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DOCTORAL SCHOOL “EDUCATION, REFLECTION, DEVELOPMENT”

DOCTORAL THESIS

DEVELOPING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE
IN LEARNERS OF THE “SECOND CHANCE” PROGRAMME – PRIMARY
EDUCATION THROUGH SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM

SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society, described in the specialized literature as a knowledge society, owes its profile not only to the unprecedented volume of information produced and circulated, but above all to the profound transformation of the relationships among knowledge, communication and action. Unlike earlier economic models, in which value was generated predominantly by material capital, the knowledge economy draws on symbolic resources — information, expertise, the capacity to interpret and to convey — as decisive factors of individual and collective development. In this context, communication ceases to be a mere auxiliary activity and becomes the very infrastructure through which knowledge is constituted, circulates and produces effects.

The need to communicate is not merely a functional requirement imposed by the demands of the labour market; it is a condition for participating in a world in which identity, belonging and recognition are constructed through discourse. To communicate effectively today means to express one's ideas coherently, to understand the messages of others in their nuances, to evaluate information critically, to negotiate meanings and to collaborate in contexts of increasingly pronounced cultural diversity. This requirement applies equally to professional life, to relations with state institutions, to civic participation and to interpersonal relationships, shaping the profile of the contemporary citizen as a subject who cannot fully exist except in and through communication.

Communicative competence has a transversal character and an integrative value for all other competences. Consequently, the task of the school is not limited to transmitting linguistic norms or to practising patterns of writing; it requires creating authentic communication contexts in which the pupil learns to listen and to be heard, to read and to interpret, to write and to express themselves clearly, gradually becoming an active and responsible participant in the public space of communication. This mission takes on heightened relevance in the case of educational programmes intended for people who were unable to complete their schooling in due time and who return to the education system: for these learners, acquiring communicative competence becomes the instrument through which they regain access to knowledge, to opportunities and to a full form of citizenship.

Starting from these premises, the present work investigates the ways in which the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education can contribute to developing learners' written

communication competence, through the design and implementation of a school-based curriculum. The thesis is structured into two complementary parts. Part I, the theoretical part, comprises three chapters devoted to the educational access of people from vulnerable groups, to the curriculum for the “Second Chance” Programme and to the characteristics of the instructional process in this context. Part II, the experimental part, presents the design of the quasi-experimental research and the results obtained through the implementation of the intervention programme “Active Communication, Reflective Attitude” — CAAR, followed by the general conclusions and the references.

This summary preserves the chapter and subchapter structure of the thesis, synthesizing the content of each section through reformulation and condensation, while fully retaining the ideas and the relevant quantitative data.

PART I — THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER I – THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR PEOPLE FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS

I.1 Conceptual landmarks regarding inclusion, equity and diversity in education

I.1.1 Ensuring equity and equal opportunities in education for people from vulnerable groups

The principle of equity in education has gradually established itself as the axiological foundation of democratic educational systems, replacing the logic of formal equality — the same resources for everyone — with a logic of structural compensation, which recognizes that unequal starting points call for differentiated interventions (Demeuse & Baye, 2008). The philosophical foundation of equity was elaborated by Rawls (1999) through the difference principle — inequalities are justified only if they benefit the most disadvantaged — and complemented by Sen (1999), whose capabilities approach shifts the emphasis from the distribution of resources to the individual's actual capacity to make use of them. The Pre-University Education Law no. 198/2023 enshrines equity and non-discrimination, prohibiting school segregation.

The concept of vulnerable groups designates the categories exposed to the risk of exclusion, marginalization or discrimination in accessing and progressing through the educational process, with vulnerability not being an intrinsic property of the individual but a condition produced by the intersection of social, economic and institutional structures (Gorski, 2013). The theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) shows that the school legitimizes the cultural capital of the dominant classes, with Bourdieu distinguishing economic, cultural and social capital. Socio-cognitive theories, however, offer an optimistic counterpoint: Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978) shows that learning potential is actualized through appropriate support. Bloom's mastery learning model (1984) demonstrates that about 95% of pupils can reach high standards given sufficient time and formative feedback, while Hattie's meta-analysis (2009) confirms the role of quality feedback and of the teacher–pupil relationship.

Freire's critical pedagogy (2000) adds a transformative dimension, proposing a dialogic pedagogy of emancipation, based on valuing the life experience of learners. At the international level, the commitment to equity is enshrined in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Sustainable Development Goal no. 4 (UN, 2015). Within the inclusive paradigm, the school assumes a

compensatory function and, moreover, a reorientation from remediation (which presupposes a deficit in the pupil) toward recognition and empowerment, starting from the pupil's resources and potential (Freire, 2000; Gorski, 2016).

I.1.2. Valuing diversity in the educational context

If equity sets out the normative imperative of intervention, valuing diversity represents the methodological, relational and cultural dimension of the same paradigm. The shift from merely tolerating diversity, characteristic of formal integration, to valuing it as an authentic pedagogical resource constitutes one of the most profound leaps of contemporary pedagogy: difference ceases to be a problem to be managed and becomes a resource to be cultivated (Ainscow et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2020). Booth and Ainscow (2011) propose a three-dimensional model of inclusion — inclusive cultures, policies and practices — whose convergence produces authentic inclusion.

Socio-cultural theories of learning (Bruner, 1996; Rogoff, 2003) emphasize that, since knowledge is a cultural product constructed through social interaction, competences acquired in diverse cultural contexts are just as valid as those of the dominant school culture, which legitimizes pupils' diversity as a cognitive resource. In teaching practice, valuing diversity is achieved primarily through instructional differentiation (Tomlinson, 2014) — a preventive strategy, integrated into the design, which maintains high standards for all — and through backward design within the Understanding by Design framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

I.2. School disengagement and departure from the education system by people from vulnerable groups

I.2.1. Conceptual distinctions between early school leaving and school dropout

The pedagogical and sociological literature works with three complementary concepts to describe the interruption of the educational trajectory: school disengagement, school dropout and early school leaving. Disengagement designates the gradual process through which the pupil loses their involvement with the educational activity and with the school institution. Finn (1989) structures the disengagement process along two dimensions: behavioural disengagement (absenteeism, declining performance) and psychological disengagement (a decrease in motivation and in the sense of belonging), the latter usually preceding the former and being harder to identify. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (2005) situates disengagement at the intersection of the microsystemic, mesosystemic, exosystemic and macrosystemic levels, contradicting explanations that locate the problem exclusively at the level of the pupil.

School dropout designates the interruption of school attendance before completing a level of education, without obtaining certification (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2012). Rumberger (2011) distinguishes between pull factors (the need to work, family responsibilities) and push factors (negative school experiences, repeated failure, a sense of not belonging). Early school leaving, a concept used in European policies, refers to young people who have completed at most lower secondary education and are no longer in education or training, constituting the reference indicator for monitoring the phenomenon at the level of the European Union.

I.2.2. Social implications of the phenomenon of leaving the education system

Leaving the education system functions as a multiplier of vulnerability: an already disadvantaged person becomes even more vulnerable through the lack of educational credentials, entering a cycle of disadvantage that tends to reproduce itself across generations. From the perspective of human capital theory (Becker, 1993), abandoning educational investment in the early phases entails compounded costs over the course of an entire life. Rumberger (2011) systematizes risk factors into four categories — individual, family, school and socioeconomic — while Berliner (2006) and Gorski (2013) show that external factors (poverty, family instability) influence performance more strongly than factors intrinsic to the teaching process. A school factor with major impact is the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), amplified by the process of labelling.

The effects of early school leaving are significant and long-lasting: at the individual level, major difficulties in professional integration, high unemployment rates and negative effects on health and civic participation (OECD, 2020; European Commission, 2019); and at the social level, high economic costs and pressure on protection systems (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In Romania, the early school leaving rate was 15.6% in 2022 and rose to 16.6% in 2023, far exceeding the European Union average of 9.5%, which calls for urgent measures, all the more so as the persistent gap between rural and urban areas highlights the geographical character of educational inequity.

I.3. Reintegration into the education system of people who left school early

I.3.1. Educational public policies for combating early school leaving through compensatory programmes

At the European level, the 2011 Recommendation of the Council of the European Union structured the policy response along three complementary directions: prevention policies (reducing risk before it materializes, by improving the quality of education and access to early

education); intervention policies (aimed at pupils identified as at risk, through early warning systems, individualized plans and counselling); and compensatory policies (intended for people who have already left the system, offering them alternative pathways for reintegration). The 2022 Recommendation on pathways to school success extended this framework, proposing a systemic and inclusive approach that incorporates, alongside academic results, the dimensions of personal, social and emotional development and the well-being of beneficiaries.

I.3.2. Educational programmes for the reintegration into education of people who left school early

European states have developed a varied set of reintegration programmes which, analysed comparatively, reveal consistent pedagogical principles. The French model *Écoles de la Deuxième Chance* (E2C, 1997) combines personalized training, social support and internships with employers, through a radical individualization of the pathway. The German dual model (VET) anchors learning in practical experience, reactivating intrinsic motivation. Other reference models are the Dutch *Vavo* programme, the Portuguese *Novas Oportunidades* programme (focused on validating competences acquired through experience), *Youthreach* in Ireland and the European Youth Guarantee initiative (2014), effective in reducing the number of NEET young people.

In Romania, the main instrument of educational reintegration is the “Second Chance” Programme, built on the principle of organizational and curricular flexibility, with content structured into integrated modules that allow the pathway to be accelerated and fundamental acquisitions to be recovered. The programme uses formative assessment as the main means of appraising progress and draws on competences previously acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts — an approach aligned with Freire's transformative pedagogy (2000) and Rogoff's participatory model (2003). The analysis of reintegration models converges toward a set of principles of success: individualization of the pathway, curricular flexibility, recognition of informal competences, anchoring learning in experience, partnership with the family and the community, and an institutional culture of trust.

CHAPTER II – CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CURRICULUM FOR THE “SECOND CHANCE” PROGRAMME – PRIMARY EDUCATION

II.1 Pedagogical landmarks regarding competence formation in primary education

II.1.1 The concept of competence as an aim of the instructional-educational process

The concept of competence has followed a complex theoretical trajectory, from its initial uses in linguistics to contemporary pedagogical meanings, becoming the central element of the modern curriculum, which defines aims in terms of transferable capacities rather than mere accumulations of knowledge. Cristea (2018) defines competence as the capacity to mobilize and combine effectively, in varied and unpredictable situations, several cognitive resources in order to solve a problem-situation, thereby capturing the integrative, contextual and transferable character of competence. Bocoş (2002) describes competence as an integrated set of capacities and abilities for applying, operating with and transferring acquisitions.

The theoretical approach to competence draws on several epistemological frameworks. From a cognitive perspective, Bloom's taxonomy (1956), revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), hierarchizes objectives across six levels and introduces the distinction among factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge, allowing constructive alignment among objectives, activities and assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). From a constructivist perspective, competence is an active, socially mediated construction (Vygotsky, 1978; Jonassen, 1999), and Ausubel (1981) shows, through the theory of meaningful learning, that new knowledge is durably integrated only when it is anchored in pre-existing cognitive structures. At the European level, the framework of key competences for lifelong learning (2006, updated 2018) brings together eight key competences.

II.1.2. The graduate profile of primary education in Romania

The graduate profile represents, in curriculum theory, a reference component that describes the acquisitions expected at the end of a level of schooling, expressed in terms of key competences and associated descriptors. It functions simultaneously as a landmark for curricular design, for the selection of content and for assessment, orienting the entire formative endeavour toward coherent aims. The graduate profile of primary education in Romania (Ministry of Education, 2023) operationalizes the eight key competences at an elementary level, with communicative competence — which integrates reading, writing and understanding messages — occupying a central position, as the foundation of the entire subsequent school pathway.

II.1.3. Particularities of learning for competence formation in the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education

Competence formation in the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education has particularities determined by the atypical profile of the learners — young people and adults who resume their schooling after an interruption of variable duration — and by the characteristics of learning in adulthood. Andragogical theory (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015) outlines the profile of the adult learner through orientation toward autonomy, the valuing of life experience as a learning resource, motivation grounded in immediate practical usefulness, and the centring of learning on solving authentic tasks. Consequently, competence formation in this category of learners requires a teaching approach that starts from prior experience, ensures the applied relevance of the content and supports the reconstruction of a positive relationship with learning, one often damaged by prior experiences of failure.

II.2 The applied character of the curriculum for the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education

II.2.1 The competence-centred curriculum

The curriculum constitutes one of the fundamental concepts of educational theory, going beyond the narrow meaning of a study plan or school syllabus and including objectives, content, teaching strategies, assessment methods and formal, non-formal and informal educational experiences (Cucos, 2014). Cerghit (2008) defines it as a complex system of decision-making processes regarding the selection, organization and use of learning experiences, and Cristea (2010) as a pedagogical project that reflects the relationship among aims, content and strategies.

The plurality of meanings — curriculum as document, process, product and lived experience — has required a multidimensional approach. Potolea (2002) identifies three complementary planes of analysis: the structural plane (the components and the relationships among them), the procedural plane (teaching, learning, assessment) and the plane of the product. At the structural level, the author proposes the triangular model, which articulates aims, content and instructional time, and the pentagonal model, which adds instructional and assessment strategies, generating a more complex network of functional relationships. The competence-centred curriculum thus orients the design from aims toward learning experiences that ensure the formation and transfer of competences.

II.2.2 Specific aspects of the school syllabi for the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education

The school syllabi for the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education have a pronounced applied character, being structured into integrated modules. They draw on the organizational flexibility specific to the programme, adapt the content to the life experience and needs of adult learners, and grant a central role to formative assessment. For the subject Romanian Language and Literature, the syllabus (Order of the Minister no. 5528/2011) organizes acquisitions around the general competences of receiving and producing written messages, providing the reference framework for designing a school-based curriculum oriented toward developing written communication competence.

CHAPTER III – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS IN THE “SECOND CHANCE” PROGRAMME – PRIMARY EDUCATION

III.1. Pedagogical landmarks regarding the interactional educational approach

III.1.1. Conceptual and methodological dimensions of instructional design

Instructional design constitutes a fundamental component of the instructional-educational process, with the role of organizing teaching, learning and assessment activities in accordance with the aims, with the specific nature of the curriculum and with the particularities of the beneficiaries. Bocoş and Jucan (2019) conceptualize it as a coherent set of operations for anticipating objectives, content, strategies and assessment methods, as well as the functional relationships among them. In the “Second Chance” Programme, this competence takes on heightened importance, since the heterogeneity of the group and the biographical particularities of the learners demand a high degree of flexibility and pedagogical responsibility.

The central concepts of design — the instructional context, the instructional situation and learning experiences — require, in this context, a specific configuration. The instructional context, understood as an active system of influences (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), is marked by heterogeneity and by fragmented prior educational experiences. The most productive instructional situations are those placed in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and designed as opportunities for the active construction of knowledge (Perrenoud, 2000), and learning experiences become effective when they are anchored in prior knowledge (Ausubel, 1981) and go through the cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Within this framework, the teacher goes beyond the role of transmitter of knowledge, taking on the functions of facilitator, mediator and organizer of learning.

III.1.2. Interactive and group teaching strategies in the instructional-educational activity within the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education

Teaching strategies are integrated sets of methods, procedures, means and forms of organization through which the teacher achieves educational aims. In the “Second Chance” Programme, they acquire particularities determined by the profile of adult learners and by the characteristics of learning in adulthood, as systematized by Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2015): orientation toward autonomy, the valuing of life experience as a resource, motivation based on immediate practical usefulness, and a focus on solving authentic problems.

Interactive and group strategies — cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), dialogic education (Mercer, Wegerif & Major, 2019) and active-participatory methods — respond to these particularities, transforming instruction into an activating process that draws on the interaction among learners, stimulates critical thinking and supports the internalization of motivation. Such strategies are relevant for a school population marked by prior experiences of failure, since they rebuild confidence, the sense of competence and educational belonging.

III.1.3. School achievement and school motivation in the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education

School achievement and school motivation are inseparable concepts that condition each other, and returning to the education system requires, for the beneficiaries of the “Second Chance” Programme, the reconstruction of a relationship with learning that has been altered by prior experiences of exclusion and failure. Nicola (2003) defines school achievement as a complex of cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural acquisitions through which the pupil reaches their optimal potential, which, in this context, requires reference not to uniform standards but to the personal progress of each learner.

Finn's participation–identification model (1989), extended by Rumberger (2011), explains success and failure through the degree of participation in school life and identification with the institution's values, suggesting that authentic reintegration requires the simultaneous reconstruction of behavioural participation and affective identification. From the perspective of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), supporting the three fundamental psychological needs — autonomy, competence and relatedness — facilitates an autonomous and durable motivation, essential for learners' perseverance along their educational pathway.

III.2. Aspects regarding the design of the school-based curriculum offer

III.2.1. Methodological and curricular requirements for developing the school-based curriculum

The school-based curriculum represents the component of the national curriculum through which the education unit exercises its design autonomy, configuring particularized formative

pathways capable of responding to the specific needs and interests of pupils and of drawing on the particularities of the local community. Far from being a mere quantitative extension of the programme, this component materializes the school's capacity to assume a pedagogical identity of its own (Potolea, 2002). The proposed programmes are subject to quality requirements: relevance in relation to the priorities of educational policy, topical currency, complementarity with the common core, and an innovative character — the development of a high-quality school-based curriculum constituting, according to Albulescu and Catalano (2024), an indicator of the professional maturity of teachers.

The normative framework in force regulates two main types of optional subjects: the deepening optional, oriented toward developing the specific competences already stipulated in the syllabus of a common-core subject, through new learning activities; and the optional as a new subject or a new field, oriented toward complementary acquisitions, which includes the optional as a new subject and the integrated optional, structured around an integrating theme. The development of the school-based curriculum starts from a rigorous analysis of the target group's needs and supports an authentic, learner-centred educational pathway.

III.2.2. Roles of the teacher in implementing the school-based curriculum in the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education

Implementing the school-based curriculum requires the teacher to assume multiple, articulated roles. As a curriculum designer, the teacher analyses the group's needs, formulates the targeted competences and constructs the learning activities. In classroom activity, the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning, a mediator of educational relationships and an organizer of learning experiences, valuing the learners' prior experience and supporting their autonomy. The role of assessor is exercised predominantly through formative assessment, oriented toward individual progress and the provision of constructive feedback. In the “Second Chance” Programme, these roles take on heightened importance, since the quality of the pedagogical relationship directly conditions the reconstruction of learners' confidence and motivation, as prerequisites for educational success.

PART II — THE EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

CHAPTER IV. THE DESIGN OF THE EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

IV.1 The premises and context of the research

The starting point of the research is the recognition of written communication competence as a fundamental acquisition of contemporary education, with direct effects on school results, on the professional trajectory and on the way in which the individual exercises their citizenship in a society marked by intense information flows. This centrality has justified, at the international level, the development of comparative assessments that allow educational systems to identify their successes and vulnerabilities along the dimension of literacy.

An essential landmark in this respect is the PIRLS study (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), launched in 2001 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and considered one of the most relevant instruments for assessing reading acquisitions at the end of primary education. The purpose of the assessment is to measure and interpret the differences among national educational systems with regard to reading competence, offering a comparative picture of progress and allowing the identification of the factors that influence the capacity to understand written text.

Romania participated in three editions: in 2001 it ranked 22nd out of 36 countries, in 2006 36th out of 45, and in 2011 it retained the 36th position out of 45. The country was not included in the 2016 and 2021 editions, with a return to participation scheduled for 2026, which renews the relevance of analysing the earlier results. The data show, for Romania, a significant decline in average reading performance in 2006 (22 points below 2001) and a partial recovery in 2011 (an increase of 9 points); on the dimension of understanding and interpreting text, a decrease of 12 points is recorded between 2001 and 2006 and an increase of 9 points in 2011. Overall, in the 2011 edition Romania was placed second to last among the participating EU states, which highlights substantial gaps at the level of the primary cycle.

From this perspective, written communication competence goes beyond linguistic and grammatical correctness: it involves the coherent organization of ideas, their support through arguments, the adaptation of the message to the context and its clear and persuasive delivery. In the PIRLS tasks, pupils are asked to express their own point of view, to interpret the attitudes of characters and events in narrative texts and to support their answers through explicit references to the content they have read. Understood in this way, written communication competence reflects the level of critical and analytical thinking: pupils capable of producing a

coherent, logical and argumentative message demonstrate not only mastery of language but also a deep understanding of the text and of the ideas conveyed through it.

Beyond the cognitive dimension, written communication is an indispensable instrument of active participation in social and professional life — from expressing a personal opinion to conveying a written message in traditional or digital format. From this perspective, the PIRLS results send educational systems a signal regarding the need to consolidate written expression skills at the level of the primary cycle, as the basis of the entire subsequent school pathway. Understanding written text is not a mere basic skill but a transversal competence with effects on the whole learning pathway: in the absence of good comprehension of what is read, pupils cannot operate with abstract concepts, cannot build durable knowledge and cannot constitute themselves as autonomous thinkers. Comprehended reading remains, in this sense, the foundation of lifelong learning, and the development of written communication competence is justified in relation to the aim of forming a profile of a pupil who is autonomous, reflective and capable of active involvement in the community.

IV.2 Review of the specialized literature

The review of the specialized literature provided the theoretical and explanatory foundation of the practical endeavour, offering the basis for formulating the objectives, hypotheses and methodology. The articles were selected from the Google Scholar and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) databases, starting from the keywords: communication competences, interactive strategies, effective learning and academic motivation. The inclusion criterion targeted scientific studies on these terms, published in the 2016–2025 interval.

The literature confirms the positive impact of dialogic education and collaborative learning on results and on motivational structure: exploratory conversation and mutual argumentation simultaneously develop communication and critical thinking (Cui & Teo, 2023), cooperative learning improves performance (Garcia et al., 2024) and reorients motivation from failure avoidance toward a mastery orientation (Mendo-Lázaro et al., 2022). Qualitative and structured peer feedback support performance, self-efficacy and the internalization of motivation for writing (Koenka et al., 2021; Cui et al., 2021).

IV.3 The aim and objectives of the research

The aim of the research consisted in verifying the effectiveness of the intervention programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude* — CAAR on the development of written

communication competence, on the improvement of the use of learning strategies and on the academic motivation of the graduates of the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education.

The research objectives were the following:

O1 – determining the level of acquisition of written communication competence and the level of development of learning strategies and academic motivation among the primary-education graduates in the “Second Chance” programme involved in the research;

O2 – selecting the interactive strategies and the content adapted to the specific nature of education in the “Second Chance” programme, with a view to designing an intervention programme (the development programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR*) that would contribute to improving written communication;

O3 – developing an intervention programme that would contribute to developing written communication competence, to improving the use of learning strategies and to stimulating the academic motivation of the Level IV graduates of the “Second Chance” Programme included in the experimental study;

O4 – the practical implementation of the intervention programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR*;

O5 – analysing the effectiveness of the intervention programme by interpreting and comparing the results obtained by the learners participating in the study in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages.

IV.4. The research questions

1. To what extent does the intervention programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR* influence the development of learners' written communication competence?
2. To what extent does the intervention programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR* influence learners' use of learning strategies?
3. To what extent does the intervention programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR* influence the level of learners' academic motivation?

IV.5. The hypotheses and variables of the research

The general hypothesis, necessary for organizing and conducting the quasi-experiment, was formulated as follows:

- The implementation of the intervention programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR* produces significant differences between the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages regarding the level of written communication competence, the use of learning strategies and the academic motivation of the learners

Secondary hypothesis 1: The intervention programme will contribute to raising the functional level of learners' written communication competence, with respect to working with the information in a text, working with the main ideas of the text, formulating conclusions regarding ideas/facts in the text, and interpreting and integrating ideas into new contexts.

Secondary hypothesis 2: The intervention programme will contribute to making learning more effective by improving learners' learning strategies, with respect to the processes of reading/comprehension and writing/composition;

Secondary hypothesis 3: The intervention programme will contribute to raising the level of academic motivation as a predictor of socio-educational integration and school performance.

Independent variable:

- the experimental programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude – CAAR*, based on interactive teaching strategies

Dependent variables:

DV1 – the level of acquisition of the written communication abilities of the learners participating in the experimental study, namely the reception of written messages in various communication contexts and the production of messages in various communication situations, measured through the test assessing fundamental knowledge in the Romanian language, administered within the national assessment for the fourth grade;

DV2 – the functional level of learners' learning strategies regarding reading/comprehension and writing/composition, for making learning more effective, measured through the SMALSI assessment questionnaire, the CITIT (READING) scale and the SCRIS (WRITING) scale;

DV3 – the level of learners' academic motivation, as a predictor of socio-educational integration and school performance, measured through the SMALSI assessment questionnaire, the MOTSCA (SCHOOL MOTIVATION) scale.

IV.6. The sample of participants

The reference population consisted of Level IV graduates of the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education, enrolled in the first year of lower secondary education. According to the SIIIR data provided by the Caraş-Severin County School Inspectorate, in the second semester of the 2024–2025 school year, 45 learners were enrolled (27 male and 18 female), coming from urban and rural areas, at the “Sf. Dimitrie” Technological High School in Teregova and the “Mihai Novac” Technological High School in Oravița, with an age distribution ranging from 14 to 62 years.

The groups were constituted through non-probabilistic, convenience sampling — a valid option for quasi-experimental studies and pilot research (Bocoş, 2021) — with recognition of the caution needed in appraising representativeness (Sackett & Larson, 1990). A sample is considered representative to the extent that the persons included possess the essential characteristics of the target population, with representativeness being explainable statistically on the basis of two variable elements — the error and the confidence level. The sample size was estimated with the G*Power application version 3.1: for a standard power of 0.8 (significance threshold 0.05, confidence level 80%) a sample of 24 persons in two groups resulted, and for a power of 0.9 (threshold 0.05, confidence level 90%) a sample of 30 persons in two groups. In order to obtain conclusive results, a sample of 30 participants was chosen, distributed into two groups with equivalent characteristics: the experimental group and the control group.

IV.7. The intervention programme

The development of the programme intended for developing written communication competence was based on the full use of the specific school context: adapting the teaching message to the concrete needs of the learners, capitalizing on personal experience, selecting resources correlated with the group's capacity to receive them, choosing appropriate methods, stimulating interaction, encouraging cooperation and cultivating an interest in written text.

The programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude* — CAAR was approved by the Curriculum Committee of the “Sf. Dimitrie” Technological High School in Teregova and designed on the basis of the school syllabus for Romanian Language and Literature for Level IV of the “Second Chance” Programme (Order of the Minister no. 5528/2011), in correlation with the level descriptors for the key competence of reading, writing and understanding messages from the graduate profile of primary education (Order of the Minister of Education no. 6731/2023).

The quasi-experimental study had as its central element the implementation of this programme, whose activities were designed so as to contribute to the formation of written communication competence and, at the same time, to the acquisition of transversal value-related and attitudinal outcomes — autonomy and personal responsibility, social interaction and personal development. The need for the programme derived from the learners' difficulties in receiving and producing written messages, from the insufficient use of effective learning strategies and from the variable level of academic motivation, which directly influences involvement, perseverance and school results.

The programme included ten integrated activities centred on the narrative text, in accordance with the pedagogical model Evocation–Realization of meaning–Reflection (the E–R–R framework), recognized for its capacity to structure the learning process so as to facilitate the active involvement of learners and the development of critical thinking. The approach integrated tasks through which learners built their acquisitions starting from prior experiences, interpreted and integrated the information into their own system of knowledge, formulated personal reflections and reasoned conclusions, and identified connections with other fields or with everyday life situations, articulating the three formative directions adopted: developing written communication competence, improving learning strategies and raising the level of academic motivation.

IV.8 Research methods and instruments

IV.8.1 Analysis of school documents

By examining official sources, school documents and archive documents, the analysis revealed the absence of any studies on the level of development of the written communication competence of the graduates of the “Second Chance” programme – primary education, which supported the necessity and priority of evaluative studies in this segment, in the context of policies for reducing functional illiteracy. The CAAR programme was developed in order to

report graduates' performance in terms compatible with the standardized national assessment at the end of the fourth grade.

IV.8.2 The focus-group method

This represented the qualitative research element, based on the interaction among participants and on the exchange of ideas, valued for its capacity to capture subjective experiences, motivations and social representations of the educational process (Morgan, 1997). It offered a framework for exploring in depth the participants' perceptions of the school climate and of the difficulties in receiving and producing written messages.

IV.8.3 The questionnaire-based survey

A quantitative method of systematically collecting data through standardized questions (Chelcea, 2004). To measure DV2 and DV3, the questionnaire for assessing learning strategies and school motivation — SMALSI (School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory) was applied, developed by Kathy Chatham Stroud and Cecil R. Reynolds, adapted and standardized for Romania by a COGNITROM group coordinated by Mihaela Porumb, with the manual published in Romanian in 2010.

As a standardized instrument, SMALSI ensures uniform procedures for administration, scoring and interpretation, allowing the comparability of results. The adaptation studies for Romania confirmed the validity (content, criterion and construct) and the reliability of the instrument (high internal consistency and satisfactory test–retest stability). The questionnaire assesses 10 constructs: seven scales of strengths (study strategies, note-taking/listening, reading/comprehension, writing/research, test-taking strategies, organizational techniques, time management) and three scales of weaknesses (low academic motivation, anxiety toward texts, concentration/attention difficulties).

IV.8.4 The testing method

Tests are instruments for measuring behavioural characteristics or cognitive qualities, offering objective descriptions converted quantitatively (Bocoş et al., 2021). The test assessing fundamental competences in Romanian Language and Literature from the National Assessment at the end of the fourth grade (2021) was used, developed by the National Centre for Policies and Evaluation in Education, an instrument with recognized methodological validity, designed according to the construction model specific to the PIRLS study.

The targeted cognitive domains correspond to general competences 3 (receiving written messages) and 4 (producing messages) from the Romanian Language and Literature syllabus

for the fourth grade (Order of the Minister no. 5003/2014). The test comprises a narrative literary stimulus text and 15 items distributed across five categories (multiple choice, matching/association, dual choice, short answer/completion and structured essay), allowing an integrated assessment of written communication competence, from identifying explicit information to elaborated, interpretive answers. The assessment process consisted in appraising the answers on the basis of the performance descriptors associated with the allocated codes, in accordance with the instrument developed by the National Centre for Policies and Evaluation in Education.

IV.8.5 The observation method

To collect qualitative data with a view to measuring DV2 and DV3, the learners' behaviours were observed in different learning contexts throughout the intervention programme. The grid used was developed for the activity of assessing the competences of fourth-grade graduates from the perspective of key-competence acquisition (a base-line study), within the project “Relevant Curriculum, Open Education for All — CRED”, co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014–2020 and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Research at the national level.

IV.8.6 The experimental method – the quasi-experiment

In the present research, the quasi-experiment constituted the main investigative endeavour. In the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages, the knowledge test and the questionnaire described above were administered, while in the experimental stage the systematic manipulation of the independent variable — the CAAR intervention programme — was carried out, in order to observe the effects produced on the level of written communication competence (receiving and producing messages), on the learning strategies associated with the processes of reading/comprehension and writing/composition, as well as on the participants' academic motivation.

IV.9 Conducting the quasi-experimental research

The study fell within the quasi-experimental paradigm, with an applied aim, seeking to identify viable pedagogical solutions for improving written communication competence and increasing the cognitive and motivational-attitudinal performance of the learners.

The research was carried out by going through three consecutive stages. The pre-experimental stage comprised three complementary endeavours: identifying, through the focus

group, the difficulties encountered in written communication and in the learners' own learning process; measuring the initial level of written communication competence through the test assessing fundamental competences in Romanian Language and Literature (National Assessment, fourth grade, 2021); and measuring the initial level of learning strategies and academic motivation through the SMALSI questionnaire. In the experimental stage, the CAAR programme was implemented exclusively for the experimental group, while the control group took part, during the same period, in the usual teaching activities, without exposure to the programme — a condition that provided the methodological framework for assessing the differential effect of the treatment. In the post-experimental stage, both groups underwent posttesting, through the administration of the 2022 test (identical in structure but with a different stimulus text) and through the re-application of SMALSI, in order to identify the changes that occurred at the level of the dependent variables.

IV.9.1 The place and period of the research

The research was carried out during the period 27 January 2025 – 20 June 2025, in two locations in Caraş-Severin County (Teregova and Oraviţa), segmented as follows: the pre-experimental stage (27.01.2025 – 28.02.2025), the experimental stage (03.03.2025 – 24.05.2025) and the post-experimental stage (26.05.2025 – 20.06.2025).

IV.9.2 The pre-experimental stage

IV.9.2.1. Organizing the activity within the focus group

The focus group was used to investigate, from a broad perspective, the issues related to the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and written communication competences. Two discussion groups were organized, each with 15 participants, with the meetings designed to last 90 minutes (70 minutes of discussion and 20 minutes of questions and clarifications), under the coordination of two moderators, moderation being considered an essential stage of the method.

The main moderator presented the purpose of the meeting, and the discussions were opened with the main question regarding the manner of communication and collaboration in the classroom, with teachers and peers, whose answers made it possible to learn opinions about teacher–pupil and pupil–pupil relationships. This was followed by the question regarding the most frequent challenges in reading/understanding a text and writing answers, from which the problems that hinder communication were identified. The specific questions investigated in depth the causes of the difficulties, related to the perception of the teacher's teaching strategies and to the learners' own manner of involvement in solving tasks, while the final question addressed the ways of educational intervention for improving competence. On the basis of the

answers, corroborated with the review of the literature, the CAAR intervention programme was grounded.

IV.9.2.2 Administering the knowledge test

To measure the initial level of written communication competence, the test assessing fundamental competences in Romanian Language and Literature from the National Assessment, fourth grade, version 1 (2021) was applied. The test is organized around four content domains with different weightings: “Working with explicit information from the text” (4 items) and “Working with the main ideas” (2 items) — together 40%; “Formulating/working with conclusions” (6 items) — 40%; “Interpreting and integrating ideas into new contexts” (3 items) — 20%. The assessment was carried out on the basis of the performance descriptors associated with the codes, according to the National Report EN IV – 2021.

The operationalization of the competences covered four assessed domains: D1 — extracting explicitly stated information (items I1–I4, multiple choice); D2 — working with the main ideas of the text (I5 multiple choice, I6 matching); D3 — formulating direct conclusions (I7–I9 multiple choice, I10–I11 short answer/completion, I12 dual choice); D4 — interpreting and integrating ideas and information (I13 dual choice, I14 short answer/completion, I15 structured essay). The correlation among the assessed domains, the specific competences and the corresponding items is summarized in the following table.

Content domain	Targeted specific competences	Items
D1 — Extracting explicitly stated information	Associating elements of the text with one's own experiences; extracting significant elements; evaluating the textual elements that lead to in-depth understanding; interest in literary reading	I1–I4 (multiple choice)
D2 — Working with the main ideas of the text	Extracting main and detail ideas; associating characters with actions/lines	I5 (multiple choice), I6 (matching)
D3 — Formulating direct conclusions	Formulating simple conclusions based on reading; associating them with one's own experiences; noticing deviations in the text	I7–I9 (multiple choice), I10–I11 (short answer/completion), I12 (dual choice)
D4 — Interpreting and integrating ideas and information	Recognizing and correcting spelling and punctuation errors; writing a portrait-type description; retelling a sequence; interest in creative writing	I13 (dual choice), I14 (short answer/completion), I15 (structured essay)

Table 4. The correlation of assessed domains – specific competences – items in the structure of the test.

IV.9.2.3 Administering the SMALSI questionnaire for assessing learning strategies and school motivation

The SMALSI instrument was used to measure the level of development of reading/comprehension competence, writing/research abilities and school motivation, through

the CITIT (READING), SCRIS (WRITING) and MOTSCA (SCHOOL MOTIVATION) scales. The CITIT scale (13 items) assesses the strategies of previewing, monitoring, rereading and self-testing that improve comprehension and retention. The SCRIS scale (13 items) assesses the ability to research topics, organize written projects and check for errors. The MOTSCA scale (17 items) assesses the lack of intrinsic motivation to engage in and complete school tasks. The questionnaire was administered in groups, with participants completing all 170 items in the pencil-and-paper version, according to the instructions in the SMALSI Manual.

IV.9.3 The experimental stage

During the period 03.03.2025 – 24.05.2025, 10 integrated activities were carried out, designed around themes within the learners' sphere of interest, with titles formulated in an action-oriented way around the phrase “we communicate about”: education, family, identity, environmental protection, protection against exploitation, cyberbullying, interculturality, patriotism, solidarity and active citizenship.

The programme was based on David A. Kolb's experiential learning model, which conceptualizes learning as a cyclical process of transforming experience into knowledge, competence and cognitive development. This model meets the requirements of an intervention programme for developing learners' competences through the alternation between action and reflection, between direct perception and conceptual abstraction, the cycle being made up of four interdependent stages (Kolb, 1984).

In the first stage, concrete experience, learners took part in authentic learning situations based on exploration and interaction, which favour the activation of intrinsic motivation and the stimulation of cognitive interest. The second stage, reflective observation, addressed reflection on the prior experience: learners critically analyse the activity carried out, identify causal relationships, cognitive difficulties and ways of optimization, with reflection constituting the metacognitive mechanism through which experience acquires educational meaning. In the stage of abstract conceptualization, experience and reflection are transformed into organized cognitive structures, through operations of abstraction and conceptual integration that contribute to the development of logical thinking and higher-order cognitive competences. The last stage, active experimentation, involved applying the concepts and cognitive strategies in new contexts, facilitating the transfer of acquisitions and the development of autonomy in learning.

The design was carried out within the constructivist framework Evocation–Realization of meaning–Reflection. In the evocation stage, pre-existing conceptual schemata were activated through a graphic organizer (a cluster/spider map) starting from the key term in the title of the theme. Realization of meaning constituted the core of the process: starting from a narrative stimulus text with civic content that presents a problem-situation, the following were carried out: extracting explicit information (graphic organizer — Who?, What?, How?, Where?, When?), working with the main ideas (the Şapiro's Tree method, in which the soil, the roots, the trunk, the hollow, the branches, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits represent the context, the causes, the actors, the central problem, the consequences, the behaviours, the emotions and the solutions) and formulating direct conclusions (the divergent question “What would have happened if...?”, through the Think–Pair–Share method). Reflection addressed awareness, self-assessment and transfer, through viewing an open educational resource, a discussion web and expressing one's personal opinion in writing (“How important is... to me?”).

The open educational resources, identified on the website of the CRED project (SMIS code 118327, beneficiary the Ministry of Education), were materials published under a free licence, with civic content correlated to the key term of each activity. Each of the 10 themes was designed on the E–R–R structure, with its own narrative stimulus text, a specific assessment question for formulating conclusions and a written reflection topic correlated with the civic subject discussed. The synthesis of the ten integrated activities is presented in the following table.

No.	Theme (key term)	Written reflection (personal opinion)
1	Education	How important is education to me?
2	Family	How important is family to me?
3	Identity	The importance of the right to identity
4	Environmental protection	The importance of environmental protection
5	Protection against exploitation	The right to protection against abuse
6	Cyberbullying	The effects of cyberbullying
7	Interculturality	Effective intercultural communication
8	Patriotism	Patriotism and its manifestations
9	Solidarity	The effects of a lack of solidarity
10	Active citizenship	I take part too!

Table (summary). The 10 integrated activities of the CAAR programme, designed on the Evocation–Realization of meaning–Reflection framework.

In the evocation sequence, each activity started from connections with the learners' life experience and from creating a cluster map based on the key term. In the realization of meaning,

learners read the stimulus text individually and underlined the important information, completed a graphic organizer with explicit information (time, place, characters, vocabulary), analysed the problem-situation through the Șapiro's Tree method (the environment/soil, the causes/root, the actors/trunk, the problem/hollow, the effects/branches, the actions/leaves, the solution/fruit) and formulated direct conclusions starting from a “What would have happened if...?” question. In the reflection, an open educational resource was presented, a discussion web was built and learners were asked to express their personal opinion in writing.

IV.10. The post-experimental stage

In this stage, quantitative methods were used (the testing method and the questionnaire-based method). Both groups were given the posttest for assessing fundamental competences in Romanian Language from the National Assessment, fourth grade. The SMALSI Questionnaire was also re-administered, to both the experimental and the control group, with the CITIT (READING), SCRIS (WRITING) and MOTSCA (SCHOOL MOTIVATION) scales being taken into account.

The purpose of these activities was to identify the changes that occurred at the level of the dependent variables in the case of the experimental group, as a result of implementing the intervention programme, by reference both to the moment before the intervention and to the control group, in order to verify the attainment of the objectives and the confirmation or disconfirmation of the hypotheses. The data obtained were compared with those accumulated previously, in order to assess the effectiveness of the CAAR programme.

IV.11. Considerations regarding research ethics

Research ethics constituted an essential pillar of the endeavour, since it guarantees both the validity of the results and the social responsibility of scientific activity. A first aspect concerned the protection of participants: all were informed about the objectives and the methodology, and participation was based exclusively on freely expressed consent. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymization and through the exclusive use of the data for scientific purposes, with the aim of avoiding any risks of discomfort or harm.

In relating to other research, the principles of academic integrity were observed, with sources being used responsibly, with appropriate citation of prior works and the avoidance of any form of plagiarism or misappropriation of ideas; methodological transparency was considered fundamental, so that the study could be reproduced and verified. The results were interpreted with caution, avoiding excessive generalizations, and their practical applicability

was analysed in relation to possible social consequences, so that the investigation might contribute to the advancement of knowledge and serve the common interest.

V. THE RESEARCH RESULTS

V.1. Results obtained in the pre-experimental stage

V.1.1 The Focus Group method

The answers to the opening question — regarding the manner of communication and collaboration in the classroom — showed that, in most cases, teacher–pupil and pupil–pupil communication is reduced to a formal, question–answer type of dialogue, and cooperation among pupils is encouraged only sporadically, with collaborative learning strategies being rarely used.

The answers to the three specific questions were rated by two evaluators, on the basis of a coding scheme. The first question concerned the influence of the methods/strategies used by the teacher on written communication abilities, the second the influence of the learners' own manner of approaching tasks and of getting involved, and the third asked for the identification of the aspect that should be improved for developing the capacity for reading/comprehension and writing. For the first two questions, the coding used was (0) neutral answer, (1) positive answer, (2) negative answer, and for the third (1) the perspective of the teacher's strategies, (2) the perspective of the learners' own strategies, (3) both perspectives.

Inter-coder consistency was assessed through the Krippendorff's Alpha coefficient (calculated with the K-Alpha web application). The values obtained — $\alpha = 0.930$ for the first question, $\alpha = 0.861$ for the second and $\alpha = 0.922$ for the third — indicate a very high level of inter-coder agreement, which supports the robustness of the data.

Synthesizing the answers, 69% of them indicated that the methods/strategies used by the teacher influence communicative capacity, in particular written communication abilities; 72% considered that the learners' own manner of approaching tasks and their involvement in solving them influence this capacity; and 73% showed that interventions on both aspects are necessary. The final question focused the discussions on the need for a formative programme, and the information obtained, together with the review of the literature, formed the basis for developing the CAAR programme.

V.1.2 The testing method

The descriptive analysis of the total scores for DV1 revealed comparable values: the control group recorded a mean $M = 4.27$ ($Mdn = 4.00$), and the experimental group $M = 4.67$ ($Mdn =$

5.00), a difference of approximately 0.40 points, which supports the initial equivalence of the conditions and the internal validity of the study.

The similarity of the mean and median values of the pre-intervention scores between the two groups constitutes a favourable indicator for the internal validity of the study. At the level of the domains, the distribution of the means was balanced: for D1 the values were close (1.4 control vs. 1.2 experimental); for D3 the highest means were reached (1.73 and 1.87), a sign of a higher degree of difficulty; for D2 the lowest values were recorded (0.33 and 0.53), a domain in which participants obtained lower scores; and D4 was placed in the middle (0.8 and 1.07). The standard deviations varied from one domain to another: for D1 the control group had a greater dispersion (1.298) than the experimental one (1.014), for D2 the ratio was reversed (0.617 vs. 0.743), D3 stood out through the largest values in both groups (1.438 and 1.302), and D4 showed minimal differences (0.775 and 0.884), completing the picture offered by the means and suggesting that not all types of tasks are approached with the same consistency.

V.1.3 The questionnaire-based survey

Following the application of SMALSI, the CITIT (READING), SCRIS (WRITING) and MOTSCA (SCHOOL MOTIVATION) scales were measured, with manual scoring and the calculation of raw scores, the T score and the index for inconsistent responses (INC). The mean values showed small differences between groups: for CITIT, the experimental group obtained a slightly higher mean (41.47 vs. 41); for SCRIS, the mean of the control group (38.8) marginally exceeded that of the experimental group (38.13); for MOTSCA, the control group recorded a mean of 51.2 compared to 50.27 in the experimental group. These results confirm comparable performances, without notable discrepancies at the initial moment.

The analysis of the standard deviations indicated, for SMALSI, a relatively close dispersion on the CITIT scale (4.106 control vs. 4.454 experimental), which shows a similar consistency, a slight increase in variability on SCRIS in the experimental group (4.395 vs. 4.824) and larger values on MOTSCA (6.689 vs. 7.469), suggesting a somewhat more pronounced heterogeneity of scores in the experimental group. Overall, although the means of the two groups are close, the internal variations tend to be more pronounced in the experimental group.

For DV2, the experimental group had a mean of 39.8 (Mdn 38.5), and the control group 39.9 (Mdn 40.5); the difference between the mean and the median offers indications about the distribution: in the control group the median (40.5) is slightly higher than the mean (39.9), indicating a negative skew, whereas in the experimental group the mean (39.8) exceeds the

median (38.5), suggesting a positive skew. For DV3 (where a lower score reflects better performance), the control group had a mean of 51.20 (Mdn 51) and the experimental group 50.27 (Mdn 49); in the control group the mean and the median are almost identical, and in the experimental group the mean being slightly higher than the median shows a few higher scores, while the median being lower than that of the control group nevertheless highlights better results for the majority of participants. These small differences confirm the start from a close level and support the balanced distribution of participants across the two conditions.

V.2 Results obtained in the post-experimental stage

V.2.1 The testing method

After the implementation of the intervention programme, the knowledge test was re-applied to both groups. The re-application revealed a notable discrepancy between groups on DV1: the experimental group obtained a mean total score of $M = 10.00$ (Mdn = 11.00), compared with $M = 4.80$ (Mdn = 4.00) in the control group — a difference of approximately 5.20 points, which indicates a substantial improvement among the participants exposed to the experimental condition. While the median of the control group remained at 4.00 (identical to the pre-intervention moment), the median of the experimental group rose to 11.00, which argues for the effectiveness of the experimental treatment.

The magnitude of the gap between the groups suggests an effect of the intervention applied to the experimental group, with definitive confirmation, however, requiring the inferential tests presented in subchapter V.3. By domain, the experimental group clearly exceeded the control group: for D1 the mean was 2.67 vs. 1.73; for D2 — 1.47 vs. 0.4; for D3 — 3.73 vs. 1.8 (almost double); for D4 — 2.13 vs. 0.87. In all cases the experimental group presented higher values, which shows that the differences do not concern only the overall level but manifest themselves consistently at the level of each assessed content domain.

The post-experimental standard deviations varied from one domain to another: for D1 the values were close (1.01 control vs. 1.3 experimental), for D2 the differences were minimal (0.62 and 0.74), D3 stood out through the highest values in both groups (1.44 and 1.30) — indicating, alongside the high means, a considerable variability among participants — and D4 presented smaller deviations (0.78 and 0.88), a sign of a greater concentration of scores around the mean. Overall, the degree of variation differed from one domain to another, with some tasks generating more dispersed answers and others more compact results.

V.2.2 The questionnaire-based survey

The re-application of SMALSI indicated visible progress in the experimental group. For CITIT, the mean of the experimental group (49.4) exceeded that of the control group (42.2); for SCRIS, the mean in the experimental group (47.07) was considerably higher than in the control one (39.07). For MOTSCA — where a lower score signifies better motivation — the experimental group obtained a lower value (40.13) than the control group (50.27), which indicates an improvement in motivation.

The analysis of dispersion showed, for CITIT, greater variability in the experimental group (7.288 vs. 3.121), which suggests that the level of performance is not uniform among the participants exposed to the intervention; for SCRIS, comparable consistency (4.59 vs. 4.743); and for MOTSCA, a smaller dispersion in the experimental group (3.502 vs. 7.469), which shows that it is not only the lower mean that favours the experimental group but also that the performances are more coherent and less fluctuating.

For DV2, in the control group the mean and the median were situated around 40 points, reflecting a relative stability, whereas the participants in the experimental group obtained significantly higher scores in both the mean and the median, an evolution that supports the hypothesis that the intervention contributed to developing reading and writing competences. For DV3, the control group recorded a mean of 50.27 (Mdn 51), and the experimental group considerably lower values ($M = 40.13$, Mdn 41); since in the MOTSCA instrument low scores reflect superior performances, this difference of approximately 10 points highlights a significant effect of the treatment. Compared with the pretest, where the scores of the experimental group were situated around the value of 50 points, the decrease to around the value of 40 reflects clear progress, while the control group did not present significant variations between the two stages.

V.2.3 The observation method

Systematic observation was carried out on the experimental group, throughout the experimental stage, using the Classroom Observation Sheet developed in the CRED project, structured into two parts (generating the descriptors in relation to the key competences and the grid for observing the descriptors for the eight key competences). The behaviours associated with the key competence “learning to learn” and with social and civic competences, correlated with learning strategies and school motivation, were monitored.

V.2.3.1 Systematic observation of behaviours for the key competence of learning to learn

The data concerned the use of simple learning techniques and the maintenance of attention until the completion of the task. Approximately 53% of learners propose or apply simple learning techniques, while 47% do not display this behaviour. As regards maintaining attention, about 60% manage to remain focused, and approximately 40% encounter difficulties. Correlating the two dimensions outlines four distinct patterns: learners who apply techniques and maintain their attention; learners who apply techniques but do not remain focused; learners who complete the task without explicit techniques; and learners who neither apply techniques nor maintain their attention.

V.2.3.2 Systematic observation of behaviours for social and civic competences

For the six behaviours monitored, most learners raise their hand or use the established signal to intervene in a discussion, with only about 13% of situations in which the behaviour is absent. For interacting with the teacher and peers while observing the rules of politeness, approximately 54% engage “to a large extent”, 33% “to some extent”, and 13% do not display the behaviour. For cooperation, fairness and willingness to help, approximately 40% engage “to a large extent” and 47% “to some extent”; for listening attentively to the task, about 40% focus “to a large extent” and 40% “to some extent”. For solving the task in a group, 54% work “to a large extent” as a team, 33% “to some extent”, and about 13% inconsistently; for fulfilling the assigned role, approximately 40% assume it “to a large extent”, and 47% “to some extent”. Overall, cooperation, orderly participation and observance of group rules predominate, with individual variations in intensity.

V.3 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages

The comparative analysis was carried out with SPSS software version 31. To test the hypotheses, a mixed-design analysis of variance (two-way mixed ANOVA) was used, appropriate to the experimental structure: a within-subjects factor (Time: pretest/posttest) and a between-subjects factor (Group: control/experimental).

For the analysis, two files were prepared: one for the SMALSI questionnaire (containing the participant identifier, the group and the T scores for the CITIT, SCRIS and MOTSCA scales at the two moments) and one for the knowledge test (containing the identifier, the group and the number of correct and complete answers for each of the four domains, as well as the total score, at pretest and posttest). The mixed ANOVA test was applied separately for each SMALSI scale and for each domain assessed through the test, as well as at the level of each variable.

The mixed ANOVA allows the simultaneous examination of the main effect of Time (pretest–posttest differences, independent of group), of the main effect of Group (general differences between control and experimental) and of the Time $\times$ Group interaction effect — the central component, interpreted as the measure of the specific effect of the intervention on the experimental group. Compared with t-tests, it directly tests the interaction, integrates the main effects into a single model, reports the effect size (η^2) and reduces the risk of Type I errors. The reported indicators include df (degrees of freedom), F, p (Sig.), η^2 , M (the mean), SD (the standard deviation) and the Levene test for checking the homogeneity of variances (a non-significant result, $p > 0.05$, indicating comparable variances).

V.3.1 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages on the knowledge test

V.3.1.1. Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages, overall, on the knowledge test, for all four assessed content domains

At the overall level, the increase in scores was significant only in the experimental group ($p < 0.001$), whereas in the control group no notable changes were recorded ($p = 0.341$). The Time $\times$ Group interaction was extremely strong, $F(1, 28) = 38.08$, $p < 0.001$, with a large-magnitude effect ($\eta^2 = 0.576$). The overall difference between conditions ($\Delta M = -2.80$, 95% CI $[-4.37; -1.23]$) supports the superiority of the intervention, even though the homogeneity of variances was slightly affected at posttest.

V.3.1.2 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the assessed content domain D1: Extracting explicitly stated information

Domain D1 (four multiple-choice items) targeted the extraction of explicit information from the text (characters, attributes, characteristics, actions, the order of events). The Time $\times$ Group interaction was significant, $F(1, 28) = 5.73$, $p = 0.024$, with a moderate effect ($\eta^2 = 0.170$). The control group remained relatively constant ($M = 1.40 \rightarrow 1.73$, $p = 0.328$), and the experimental group increased clearly ($M = 1.20 \rightarrow 2.67$, $p < 0.001$). Although the overall difference between groups was not significant ($\Delta M = -0.37$, 95% CI $[-1.09; 0.36]$), the direction of the results favours the experimental condition, and the Levene tests confirmed comparable dispersions at both moments.

V.3.1.3 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the assessed content domain D2: Working with the main ideas of the text

Domain D2 (one multiple-choice item and one matching item) targeted the extraction of main ideas and the association of characters with actions or lines. The interaction was significant, $F(1, 28) = 20.05$, $p < 0.001$, with a considerable magnitude ($\eta^2 = 0.417$). The control group remained unchanged ($M = 0.33 \rightarrow 0.40$, $p = 0.705$), while the experimental group increased consistently ($M = 0.53 \rightarrow 1.47$, $p < 0.001$). The overall difference was significant ($\Delta M = -0.63$, 95% CI $[-1.09; -0.18]$), with homogeneous variances at both moments.

V.3.1.4 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the assessed content domain D3: Formulating direct conclusions

Domain D3 (six items) targeted the formulation of simple and direct conclusions based on reading literary texts, through identifying ideas, formulating short answers or completing gapped sentences. The interaction was confirmed, $F(1, 28) = 8.04$, $p = 0.008$, with a moderate effect ($\eta^2 = 0.223$). The increase was significant only in the experimental group ($M = 1.87 \rightarrow 3.73$, $p < 0.001$), the control group remaining stable ($M = 1.73 \rightarrow 1.80$, $p = 0.882$). The overall difference ($\Delta M = -1.03$, 95% CI $[-1.98; -0.09]$) reinforces the conclusion of a positive effect of the intervention.

V.3.1.5 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the assessed content domain D4: Interpreting and integrating ideas and information

Domain D4 (three items: dual choice, short answer/completion and structured essay) targeted the recognition and correction of spelling and punctuation errors and the writing of a short text based on a simple plan, with graphic marking of paragraphs. The Time $\times$ Group interaction was significant, $F(1, 28) = 7.03$, $p = 0.013$, $\eta^2 = 0.201$ (moderate effect). The experimental group increased clearly ($M = 1.07 \rightarrow 2.13$, $p < 0.001$), the control group remaining almost constant ($M = 0.80 \rightarrow 0.87$, $p = 0.804$). The overall difference ($\Delta M = -0.77$, 95% CI $[-1.25; -0.28]$) underscores the advantage of the experimental group, with homogeneous variances at both moments.

V.3.2 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages on the SMALSI questionnaire

V.3.2.1 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages, overall, for the CITIT (READING) and SCRIS (WRITING) scales

The evolution of DV2 revealed a high-magnitude Time $\times$ Group interaction effect, $F(1, 28) = 34.22$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.55$, which means that approximately 55% of the variation in the changes can be attributed to the interaction between the moment of assessment and group

membership — a proportion that exceeds the conventional thresholds for a large effect in educational research. The control group remained stable ($39.9 \rightarrow 40.63$, $p = 0.937$), and the experimental group increased markedly ($39.8 \rightarrow 48.23$), the estimated overall difference being $\Delta M = -4.583$. The homogeneity of variances was supported at pretest (Levene $p = 0.448$), but affected at posttest ($F = 7.259$, $p = 0.012$), probably due to variable individual responses to the intervention; nevertheless, the interaction effect remains strong enough to support the conclusion of a significant impact.

V.3.2.2 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages on the CITIT (READING) scale

The interaction was significant, $F(1, 28) = 6.63$, $p = 0.016$, $\eta^2 = 0.192$. The control group did not present significant changes ($41.0 \rightarrow 42.2$, $p = 0.522$), while the experimental group increased substantially ($41.47 \rightarrow 49.4$, $p < 0.001$). The Levene test indicated homogeneity at pretest ($p = 0.752$) and a violation of it at posttest ($F = 16.09$, $p < 0.001$), an aspect that suggests a higher variability of scores after the intervention, especially in the experimental group.

V.3.2.3 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages on the SCRIS (WRITING) scale

The interaction was very strong, $F(1, 28) = 133.82$, $p < 0.001$, with a very high effect ($\eta^2 = 0.827$). The control group remained stable ($38.80 \rightarrow 39.07$, $p = 0.674$), and the experimental group increased markedly ($38.13 \rightarrow 47.07$, $p < 0.001$), the overall difference being significant ($\Delta M = -3.67$, 95% CI $[-7.05; -0.28]$). The Levene tests confirmed the homogeneity of variances at both moments ($p = 0.954$ and $p = 0.559$, respectively), which consolidates confidence in the validity of the results.

V.3.2.4 Comparative analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages on the MOTSCA (SCHOOL MOTIVATION) scale

For MOTSCA, a higher score indicates lower motivation, and a low score better motivation. The interaction was significant, $F(1, 28) = 8.79$, $p = 0.006$, with a medium-high effect ($\eta^2 = 0.239$). The control group did not present differences ($51.20 \rightarrow 50.27$, $p = 0.705$), and the experimental group decreased pronouncedly ($50.27 \rightarrow 40.13$, $p < 0.001$), which, in the logic of the scale, reflects an improvement in motivation. The overall difference ($\Delta M = 5.53$, 95% CI $[2.67; 8.40]$) confirms a robust effect of the experimental condition, and the variances were comparable at both moments ($p > 0.34$).

V.3.3. Comparative analysis of the results obtained at pretest and posttest (pretest vs. posttest)

V.3.3.1. Comparative analysis of the results obtained at pretest and posttest for the knowledge test

The control group stagnated ($M = 4.27 \rightarrow 4.80$, an increase of only 0.53 points), while the experimental group progressed remarkably ($M = 4.67 \rightarrow 10.00$, an increase of 5.33 points). The ratio between the two variations (approximately 1:10) suggests that the changes in the experimental group cannot be attributed to random factors, but to the direct influence of the programme. At pretest there were no significant differences on any of the four domains (for example D1: $\Delta = 0.2$, $p = 0.642$; D4: $\Delta = 0.267$, $p = 0.387$), confirming the comparable initial level. At posttest, all domains recorded significant improvements: D1 ($\Delta = 0.933$, $p = 0.037$, $\eta^2 = 0.146$), D2 ($\Delta = 1.067$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.430$), D3 ($\Delta = 1.933$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta^2 = 0.261$), D4 ($\Delta = 1.267$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.382$), and the total score $\Delta = 5.2$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.55$.

Domain (DV1)	Moment	Mean difference	p	η^2
D1	Pretest	0.2	0.642	0.008
D1	Posttest	0.933	0.037	0.146
D2	Pretest	0.2	0.429	0.022
D2	Posttest	1.067	< 0.001	0.430
D3	Pretest	0.133	0.792	0.003
D3	Posttest	1.933	0.004	0.261
D4	Pretest	0.267	0.387	0.027
D4	Posttest	1.267	< 0.001	0.382
Total	Pretest	0.4	0.638	0.008
Total	Posttest	5.2	< 0.001	0.55

Table 25. Comparative analysis of pretest vs. posttest results for the knowledge test.

V.3.3.2. Comparative analysis of the results obtained at pretest and posttest for the SMALSI questionnaire

At pretest there were no significant differences for any of the scales (CITIT: $\Delta = 0.467$, $p = 0.768$; SCRIS: $\Delta = 0.667$, $p = 0.695$; MOTSCA: $\Delta = 0.993$, $p = 0.721$). At posttest, the differences became significant: CITIT ($\Delta = 7.2$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta^2 = 0.306$), SCRIS ($\Delta = 8$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.440$) and MOTSCA ($\Delta = 10.13$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.645$). For DV2, the mean of the experimental group increased from 39.80 to 48.23 ($\Delta \approx 8.43$), while the control group increased minimally ($39.90 \rightarrow 40.63$, $\Delta \approx 0.73$), the two groups starting from comparable values (39.90 vs. 39.80). For MOTSCA, the experimental group decreased from 50.27 to 40.13 ($\Delta \approx 10.14$ points, an improvement), the control group remaining stable ($51.20 \rightarrow 50.27$, $\Delta \approx 0.93$), from similar initial values (51.20 vs. 50.27).

Scale	Moment	Mean difference	p	partial η^2
CITIT	Pretest	0.467	0.768	0.003
CITIT	Posttest	7.2	0.002	0.306
SCRIS	Pretest	0.667	0.695	0.006
SCRIS	Posttest	8	< 0.001	0.440
MOTSCA	Pretest	0.993	0.721	0.005
MOTSCA	Posttest	10.13	< 0.001	0.645

Table 26. Comparative analysis of pretest vs. posttest results for the SMALSI questionnaire.

V.3.3.3. Comparative analysis of the results obtained by the control group and the experimental group (control vs. experimental) on the knowledge test

In the control group, no domain recorded notable changes between the two moments (D1: $\Delta = 0.333$, $p = 0.328$, $\eta^2 = 0.034$; D2: $\Delta = 0.067$, $p = 0.630$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$; D3: $\Delta = 0.067$, $p = 0.883$, $\eta^2 = 0.001$; D4: $\Delta = 0.067$, $p = 0.804$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$; total score $\Delta = 0.53$, $p = 0.341$, $\eta^2 = 0.032$). In the experimental group, the improvements were consistent and significant: D1 ($\Delta = 1.467$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.407$), D2 ($\Delta = 0.933$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.624$), D3 ($\Delta = 1.867$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.382$), D4 ($\Delta = 1.067$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.364$) and total score $\Delta = 5.33$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.57$.

Domain (DV1)	Control Δ (p)	Control η^2	Experimental Δ (p)	Exp. η^2
D1	0.333 (0.328)	0.034	1.467 (< 0.001)	0.407
D2	0.067 (0.630)	0.008	0.933 (< 0.001)	0.624
D3	0.067 (0.883)	0.001	1.867 (< 0.001)	0.382
D4	0.067 (0.804)	0.002	1.067 (< 0.001)	0.364
Total	0.53 (0.341)	0.032	5.33 (< 0.001)	0.57

Table 28. Comparative analysis control vs. experimental for the knowledge test.

V.3.3.4. Comparative analysis of the results obtained by the control group and the experimental group (control vs. experimental) on the SMALSI questionnaire

The control group did not present relevant changes (CITIT $\Delta = 1.2$, $p = 0.522$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$; SCRIS $\Delta = 0.267$, $p = 0.619$, $\eta^2 = 0.009$; MOTSCA $\Delta = 0.933$, $p = 0.674$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$), while the experimental group recorded major improvements: CITIT ($\Delta = 7.933$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.397$), SCRIS ($\Delta = 8.93$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.910$) and MOTSCA ($\Delta = 10.13$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.432$). The Time $\times$ Group interaction was therefore significant, with the progress being due specifically to the applied programme. Comparatively, the effects on DV3 exceeded in amplitude the effects on DV2 at the level of the difference between groups, although the effect size was higher for SCRIS, which indicates a high responsiveness of both components to the experimental condition.

Scale	Control Δ (p)	Control η^2	Experimental Δ (p)	Exp. η^2
CITIT	1.2 (0.522)	0.015	7.933 (< 0.001)	0.397
SCRIS	0.267 (0.619)	0.009	8.93 (< 0.001)	0.910
MOTSCA	0.933 (0.674)	0.006	10.13 (< 0.001)	0.432

Table 29. Comparative analysis control vs. experimental for the SMALSI questionnaire.

In synthesis, in the case of DV2 the control group displayed a minimal variation with no statistical relevance between the two moments, while the experimental group presented a pronounced increase accompanied by a very large-magnitude statistical effect, which shows that the intervention decisively influenced the scores. For DV3, the profile of the control group showed the maintenance of a constant level, and the experimental group a clear improvement, supported by a strong statistical effect. The persistence of stable results in the control groups consolidates the internal validity of the analysis and supports the interpretation according to which the observed differences are associated with the intervention, not with external contextual factors.

V.4 Conclusions of the experimental research

The research aimed to verify the effectiveness of the CAAR programme on the development of written communication competence, the improvement of learning strategies and the stimulation of academic motivation of the primary-education graduates in the “Second Chance” programme, and all five formulated objectives were attained.

The first objective — identifying and assessing the level of development of written communication competence, learning strategies and academic motivation — was accomplished through the use of standardized instruments (the fourth-grade National Assessment test and the SMALSI questionnaire), applied both in the pre-experimental and in the post-experimental stage, which allowed the comparative analysis of educational progress. The second objective was accomplished by selecting, on the basis of the literature review, interactive teaching strategies adapted to the participants' educational needs and content relevant to their life experience, intended to transform instruction into an activating and stimulating process.

The third objective was accomplished by developing a programme of a practical-applied character, based on Kolb's experiential learning model and on an interactional teaching approach, drawing on the information provided by the knowledge test, the questionnaire and the focus-group discussions. The fourth objective was fulfilled by implementing the programme in a stimulating educational environment, in which learners were placed in the situation of seeking solutions, thinking critically, expressing reasoned opinions and reflecting

on what they had learned and on the way in which they had learned. The last objective, concerning the analysis of effectiveness, was fulfilled by interpreting and comparing the results from the two stages.

The study analysed three variables at two moments (pretest and posttest), on a control group (N = 15) and an experimental group (N = 15). For DV1, the control group increased minimally (M = 4.27 → 4.80), and the experimental group substantially (4.67 → 10.00). For DV2, the control group remained stable (39.90 → 40.63), and the experimental group improved significantly (39.80 → 48.23). For DV3 (MOTSCA), the control group remained stable (51.20 → 50.27), and the experimental group recorded a decrease (50.27 → 40.13) which, in the logic of the scale, indicates an increase in school motivation.

At pretest there were no relevant differences between groups, which supports the initial homogeneity of the participants and offers an appropriate framework for interpreting the subsequent effects; the low values of the effect size confirm the minor character of the initial variations. At posttest, statistically significant differences appeared for all the dependent variables, with high values of the effect size, while the control group remained stable — a stability that supports the interpretation of the differences in the experimental group as effects of the intervention, not of the mere passage of time. The synthesis by groups is presented below.

Variable	Group	Mean difference	p	η^2
DV1	Control	0.53	0.341	0.032
DV1	Experimental	5.33	< 0.001	0.77
DV2	Control	0.73	0.437	0.022
DV2	Experimental	8.43	< 0.001	0.746
DV3	Control	0.993	0.674	0.006
DV3	Experimental	10.13	< 0.001	0.432

Table 3 (summary). Comparison of the three dependent variables by group (pretest vs. posttest).

Consequently, the results support the hypothesis that the intervention contributes significantly to the optimization of the investigated variables, with the effects manifesting themselves coherently in relation to all the criteria of analysis. The statistically significant differences obtained by the experimental group demonstrate the effectiveness of the programme and confirm all three specific hypotheses of the research.

The programme *Active Communication, Reflective Attitude* — CAAR has an innovative character, offering a methodological framework based on interactive instruction and experiential learning, with a three-dimensional structure — cognitive, strategic and affective-attitudinal — that allows the integrated development of cognitive competences, the

optimization of learning strategies and the stimulation of academic motivation. The activities engage learners in constructing knowledge through their own effort, individually or collaboratively, develop critical thinking and value metacognition.

The comparison of the variables by group membership indicates the maintenance of a relatively stable level of the dependent variables in the control group, where the observed changes do not reach the threshold of statistical significance and are associated with small effects; the mere passage of time or exposure to the usual conditions of the context were not sufficient to produce relevant changes. From a methodological and applied perspective, the conclusions offer solid arguments for the validity of the experimental model and for the possibility of extending the use of the intervention in similar contexts of research or of educational and psychological practice.

The added value of the programme lies in promoting active and reflective teaching practices, which enhance learning and shape learners' learning strategies, engaging them in constructing knowledge through their own effort and in making connections between prior knowledge and new acquisitions. In view of putting the results to use, the CAAR programme was approved as a deepening optional for the “Second Chance” programme – primary education, Level IV, with implementation to be supported through a methodological guide for teachers. Likewise, a continuing professional development programme centred on activating and reflective teaching practices was included in the offer of the Caraş-Severin Teacher Training Centre for the 2025–2026 school year, approved by the Ministry of Education and Research.

V.5 Limitations of the research and directions for further research

The interpretation of the results must be carried out with caution, by reference to the methodological and contextual limitations of the endeavour, the identification of which ensures scientific rigour and opens up directions for further research:

- The sample size remained small, the research being carried out on 30 learners, distributed into two equivalent groups of 15 participants each. The small number of participants limits statistical power and restricts the possibility of generalization.
- The sampling was of a non-random character.
- The investigation had a local character, since it was carried out at the level of Caraş-Severin County, within two school units, so that the contextual socioeconomic and

institutional particularities do not allow the direct extrapolation of the conclusions to the national level.

- The intervention was carried out over a limited duration, which allowed the measurement of the immediate effects but not of their stability over time.
- The educational context of the “Second Chance” programme presents pronounced particularities, since the heterogeneity of the learners introduces a variability that is difficult to control.
- The results cannot be generalized in an unrestricted manner: although they remain statistically significant and practically relevant, they retain their validity within the limits of the sample and of the investigated context and must be interpreted as consistent evidence of the effectiveness of the CAAR programme in a particular setting, one that invites replication and extension.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The research endeavour undertaken in this work has its origin in the conviction that developing the competence of receiving and producing written messages constitutes a fundamental condition for the social integration and professional insertion of people who left the education system early. Contemporary society, marked by accelerated information flows and by the increasingly high demands of functional communication, transforms the capacity to understand and to write texts into an indispensable instrument for active participation in community life and for the exercise of personal autonomy. Starting from this premise, the work rigorously investigated the ways in which the school can respond to this educational need, in the specific context of the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education.

The first chapter provided the theoretical grounding of the researched problem, by clarifying the concepts of inclusion, equity and diversity in education and by analysing the social implications of early school leaving. The treatment of the causes and effects of school dropout was complemented by the examination of educational policies and compensatory programmes intended for the reintegration of people from vulnerable groups, which offered the conceptual and axiological framework necessary for understanding the phenomenon investigated.

The second chapter was devoted to the critical analysis of the curriculum for the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education, with an emphasis on the specific nature of competence formation in this context. The analysis examined the graduate profile, the applied character of the curriculum and the particularities of the school syllabus, seeking to identify the defining elements of a competence-centred curriculum. These findings constituted the foundation for designing the intervention programme for developing written communication competence.

The third chapter was dedicated to the instructional process within the “Second Chance” Programme – primary education, highlighting the role of interactive teaching strategies, of the rigorous design of the instructional-educational endeavour and of the school-based curriculum in developing learners' competences. The examination of the relationships among the components of the formal curriculum made it possible to identify the opportunities for developing a school-based curriculum that responds to the real educational needs of the learners.

The articulation of the three chapters of the theoretical part provided the conceptual, methodological and applied framework necessary for constructing the experimental endeavour. The conclusions drawn at this level oriented the formulation of the hypotheses, the selection of teaching strategies and the design of the intervention programme, ensuring internal coherence between the theoretical landmarks and the applied investigation in the second part of the work.

The experimental research aimed to verify the effectiveness of the intervention programme Active Communication, Reflective Attitude — CAAR on the development of written communication competence, the improvement of learning strategies and the increase of academic motivation among the learners of the “Second Chance” programme – primary education. The experimental endeavour made it possible to fully attain the five formulated objectives, each corresponding to a distinct stage of the research and being supported by rigorously selected methodological instruments.

The first objective was accomplished through the administration, in the pre-experimental stage, of the test assessing fundamental competences in Romanian Language and Literature and of the SMALSI questionnaire, with the data collected — complemented by the information from the focus group — highlighting the statistical equivalence of the two groups at pretest and grounding the necessity of the intervention. The second objective was concretized by selecting interactive teaching strategies and adapted content, with the literature review grounding the integration of methods such as experiential learning based on the Kolb model, the Evocation–Realization of meaning–Reflection framework, the “Şapiro's Tree” technique, the “Think–Pair–Share” method and graphic organizers.

The third objective was accomplished by developing the CAAR programme, built on three complementary dimensions — cognitive, strategic and affective-attitudinal — and designed as a school-based curriculum, adapted to the heterogeneous profile of the learners. The fourth objective concerned the effective implementation of the programme, with the activities being carried out in a stimulating educational environment, in which learners engaged in active processes of seeking solutions, formulating reasoned opinions and metacognitive reflection. The fifth objective was accomplished by statistically comparing the results at pretest and posttest, both between groups and within groups, through two-way mixed ANOVA analysis.

The results of the statistical analysis supported the research hypotheses, within the limits of the sample and of the educational context analysed. Secondary hypothesis 1 was confirmed by the statistically significant differences obtained on the knowledge test: the experimental

group evolved from $M = 4.67$ to $M = 10.00$, while the control group remained relatively constant (from $M = 4.27$ to $M = 4.80$), and the $\text{Time} \times \text{Group}$ interaction proved strongly significant, $F(1, 28) = 38.08$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.576$, with the improvements manifesting themselves across all four content domains.

Secondary hypothesis 2 was confirmed by the results obtained on the CITIT and SCRIS scales: the experimental group evolved from $M = 41.47$ to $M = 49.40$ on the CITIT scale and from $M = 38.13$ to $M = 47.07$ on the SCRIS scale, the within-group differences being significant ($p < 0.001$), with large effect sizes ($\eta^2 = 0.397$ for CITIT and $\eta^2 = 0.910$ for SCRIS), while the control group did not present notable changes. Secondary hypothesis 3 was confirmed by the results obtained on the MOTSCA scale, where the experimental group recorded a decrease in the mean score from $M = 50.27$ to $M = 40.13$ (interpreted as an increase in motivation), the interaction being significant, $F(1, 28) = 8.79$, $p = 0.006$, $\eta^2 = 0.239$.

The convergence of the results obtained through within-group and between-group comparison, supported by the stability of the control group's performance, excluded the hypothesis of random variations or pre-existing differences and made it possible to attribute the improvements to the specific effect of the programme. Consequently, the general hypothesis of the research was confirmed.

The research makes an original contribution on the theoretical, methodological and applied levels, articulated along three complementary directions. Firstly, the development and application of the CAAR programme represents the main contribution: conceived as a three-dimensional didactic construct, the programme integrates the cognitive component, the strategic component and the affective-attitudinal component into a coherent pathway, based on experiential learning and on the E–R–R framework, offering a replicable model for similar interventions in adult education.

Secondly, the research demonstrates the usefulness of a school-based curriculum adapted to the specific needs of the learners: the empirical demonstration of the fact that such a curriculum, designed starting from the analysis of real needs and from the results of the pre-experimental stage, generates statistically significant progress, constitutes an argument for making the curricular offer more flexible, and the approval of the programme as an optional subject and the inclusion of a training programme for teachers in the offer of the Caraş-Severin Teacher Training Centre confirm, institutionally, the applied value of this contribution. Thirdly, the research highlights the relevance of interactive teaching strategies for developing written

communication competence in adult learners, a population insufficiently investigated in the Romanian literature, which gives the endeavour the character of a pioneering study.

Overall, the research demonstrated that a systematic pedagogical intervention, theoretically grounded and adapted to the specific nature of the target group, can produce significant improvements in written communication competence, learning strategies and academic motivation among the learners of the “Second Chance” programme. The statistical confirmation of all the hypotheses, supported by large effect sizes, makes it possible to affirm the practical usefulness of the CAAR programme and opens up prospects for extending its application. Beyond the quantifiable results, the research contributes to consolidating an inclusive educational paradigm, in which active, reflective and meaningful learning becomes an instrument for regaining personal autonomy and for the socio-professional integration of people from disadvantaged groups.

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