience;</li> <li>- offers and receives compliments;</li> <li>- invites other children to play together;</li> <li>- efficiently solves conflicts</li> </ul>
3	Integrating in a group of friends (pro-social behaviour)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cooperates with others when playing;</li> <li>- cooperates with others in solving a task;</li> <li>- offers and asks for help when needed;</li> <li>- looks after the others' toys;</li> <li>- helps in different contexts (sharing stationery/ snacks).</li> </ul>

### **Ways of achieving socio-emotional education in the teaching practice in kindergarten**

In order to achieve socio-emotional education objectives, to form the desired skills and to educate a socially and emotionally right behaviour, pre-school teachers can choose one or more of the following:

1. Integrating socio-emotional education content in all the teaching and learning activities in kindergarten. Integrated teaching and learning, supported by all current curricular documents, can be an opportunity of achieving socio-emotional education proposed objectives.
2. Implementing a national programme for pre-school children's socio-emotional education, a programme structured on three levels, training, intervention and evaluation, whose target group should be pre-school children, their parents and pre-school teachers.
3. Elaborating and developing optional activities in the groups, specific for socio-emotional education and having specific content.

4. Running projects complementary to the curricular activities, emphasizing socio-emotional extra-school activities and volunteering, in partnership with school, children's parents and the community.
5. Marking some events in children's life by introducing elements of socio-emotional education. As long as the events in every child's life are not scheduled beforehand, this strategy can be used occasionally.

## CHAPTER III SOCIO-EMOTIONAL EDUCATION WORKSHOPS IN PRE-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

### **III.1. Socio-emotional education development workshop for pre-school children: definition, psychopedagogical characterization, values promoted**

The word workshop, educational workshop, respectively, has become a usual word, used in educational practice as a kind of synonym of working in small groups, where verbal, non-verbal, intellectual and social interaction and exchanges are produced.

**On trying to define the term *educational workshop*, we can say it represents an organised, integrated educational frame, which takes advantage of the formal, non-formal and informal educational contexts' influence, having as objective the building of lifelong learning opportunities, facilitating the balanced development of the personality and forming life skills based on values.**

The educational workshop favours building learning situations in which those involved work together, learn from and help one another. This way, through the social, cognitive and verbal exchanges and interaction inside the group, children improve their personal, individual performance as well as the group performance.

Thus, the characteristics of the educational workshop are:

- Groups of 8 to 12 persons of about the same age are organized,
- The duration of a workshop depends on the participants' age: 30 minutes for pre-school children, 60 minutes for schoolchildren, 90 – 120 minutes for adults,
- They are based on cooperative learning,
- They favour creativity,
- They take advantage of every person's potential and strengthen it,
- They build the ability to relate to others and to be an active member inside the group.

Values promoted:

- Cooperation – team work with the group members in order to reach the proposed common objectives;
- Creativity – they develop the creative potential of all the group members;
- Support – they assure mutual cognitive and non-cognitive support inside the group;
- Respect – respect for each member of the group, respect for the whole group as a social group as well as self-respect;
- Change – applied learning leads to change, which is accepted by the members of the group;
- Non-discrimination – excluding social, cultural, economical and genre inequity, and assuring equal chances of involvement and group activity for all the group members, no matter what their sex, nationality or religion are, through a balanced educational approach;
- Responsibility – the members are responsible for fulfilling their tasks, which are the premises for fulfilling the group activity;
- Self-responsibility – the members of the group become aware of the necessity of self-involvement (not only involvement) in the group activities, of the necessity to cooperate in order to reach the proposed objectives.

We have chosen the educational workshop as a basic form for the activities developed in our research because these work meetings with the children and their parents can be efficient in building socio-emotional skills, by taking into consideration their formative value:

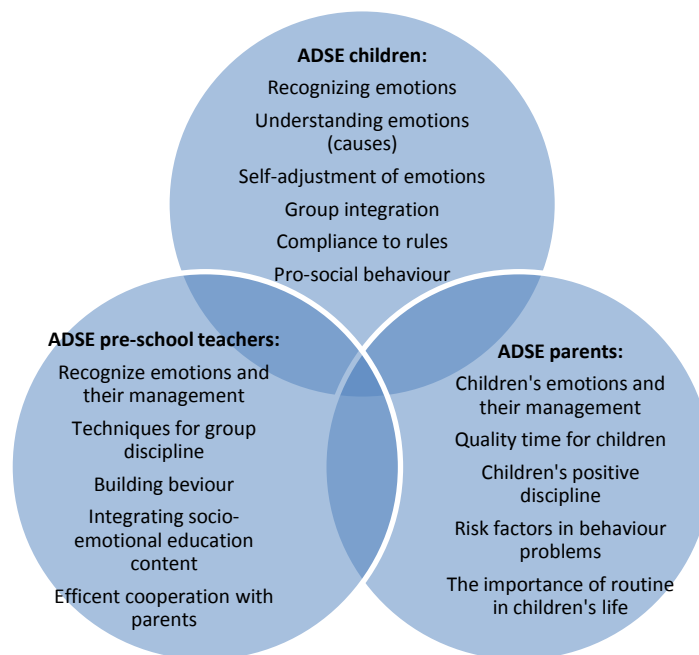
- ✚ they assure free creative and personal involvement of each participant,
- ✚ they assure the optimum frame for assertive communication and depășirea blocajelor,
- ✚ they offer efficient alternative education techniques, oriented towards the child's freedom, creativity and intellectual potential development,
- ✚ authentic learning tools can be used,
- ✚ they assure the clear understanding of the principles and values expressed in the content.

The values promoted and exercised in socio-emotional workshops are the values of a quality social life and this educational frame can assure an excellent context to achieve the education for values:

- Respect for the self and for the others;
- Empathy and support;
- Culture and cultural diversity;
- Responsibility;
- Self-responsibility;
- Active involvement;
- Self-involvement;
- Social adjustment.

We present the contents of our socio-emotional development workshops (ADSE):

Figure 1.III. *The contents of socio-emotional development workshops*



### III.2. The management of pre-school children's undesirable social and emotional behaviour – workshops for pre-school teachers

The aim of the educational activity, the socio-emotional development of pre-school children, is materialized in the balanced selection and grouping of a set of specific teaching methods and techniques, such as:

- Socio-emotional tale*
- Explanation*
- Conversation*
- Exercise*

□ *Case study.*

In order to avoid children’s discrimination, the teacher should take into account the following educational recommendations:

- Establishing a rule as well as the consequences associated to breaking that rule may prevent exclusion and discrimination of some children by their peers.
- Using interactive teaching and learning techniques and the activities developed on centres of interest to facilitate social interaction and exchange among children.
- Conveying verbal and non-verbal messages to show children that people are different and do things differently, with different results.
- Conveying complimentary messages for the effort done, centred on the strategy used, on the process done by the child: „you have worked a lot on this drawing, you have chosen the best way to do it” not on personal characteristics „you are smart” or „you are the best”.

If there is a child in the group avoided by his/ her peers, the teacher could act in two directions:

1. Modifying the children in the group’ perspective on the excluded child
2. Modifying the excluded child’s self perspective.

### **III.3. The role of the family in building and developing positive behaviour in their children – workshops for parents**

The affective atmosphere in the family has a decisive influence upon psychic development in early childhood. This is due to the fact that during the first years of life the child responds to everything around him/ her through emotional reactions which will determine later attitudes and the direction of further activity.

Cooperation between parents and teachers is essential in order to assure coherence and consistency to the two fundamental educational factors on the child as well as of the two media where the child lives most of his/ her early age. To achieve a partnership relation between kindergarten and family, it is necessary to observe some elementary but very useful conditions.

Table 2.III. *Conditions necessary to achieve an efficient kindergarten – family partnership*

Family	Kindergarten
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be informed about the educational services, its mission, work methodologies, activities and personnel expertise in order to establish a cooperation relationship.</li> <li>• To know the service requirements: interior regulations, expectations concerning the relationship with the parents, the type of communication they use, etc.</li> <li>• To be informed about the kindergarten’s expectations concerning the parents as partners in looking after, raising, developing and teaching the child.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assure a comfortable, open, welcoming space able to ensure privacy (without any desks or other physical barriers in communication).</li> <li>• To allow time to find out the family’s history and culture.</li> <li>• To know the expectations the family has from the educational service provided.</li> <li>• To get information about the child’s characteristics (age, meals and sleeping hours, medical problems, routine, specific interests etc.).</li> <li>• To be informed about the functional educational pattern in the family.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know the kindergarten's philosophy as to looking after, raising, developing and teaching the child at early ages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know the interaction patterns established in the family and the cultural models which define the child's family environment (important values, types of food, family celebration etc.).</li> <li>• To have date about family features (structure, family membres, medical problems, educational, financial and material status etc.).</li> </ul>
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In order to establish a fair and efficient partnership between family and kindergarten, there are common ways of action such as:

- *Periodical individual meetings* to analyze the child's development, to indentify the routes which require diverse activities, which are the activities easily done at home, the way the child reacts to different proposed activities.
- *Parents' participation to the child's activities.*
- *Filling in observation worksheets at home* depending on the child's development routes.
- Un schedule of *home visits* (after building up trust between parent and teacher).
- *Organizing group meetings with the parents* to address familys with similar problems.
- *Direct communication when coming to or leaving the kindergarten.*
- *Administrative meetings* (parents' meetings).
- Getting feedback about the institution (suggestions).

**CHAPTER IV**  
**INTRODUCING THE PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC**  
**„EXPERIMENTING THE EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMME**  
**SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS - ADSE.”**

**IV.1. Introducing the research topic**

Our research topic is up to date in nowadays Romania and it may be an important stage in the educational research and practice for pre-school education. This has been our concern and preferences for a long time trying to find solution to build and develop life abilities to pre-school children and to the adults they interact with. The whole human development is influenced by the socialising process, by social integration and self identity. The child is influenced by the family and then by the kindergarten, the latter in a more organised and systematic way. Parents and teachers are the factors who offer a models of conduct, patterns of appreciation, reactions, opinions and knowledge about everything surrounding them, the good and the bad. Considering the direct observation and the personaly experience in my direct activity with pre-school children and their parents, with pre-school teachers, from the feedback in training sessions with parents or teachers working with 3 to 7 year-olds, we infer the necessity of support curriculum elements (in our case – training sessions) which may lead to children’s improved social performance.

In order to identify the need for such a programme, we applied 100 questionnaires (Annexe 1) having as a target group 50 pre-school teachers and 50 school psychologists from all the counties including Bucharest, aged between 20 and 50.

On analysing the received answer we can say:

- 30 % of them are familiar with socio-emotional education in different contexts: faculty courses - Cluj-Napoca, Suceava, Iași, Timișoara, București, Craiova, Târgu-Jiu; in pedagogical highschools (Târgu-Secuiesc), from specialty books, in methodical meetings or pedagogical meetings in kindergarten; from different speciality revues; from participating in different symposiums on this topic or from good practice exchanges.

- 77 % of them consider that in order to make socio-emotional education efficient in kindergarten we need to train and inform teachers and all the personnel in the kindergarten; we also need the specialists’ support (school psychologist) as well as parents’ cooperation. Other suggestions have been: changing the teachers’ attitude, the director’s support and inclusive educational promotion.

- The most frequent barriers which hinder the achievement of socio-emotional education in pre-school children are mentioned: low parents’ involvement, lack of information about socio-emotional education and of conclusive training, lack of contents and materials necessary to develop socio-emotional education.

- 49% of the respondents consider that socio-emotional education lacks in kindergartens, 24% believe that it is partially done and 27% say that it is done through different programmes such as „Yes, you can!”, or by the activities done by the school psychologist or by common sense that is implicitly while developing different educational activities.

- 67% of the respondents suggest to the ministry, school authorities, kindergartens, CJRAE training courses for the adults to acquire the necessary skills to develop socio-emotional education in kindergartens; 23% suggest training and informing parents and 10% propose the implementation of projects on this topic.

- Among the authorities and/ or organizations which are meant to support socio-emotional education they mentioned: N.G.O.s, Parents’ Associations, Local and County Councils – by allotting the necessary funds; training institutions by facilitating courses; The



Church, the media; Mental health centres – by making available informing and training programmes for teachers and parents; the schools will enlist children in order to continue the development of their socio-emotional skills; Faculties of Psychology and Education Sciences; UNICEF; D.P.P.D.

- 22% of the respondents said short movies might be needed, 30% – brochures for parents and teachers, 28% – good practice guides and 20% suggested specific curriculum and content: tales, games, worksheets etc.

Therefore, the educational progress we envisage addresses the description, explanation, building, clarifying, improvement and optimizing kindergarten instructive activities, thus making contribution to educational theory and practice development and to solving the problems identified inside the educational reality.

**General objective:** developing 3 to 6/7 year-olds' socio-emotional skills as a premise of supporting the children's cognitive development during the school years to come.

**Specific objectives:**

O<sub>1</sub> – identifying and experimenting techniques and strategies to build adequate social and emotional behaviour and to correct undesirable conduct in children inside the specific educational programme.

O<sub>2</sub> – assuring the complementarity between the national pre-school curriculum and the curriculum implemented in the educational programme for age levels.

The suggested programme had a training component for teachers and school personnel, as well as for children's parents from the point of view of emotional education issues. The most important component of the project was the practical one – effective work in the group of pre-school children, running developing socio-emotional workshops for pre-school teachers, the children and their parents, focusing on the two elements: social and emotional education.

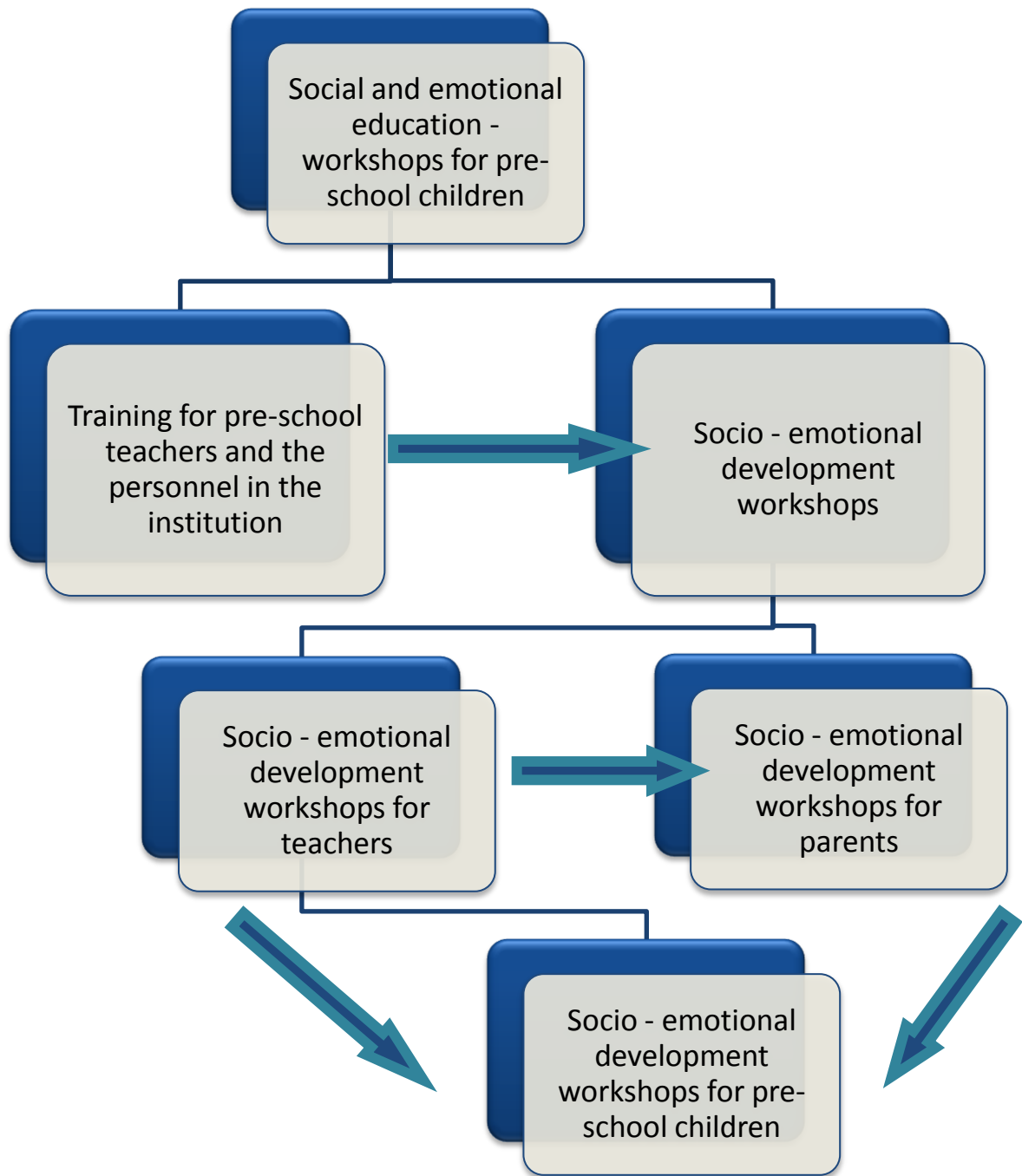


Figure 1.IV. *The structural components of the programme*

The programme has been conceived as an educational intervention system to support the pre-school teacher and the children in building social and emotional skills, in correcting undesirable conduct in children as well as in building life skills by following the next course lines:

<i>The course lines for the educational intervention programme</i>	<i>Development</i>
The adopted vision	Strategic and long-range vision envisaging the present and future relevance of emotional education in moulding the child, the young and the adult person.

The basic method in interpreting the processes involved	Systemic and curricular approach of the educational processes involved in the programme
Centring the programme	It is centred on pre-school children, with their psychopedagogical characteristics, with their emotional and behaviour problems.
The dimensions of the formative	The intervention has been developed on three levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School personnel in the institution: teachers, auxiliary and non-teaching personnel,</li> <li>- Pre-school children,</li> <li>- Pre-school children's parents.</li> </ul>
The methodological approach used	Learning by age-adequate specific methods, used in formal, nonformal and informal contexts; national and suggested curriculum elements are also used.
Teleological character	Pro-social behaviour building and moulding.
Educational aim	Building of social skills.
Curricular endeavour	Achieving a continuous process of curricular adaptation and using elements of hidden curriculum as well as of metacurriculum.
Possible levels of action for the programme	1. individual level; 2. group level; 3. kindergarten level; 4. family level; 5. community level.
The programme's structural components	They are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- programme's curriculum;</li> <li>- the content used;</li> <li>- human resources involved;</li> <li>- material resources;</li> <li>- time resources;</li> <li>- procedure resources.</li> </ul>
The programme's operational character	It is assured by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teaching, learning and evaluation educational activities;</li> <li>- examples of behaviour moulding;</li> <li>- influences of hidden curriculum and metacurriculum;</li> <li>- teaching and training experience;</li> <li>- didactic principles;</li> <li>- educational strategies;</li> <li>- education methods;</li> <li>- children's activity organising patterns;</li> <li>- educational relationships.</li> </ul>

Table 1.IV. *The course lines for the educational intervention programme*

## **IV.2. The coordinates of the research**

### **IV.2.1. The objectives of the research**

The objectives of our research, on the theoretical fundamental level as well as on the practical and implementation level, are as follows:

#### ***Objectives of the research on the theoretical fundamental level:***

- ❖ Describing the dynamics of socio-emotional competence development in different stages of pre-school age (3, 5, 6/7 year-olds);
- ❖ Assessment of the major educational factors in developing socio-emotional skills in pre-school children.

***Objectives of the research on the practical and implementation level:***

- ❖ Investigating the forming impact of the socio-emotional skills development programme for pre-school children – SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS (ADSE).

The workshops have been organised weekly for each of the three age levels in the experiment sample. The programme has been supported by an informative endeavour for the teachers involved in the programme and for the parents of the children involved, endeavour which comprised educational workshops organized on the topic of developing socio-emotional skills in pre-school children. The results of the intervention programme are emphasized through comparisons between the pre-test and post-test stages, and they will be significantly developed.

#### **IV.2.2. The research assumption**

In our research we have envisaged to test the following work assumption:

*Implementing the intervention programme „Socio-emotional development workshops (ADSE)” leads to building and moulding pre-school children’s basic socio-emotional skills: recognizing and expressing emotions, understanding emotions, emotional adjustment, compliance to rules, social relationships and pro-social behaviour.*

#### **IV.2.3. The variables of the research**

- a) The independent variable is the systematic implementation, all along a school year (9 months) of the intervention programme „Socio-emotional development workshops (ADSE)”, based on a curriculum introduced during the experimental stage, whose content can be found in Annexes 2 and 3.
- b) The dependent variables:

*The level of emotional competence development, measured by the help of the following criteria:*

- 1. recognising and expressing emotions**
- 2. understanding emotions**
- 3. emotional adjustment**

*The level of social competence development, measured by the help of the following criteria:*

- 1. compliance to rules**
- 2. social relationships**
- 3. pro-social behaviour**

#### **IV.2.4. Development place and period**

The research took place in „Căsuța cu povești” (Fairy-tales’ House) kindergarten, Bistrița, where there are 15 groups of children, randomly organized, trying to establish a balance between the number of girls and the number of boys in each group. Children’s parents belong to different social categories, with diverse levels of education. We involved 6 groups in our research: 2 groups of 3 year-olds, 2 groups of 4 year-olds and 2 groups of 5/6 year-olds, that is 200 children, representing 46,5% of the children in the kindergarten.

##### **THE RESEARCH PERIOD:**

Research action took place between September 15<sup>th</sup> 2011 and June 15<sup>th</sup> 2012.

- Pre-experimental stage: September 15<sup>th</sup> – October 30<sup>th</sup> 2011;
- Formative experimental stage: November 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 – April 30<sup>th</sup> 2012;
- Postexperimental stage: May 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 – June 15<sup>th</sup> 2012.

#### **IV.2.5. Participants’ sampling**

In order to meet the proposed objectives and to check the specific assumptionl, 200 children from „Căsuța cu povești” kindergarten Bistrița have taken part in the research, 100 of which will take part in the intervention programme, the others being the control group. The children are between 3 and 6 years old, 66% of them attended kindergarten for one or two years.

#### **IV.2.6. Content sample**

Content sample included scientific element, in accordance with the pre-school children national curriculumfor their age group. Thus, we envisaged conforming to the requirements of a training programme on organising and developing education and learning in kindergarten.

#### **IV.2.7. The pre-experimental stage**

*The pre-experimental stage* represents a complex stage of complex preparation of the experimental intervention, supposing many endeavours. The teachers involved took part in a training programme on the topic „Developing socio-emotional skills to 3 to 7 year olds” accompanied by a series of educational workshops on social and emotional education for pre-school children, building nand moulding techniques for pre-school children’s undesirable behaviour, methods of intervention through developing social and emotional skills for positive interaction and adequate conflict solving (ex. Asking for something, waiting your turn, verbally expressing anger, sharing toys, obeying rules).

On the other hand, pre-school teachers developed systematic observation of pre-school children, observing and writing down a list of inadeguete behaviour of the children in their groups, ranking them from the point of view of their occurrence, duration, intensity or latency of each of them.

The teachers’ conduct during the activities was also monitored, based on an observation worksheet especially designed (Annexe 4) in order to become aware of the need to change some inappropriate habits for the proposed objectives of our programme, such as criticising, raising the voice, negative feedback, discriminating children.

## IV.2.8. The formative experimental stage

The **formative experimental stage** was the implementation – in the experimental groups – of the educational intervention plan –the socio-emotional development workshops (ADSE)

Specific objectives:

- ☉ **In order to develop emotional skills:**
  - To identify their own emotions and other people's emotions as well as their causes, basic or associated emotions, based on the nonverbal component;
  - To express verbally and nonverbally primary and complex emotions
  - To use emotional self-adjustment strategies.
- ☉ **In order to develop social skills:**
  - To initiate and maintain relations;
  - To manifest pro-social behaviour;
  - To obey rules.

### Programme for socio-emotional skills development for pre-school children SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS ADSE

#### Emotional education

**Frame objective:** Building up and consolidating specific skills for emotional development of pre-school children

Reference objectives	Specific objectives Examples of behaviour	Content/ ADSE	Nr. act. 3 year-olds	Nr. act. 4 year-olds	Nr. act. 5/6 year-olds
<b>To recognize and express own or others' emotions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To name basic emotions (joy, sadness, fear, anger),</li> <li>➤ To identify their own emotions in different situations,</li> <li>➤ To identify other persons' emotions in different situations,</li> <li>➤ To identify the emotions associated to a specific context,</li> <li>➤ To recognize emotions based on the nonverbal component: face expression and posture,</li> <li>➤ To express verbally and nonverbally different emotions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Games/ Exercises:</b>  <i>The cube of emotions</i>  <i>The bag of emotions</i>  <i>Detectives</i>  <i>Turtle's technique</i>  <i>„Emotions' map”, Boxes with magic emotions,</i>  <i>What happens when I feel...;</i>  <i>How would you feel if...,</i>  <i>Let us consider other people's emotions,</i>  <i>Emotions' detective,</i>  <i>What if...;</i>  <i>Emotions card game;</i>  <i>Bruno and Bruni teach us how to express our emotions,</i>  <i>The Turtle teaches us how to become super-turtles,</i>  <i>Emotions' detective II,</i>  <i>The vixen teaches us the positive monologue;</i>  <i>Magic mirror</i></p> <p><b>Drawing/ painting/</b></p>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>understand the causes of emotions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To express empathy towards other people,</li> <li>➤ To identify the cause of emotions (using support),</li> </ul>	<p><b>practical abilities:</b>  <i>My emotions</i>  <i>The album of emotions</i>  <i>Today I feel...</i>  <i>The story of the Turtle</i></p>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>To self-adjust their own emotions.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To use emotional self-adjustment techniques</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stories:</b>  <i>The story of Tupa- Tupa, the rabbit</i>  <i>The story of the Turtle</i>  <i>The story of the boy who did not know what toy he wanted</i>  <i>Thoughts create emotions</i>  <i>Be yourself</i>  <i>The story of the five chickens</i>  <i>The story of the little octopus</i>  <i>Do you know how to receive a compliment?</i></p>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

Table 11.IV. Objectives of emotional education

### Social education

**Frame objective:** Building up and consolidating specific skills for social development of pre-school children

Reference objectives	Specific objectives Examples of behaviour	Content/ ADSE	Nr. act. 3 year-olds	Nr. act. 4 year-olds	Nr. act. 5/6 year-olds
<b>To understand and obey the rules imposed by the social environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To use the verbal formulae to initiate a conversation with a child (what's your name?, my name is...),</li> <li>➤ To obey the rules related to a social situation,</li> <li>➤ To show appropriate behaviour of integrating in another child's game (ex. Come up with a game idea), by obeying the game rules,</li> <li>➤ To establish visual contact when speaking.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Games/ Exercises:</b>  <i>Let us exercise the rules with Ami,</i>  <i>Ami teaches us how to be responsible,</i>  <i>What to expect when we disobey rules,</i>  <i>The same - different,</i>  <i>And - or – something else,</i>  <i>The magic hat for solutions,</i>  <i>To have or not to have a problem,</i>  <i>Every situation has more solutions,</i>  <i>Now or later?, The magic hat – solutions at hand,</i>  <i>True friends, Obstacle race,</i>  <i>The mysterious object, Cube tower, Lego castle,</i>  <i>Let us play listening,</i>  <i>How do I start playing with somebody else,</i>  <i>Alfi, Pufi and Puşu teach us</i></p>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>To initiate and maintain positive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To manifest active listening skills</li> </ul>		<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>

<p><b>interaction with peers and adults</b></p> <p><b>To initiate help actions to get benefit for him/herself or for the group</b></p>	<p>(waiting for the adult to finish the question then giving the answer).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To share objects with the other children in the group, being supported by the adult,</li> <li>➤ To offer, being supported by the adult, a toy to a child to play with it; if a child asks for a toy, the child gives him/ her the toy,</li> <li>➤ To adequately ask for something when he/ she needs it (ex. <i>Will you give me that toy car, please?</i>),</li> <li>➤ To identify, (being helped along by the adult) appropriate ways of response if he/ she does not get the toy at once (ex. He/ she finds something else to do),</li> <li>➤ To share common materials (ex. toys, coloured pencils) – guided by the adult,</li> <li>➤ To solve efficiently the occurring conflicts,</li> <li>➤ To name efficient ways of solving conflicts,</li> <li>➤ To cooperate with others in solving a task,</li> <li>➤ To offer and ask for help when needed,</li> <li>➤ To describe two ways of offering and asking for help when needed,</li> </ul>	<p><i>how to solve problems with friends.</i></p> <p><b>Fairy-tales – Stories</b>  <i>Bruno and Bruni's adventures in the snow, Bruno and Bruni are playing hide-and-peek, How to be friends? How Ana has become my well-behaved friend, How the little elephant learnt not to upset its belly, The story of Martinică, the little bear, The story of the hive, The four loyal friends, How to make friends.</i></p> <p><b>Artistic/ practical abilities</b>  <i>Modelling clay, The rainbow, My friend.</i></p>	<p>7</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>14</p>
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	➤ To cooperate with others in solving a task, being supported by the adult				
<b>Total</b>			<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>

Table 12.IV. *Social education objectives*

#### **IV.2.9. The post-experimental stage**

During this stage, the teacher analyses the effects of the interventions upon children's behaviour in formal, non-formal and informal contexts.

##### **Tools used**

Pre-school children's socio-emotional skills have been evaluated by applying screening instruments on the teachers and parents sample from the Platform for 3 to 6 year-old children Development Assessment (PED - a).

The Platform for Development Evaluation (PED – a) was validated in Romania in 2010 in order to thoroughly assess 3 to 7 year-old children's development areas and it was used as a tool in our research, under usage rights.

## CHAPTER V RESEARCH RESULTS AND THEIR APPROACH

**The assumption** we started our research with was that there are differences concerning the level of social and emotional skills development among children both in pre-test and in post-test, after the implementation of the intervention programme.

**For the 3 to 4 year-olds**, by comparing the average of pair samples, the initial assumption (**H0**) can be stated as follows: we presume that the differences between the two averages are due to chance and that there are no real differences in the level of social and emotional skills development among children in pre-test and post-test.

By analyzing the results obtained after applying the test t to compare the averages in the pair samples, we notice statistically significant differences in the experimental group for the following variables:

- understanding emotions assessed by parents;
- understanding emotions assessed by teacher;
- expressing emotions assessed by parents;
- expressing emotions assessed by teacher;
- compliance to rules assessed by parents;
- compliance to rules assessed by teacher;
- socially relating assessed by parents;
- socially relating assessed by teacher.

We notice no statistically significant differences in the experimental group for the following variables:

- emotional adjustment assessed by parents;
- emotional adjustment assessed by teacher;
- social behaviour assessed by parents;
- social behaviour assessed by teacher.

In the control group there are statistically significant differences concerning compliance to rules assessed by the teacher, but for the other variables, the difference between pre-test and post-test is statistically insignificant.

The results of the comparison between the averages obtained by the pair samples indicate statistically significant difference in the sample benefitting from the intervention programme, therefore the initial assumption is invalidated and the work assumption is empirically **validated**.

### Size of the effect

Table 39.IV. *Size of the effect*

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Size of the effect</b>	<b>Effect</b>
Understanding emotions (assessed by parents)	0,88	Strong effect
Understanding emotions (assessed by teacher)	0,51	Medium effect
Expressing emotions (assessed by parents)	0,64	Medium effect
Expressing emotions (assessed by teacher)	0,49	Medium effect
Compliance to rules (assessed by parents)	0,53	Medium effect
Social relations (assessed by parents)	0,70	Strong effect
Social relations (assessed by teacher)	0,5	Medium effect

Analyzing Table 39.IV. *Size of the effect*, we see that it varies from medium to strong. In the case of the variables Understanding emotions (assessed by teacher), Expressing emotions (assessed by parents), Expressing emotions (assessed by teacher), Compliance to rules (assessed by parents), Social relations (assessed by teacher), the effect is medium. This

effect is unlikely to be due to chance and it seems to be important enough from a practical point of view. Moreover, the effect is statistically significant. In the case of the variables Understanding emotions (assessed by parents) and „înțelegerea emoțiilor” (evaluată de părinți) și Social relations (assessed by parents), the effect is strong, therefore we can conclude that the effect is both statistically and practically significant.

There is a clinical significance as well, because any improvement in the clinical picture of a disturbance means progress, showing us that the method used, the intervention we use is valuable. Beyond all statistics we get, any development of socio-emotional competence of pre-school children, no matter how small it might be, is highly important.

**For the 4 to 5 year-olds**, by comparing the average of pair samples, the initial assumption (**H0**) can be stated as follows: we presume that the differences between the two averages are due to chance and that there are no real differences in the level of social and emotional skills development among children in pre-test and post-test.

By analyzing the results obtained after applying the test t to compare the averages in the pair samples, we notice statistically significant differences in the experimental group for the following variables:

- Understanding emotions (assessed by teacher)
- Expressing emotions (assessed by parents)
- Expressing emotions (assessed by teacher)
- Compliance to rules (assessed by parents)
- Compliance to rules (assessed by teacher)
- Social relations (assessed by parents)
- Social relations (assessed by teacher)
- Pro-social behaviour (assessed by parents)
- Pro-social behaviour (assessed by teacher).

There are no statistically significant differences in the experimental group for the following variables:

- emotional adjustment assessed by parents
- emotional adjustment assessed by teachers;

In the control group there are statistically significant differences concerning compliance to rules assessed by the teacher, but for the other variables, the difference between pre-test and post-test is statistically insignificant.

The results of the comparison between the averages obtained by the pair samples indicate a statistically significant difference in the sample benefitting from the intervention programme, therefore the initial assumption is invalidated and the work assumption is empirically **validated**.

### **Size of the effect**

We wonder how big is the difference between the experimental group and the control group. Consequently, we need to calculate the size of the effect.

Table 64.IV. *Size of the effect*

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Size of the effect</b>	<b>Effect</b>
Understanding emotions (assessed by teacher)	0,72	Strong effect
Understanding emotions (assessed by parents)	0,86	Strong effect
Expressing emotions (assessed by teachers)	0,87	Strong effect
Expressing emotions (assessed by parents)	0,59	Medium effect
Compliance to rules (assessed by parents)	0.62	Medium effect
Social relations (assessed by parents)	0,48	Medium effect
Social relations (assessed by teacher)	0,58	Medium effect

Pro-social behaviour (assessed by parents)	0,67	Medium effect
Pro-social behaviour (assessed by teacher)	0,5	Medium effect

We see that the size of the effect varies from medium to strong. In the case of the variables Expressing emotions (assessed by parents), Compliance to rules (assessed by parents), Social relations (assessed by parents), Social relations (assessed by teacher), Pro-social behaviour (assessed by parents), Pro-social behaviour (assessed by teacher) the effect is medium. This effect is unlikely to be due to chance and it seems to be important enough from a practical point of view. Moreover, the effect is statistically significant. In the case of the variables Understanding emotions (assessed by teacher), Understanding emotions (assessed by parents), Expressing emotions (assessed by teachers) the effect is strong, therefore we can conclude that the effect is both statistically and practically significant.

**For the 5 to 6 year-olds**, by comparing the average of pair samples, the initial assumption (**H0**) can be stated as follows: we presume that the differences between the two averages are due to chance and that there are no real differences in the level of social and emotional skills development among children in pre-test and post-test.

By analyzing the results obtained after applying the test t to compare the averages in the pair samples, we notice statistically significant differences in the experimental group for the following variables:

- Understanding emotions (assessed by teacher)
- Understanding emotions (assessed by parents)
- Expressing emotions (assessed by teachers)
- Expressing emotions (assessed by parents)
- Compliance to rules (assessed by parents)
- Social relations (assessed by parents)
- Social relations (assessed by teacher)
- Pro-social behaviour (assessed by parents)
- Pro-social behaviour (assessed by teacher)
- Emotional adjustment (assessed by parents)
- Emotional adjustment (assessed by teacher);

In the control group there are statistically significant differences concerning compliance to rules (assessed by teacher), understanding emotions (assessed by teacher), understanding emotions (assessed by parents). For the other variables, the difference between pre-test and post-test is statistically insignificant.

The results of the comparison between the averages obtained by the pair samples indicate a statistically significant difference in the sample benefitting from the intervention programme, therefore the initial assumption is invalidated and the work assumption is empirically **validated**.

### Size of the effect

We wonder how big is the difference between the experimental group and the control group. Consequently, we need to calculate the size of the effect.

Table 89.IV. *Size of the effect*

Dependent variable	Size of the effect	Effect
Expressing emotions (assessed by teachers)	0,63	Efect mediu
Expressing emotions (assessed by parents)	0,59	Efect mediu
Emotional adjustment (assessed by parents)	0,64	Efect mediu
Emotional adjustment (assessed by teacher)	0,49	Efect mediu

Compliance to rules (assessed by parents)	0,56	Efect mediu
Social relations (assessed by parents)	0,55	Efect mediu
Social relations (assessed by teacher)	0,48	Efect mediu
Pro-social behaviour (assessed by parents)	0,51	Efect mediu
Pro-social behaviour (assessed by teacher)	0,5	Efect mediu

In the case of the variables Expressing emotions (assessed by teachers), Expressing emotions (assessed by parents), Emotional adjustment (assessed by parents), Emotional adjustment (assessed by teacher), Compliance to rules (assessed by parents), Social relations (assessed by parents), Social relations (assessed by teacher), Pro-social behaviour (assessed by parents), Pro-social behaviour (assessed by teacher) the effect was medium. This effect is unlikely to be due to chance and it seems to be important enough from a practical point of view. Moreover, the effect is statistically significant.

## CHAPTER VI CONCLUSIONS

### VI.1. The research conclusions

We started our research with the assumption:

- ❖ After implementing the specific intervention programme, socio-emotional abilities will be developed in pre-school children, emphasized through comparisons between the pre-test and the post-test stages.

In order to thoroughly assess socio-emotional competence of the three groups of children involved in the research, we used, before starting the educational programme and after it was concluded, the assessment of the socio-emotional skills for 3 to 4 year-olds, 4 to 5 year-olds and 5 to 7 year-olds (computer-based version) from the Development assessment platform, 3-6/7 year-olds, PED<sup>a</sup>, tests standardised for the population of Romania.

The social competence evaluation scale for pre-school children is based on three dimensions: *compliance to rules, social relations and pro-social behaviour*. There are different items depending on the children's age, thus making different scales for the 3 to 4 year-olds, 4 to 5 year-olds and 5 to 7 year-olds. For each age category there are two scale versions, one to be filled in by the teachers and the other for the parents or legal representatives. Consequently, there are 6 different scales for pre-school children's social abilities screening.

The emotional competence evaluation scale considers three dimensions: *understanding emotions, expressing emotions and emotional self-adjustment*. The scale has different items depending on the children's age, thus having different scales for the 3 to 4 year-olds, 4 to 5 year-olds and 5 to 7 year-olds. For each age category there are two scale versions, one to be filled in by the teachers and the other for the parents or legal representatives. Consequently, there are 6 different scales for pre-school children's emotional abilities screening.

The answer for each item is on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 signifies *almost never*, 2 - *rarely*, 3 - *sometimes*, 4 - *very often*, 5 - *almost always*. The respondent has to circle one answer only for each item, depending on how often the child manifests that behaviour.

We have used the application SPSS for Windows, version 11 to make the statistical analysis. In order to establish whether the average of emotional and social competence development level measured in pre-test and post-test at the control group are different from the the average of emotional and social competence development level measured in post-test and post-test at the experimental group, we made a quasi-experimental study by using the t test for independent samples. To see if there are significant differences in each of the two groups, we applied a t test for pair samples.

The answers to the questionnaires applied to the teachers in „Fairy-tales House” kindergarten, as a consequence of implementing the programme „Socio-emotional development workshops (ADSE)” show a quantitative difference from the initial questionnaires results in the specialty language used, in the level of understanding the questions and in the suggestions offered:

- 61% have become familiar with socio-emotional education in the contexts created during the training courses and the programme we have run,
- 57% have considered that, in order to make socio-emotional education efficient in kindergartens, such socio-emotional education programmes should be

delivered especially to parents, 19% believe teachers need such preparation during their study years, 20% suggest including socio-emotional education in the curricula for all pre-university levels and 4% suggest involving specialists or optional classes.

- The most frequent barriers which may hinder pre-school children socio-emotional education development are mentioned: prejudices about socio-emotional education; lack of information for teachers concerning the role and the necessity for socio-emotional education, genre stereotypes in the education that parents offer to their children.
- 54% of the respondents suggest decision-makers (ministry, school authorities, kindergartens, CJRAE) to introduce modules on this topic in the teachers preparing faculties' curricula.
- Among the authorities and/ or organizations that are entitled to support socio-emotional education are mentioned: NGOs, Parents' organisations, DGASPC, The Public Health Authority, Psychologists' College.

## **VI.2. General conclusions**

This paper focused on investigating the efficiency of an educational programme to develop socio-emotional skills to pre-school children aged 3 to 7 years. The programme was developed between September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 – June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in 3 groups of children from „Fairy-tales House” kindergarten, Bistrița – they were the experimental group. Other three groups from the same kindergarten were the control group.

We can conclude what we have proved so far by presenting the following general considerations on the proposed topic and on our research:

The most important socio-emotional skills development factors regard the most varied contexts and opportunities offered to children, the parents', teachers' and adults' adequate response, the personal model of expressing emotions and the way of solving social and emotional problems.

Assuring structured contexts (using rules to guide children's behaviour in a social situation), offering opportunities of exercising cooperation social skills, waiting for their turn, efficiently solving conflicts with the others, sharing toys) have contributed to improving pre-school children's social skills during the post-intervention stage (compliance to rules has been improved the same as pro-social behaviour manifestation frequency).

Considering, by each teacher, of conflict situation in the group as an opportunity of learning efficient management of conflict solving skills (expressing emotions in words negotiating, compromise) has led to increased emotional expression skills, understanding emotions and emotional self-adjustment. This type of intervention has replaced the traditional approach where children were scolded and punished for having initiated a certain conflict.

### **1. Conclusion referring to socio-emotional education rate in the Romanian pre-school curriculum.**

Pre-school curricula between 1960 and 2008 represented the main curricular documents we have studied and reported to all along our research. Socio-emotional education is not mentioned explicitly in any curricular document in Romania at any educational level. It is still mentioned under certain names – Moral and civic education, Patriotic education,

Affective education, and in the 2008 Pre-school curriculum we find the Man and Society experiential area, which might be considered a methodological and informative frame in achieving socio-emotional education objectives and tasks. As it is a less used phrase (socio-emotional education) it is less used in teaching activity in the group, so there may be the tendency for the proposed objectives to be considered inherently accomplished in the kindergarten or they might be taken for other aspects in the children's daily life which would lead to diminishing their didactic significance.

Considering the fact that there are few curricular materials on pre-school children's socio-emotional education and the elements suggested in pre-school curriculum, we hope our paper may lead to the curricular improvement of pre-school programmes, especially the suggestions regarding content.

We think that offering correct positive feedback, giving up on criticising and negative feedback, fair rewarding used in the group, fair establishing and application of group rules as well as avoiding labelling (positive or negative) of the children by the teacher, parents or peers could positively influence the quality of the educational act by assuring the basis for life abilities development.

## **2. Conclusions referring to the formative and informative qualities of socio-emotional education in pre-school children**

By implementing the educational programme we suggested – Socio-emotional development workshops (ADSE) we observed the following beneficial informative influence upon the process of building representations and knowledge specific to children's socio-emotional development:

- Enriching the vocabulary with socio-emotional education specific words and phrases, that is understanding, naming and expressing emotions;
- Getting to know and obeying norms and rules necessary to a quality life in their peers' group;
- Enriching knowledge on social relations and feelings from reading specific texts;
- The ability to establish correct correlations between facts and their consequences;
- The ability to tell real or imaginary stories with socio-emotional character.

Regarding the formative influence of socio-emotional education we consider they are extremely relevant and they depend on the teachers' attitude and competence, teachers needing pre-training. The motivated and motivating trainer lies in the centre of the programme in order to set an affective and socially supportive climate where each child feels involved and valued in his/ her own building process. This way, the teaching frame:

- Is a model for the pre-school child in speech, behaviour, attitude and posture;
- Allies with the parents for cohesion and continuity in the child's education;
- Can build disciplined, respectful communicative and empathic children by building their own behaviour, thus becoming models;
- To be honest, affectionate and loving, to be human and to get to their heart;
- Contributes to developing children's self-esteem, their stability, inner calmness, their ability to contemplate beauty, to forgive, to make friends, to be sociable;
- Contributes to developing children's feeling of safety, tolerance, solidarity and resilience.

A leading role in developing and moulding emotional and social behaviour is played by parents being informed. Concluding educational partnership programmes with the family by which the kindergarten cooperates with the family as real, equal partners in children's education has beneficial effects on the parent – child communication.



The results following this research confirm the need to apply the principles of socio-emotional education in daily activity, the value and the educational character having a major impact upon educational practice, upon children's preparation for life. This way, the constant wide use of the information, models and examples we have suggested could lead to higher quality education as well as to a better life.

### **3. Conclusions about the impact of the programme**

The topic of our research has been chosen following the acknowledgement of an educational reality, the fact that current educational practice in kindergarten is out of date. We are inclined to theorize without thinking that what we are now proposing for the Romanian education already belongs to history for many educational systems in the world, and that the perspective of quality education in kindergarten depends on us, and a better future starts with ourselves. It is obvious that the pedagogical elements we are trying to impose in educational practice can be found in Romanian kindergartens. These things do not depend on the national educational policy, but on the educator as a professional who considers that self-training and information are elementary duties for a teacher, then he/ she can act knowledgeably or not.

We also think that implementing socio-emotional education principles and content in the children groups allows us to actually speak of *child-centred education*, where teachers establish a warm, positive and self-acceptance climate.

The programme's training component and its implementation in the kindergarten have had a major influence:

- The educational space and the physical environment in the kindergarten have changed, the environment becoming warmer, more expressive, useful and educational.
- The image of the kindergarten has improved in the local community, on a county's and national level.
- It has influenced the kindergarten's vision and mission, with real impact on the optional curriculum and on the kindergarten's project of institutional development.
- Social relations inside the teachers' and children's groups have been improved.
- Parents' trust in the education institution, in the teachers and the whole kindergarten's personnel has increased.
- The quality of the teaching approach has improved, the children groups' management as well as the educational practice in each group participating in the programme.

In this context, we hereinafter present the scheme of the impact

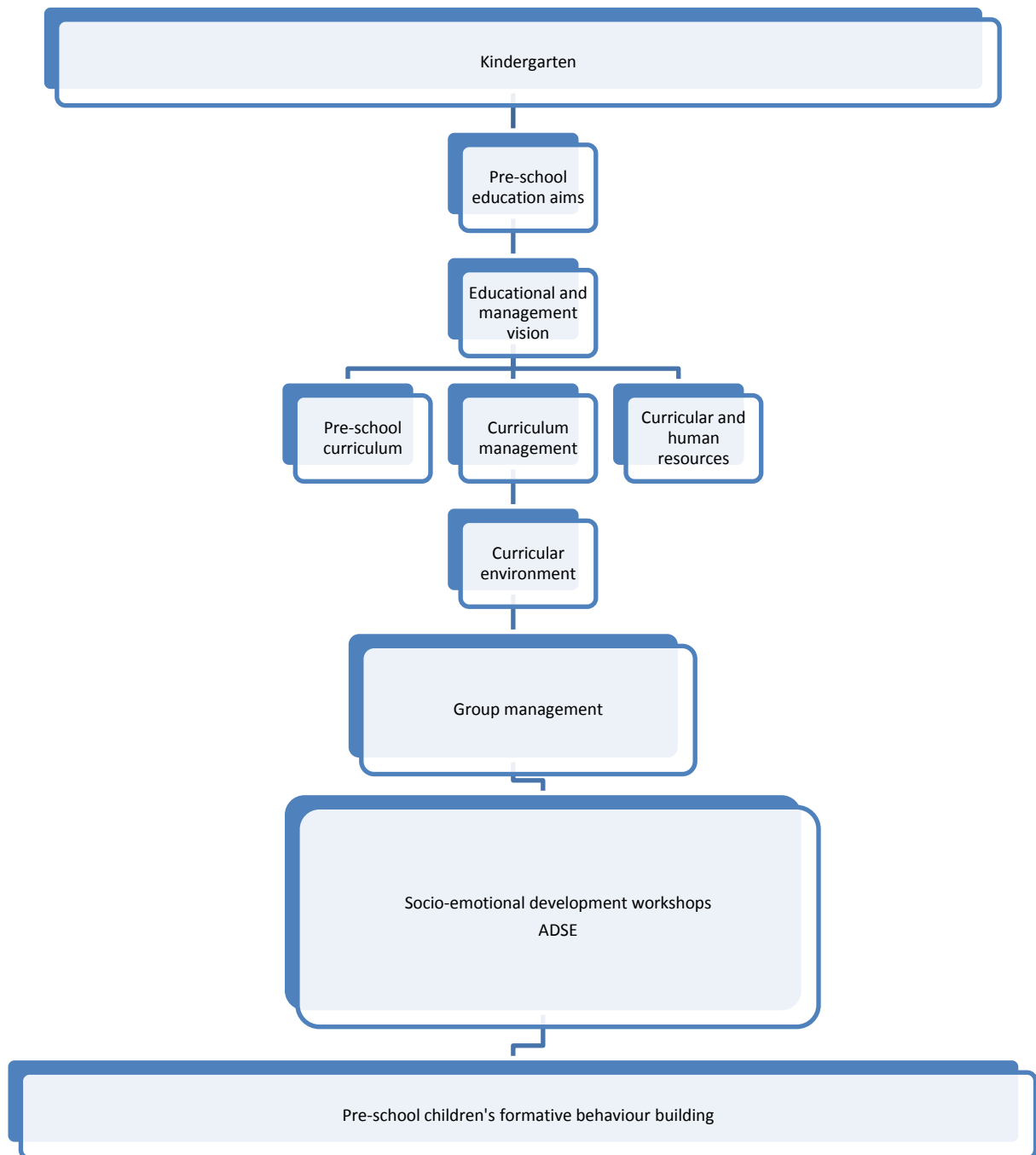


Figure 1.VI. *The impact of the training component*

#### 4. Limits of the study:

Extending the intervention to parents makes us believe the results are superior due to the socio-emotional skills also exercised at home. The impact of the workshops organised with the parents in order to support them develop their parental skills of exercising socio-emotional skills at home has not been assessed. We mention the fact that a scientifically valid instrument to measure the socio-emotional skills in adults – parents and teachers – has not been found; these categories have attended training sessions. Moreover, the educational workshops should have in view to exercise adequate emotional management skills in parents. Children learn by observing and by imitating, and the model of the parent is a learning

context. More than that, the parent's emotions directly influence the reactions they have inside children's behaviour.

The training programme and the educational workshops with the teachers targeted monitoring and changing teachers' undesirable habits, their negative attitudes and behaviour, as well as their socio-emotional competence development, things which we believe have also influenced the success of the programme.

Teachers' training on social and emotional skills development should be followed by a period of at least two months' supervision, which could imply the possibility of receiving immediate feedback for the way they have controlled certain situations as well as in order to receive support in changing some habits inadequate to the programme we have suggested.

The teachers and the parents from the experimental group knew about this educational programme so their reports might have been slightly influenced by this during the positive growth in post-test.

Another drawback might be the fact that the level of socio-emotional competence development had already been high at the children involved in the programme before the start of the project, which could have made them to be more receptive and more easily to be moulded through this kind of activities.

## **5. Consequences of the study**

The results obtained after running the educational programme we have suggested regarding socio-emotional development in pre-school children aged 5 to 7 years old, as well as its impact upon teachers and parents have determined their continuation and implementation on a national scale. This way The Ministry of Education and Research, in partnership with parents' association of „Fairy-tales'House” kindergarten („Căsuța cu povești”) Bistrița, being financially supported by UNICEF Romania, implement the national project *Developing socio-emotional skills in 3 to 7 year-olds*, the scientific content of this project is based on the educational programme we have suggested. We present, in short, the content of the project in annexe 17.

## **6. Practical suggestions for teachers**

Our research, especially the questionnaires applied, emphasized some recommendations which we present as suggestions for every day the teacher spends together with the children:

- Learn the "100 languages" of the child in order to be able to understand him/ her,
- Be natural and normal in your behaviour to a child,
- Respect the child, even when he/ she does not respond to your expectations,
- Be a model for the child,
- Involve the children in separate activities when you can not watch them,
- Involve the children in cooperation activities targeted at sharing materials and waiting for one's turn,
- Offer each child the opportunity to be the first in a game, in a competition, without favouring anyone,
- Guide the child's behaviour after simple rules,
- Help children solve their conflicts correctly,
- Closely watch children's game and promptly intervene if problematic behaviour is about to show (ex. he/ she pulls the toy from somebody else's hand),
- Keep your word when you promise something to children,
- Avoid criticism and observations in public.



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