



Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

**Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences**

**The Contribution of an Educational Program  
(R.S.P) to the Development of Cognitive and  
Emotional Competencies for Transition to First  
Grade**

**Long Abstract**

CONDUCĂTOR DE DOCTORAT

DOCTORAL COORDINATOR

**PROFESSOR Cristian Stan**

Student-doctorand

Doctoral student

**Ayala Kadusi**

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## Abstract

Nurturing and developing cognitive and emotional competences in early childhood constitutes the ground for creating a learning competences infrastructure and therefore, emphasis should be placed on preschool and preparation for the first grade. The acquisition of reading and writing is not an easy task for children. It is not only the result of their exposure to a literate environment and the stimulation of their curiosity. The acquisition of cognitive and emotional competences is indeed supported by an organized educational environment and the exposure of the children to literacy contents, but it requires mediation and educational intervention based on play and learning adapted to the children's development.

**Research aims** were to examine the influence of an educational intervention program (RSP) on cognitive and emotional competences as preparation for the first grade. The research also examined the program's influence on teachers' attitudes following the implementation in preschool.

**Methods and Research Design** – Mixed methods research. In the quantitative part, 70 children who underwent the program were examined using the preschool children test (PCT) before and after the program in the cognitive area, and an observation in the emotional area, compared to 70 children in the control group who did not undergo the program. In the qualitative part, 2 semi-structured interviews were conducted with two preschool teachers who implemented the program, before the program and after the program.

The **quantitative findings** pointed to significant improvements in children's cognitive achievements and improvements in 5 emotional competences in the intervention group compared to the control group. The qualitative findings emerging from semi-structured interviews showed that the program contributed to teachers' personal and professional development and that there was a positive change in their attitudes towards preparedness for the first grade after the program.

The conclusions are that RSP intervention based on activities and integrative contents directed at preparing the children for school advances cognitive and emotional competences that are required in the transition to school, is intensified when teachers succeed in implementing it on an annual continuum. An additional conclusion is that the intervention program was perceived as an opportunity for teachers to develop personally and professionally and increased their motivation as well as self-awareness.

Practical implications are of great significance to the education system, and hence it is recommended that decision-makers try to introduce RSP to as many preschools as possible, so that they acquire the competences to cope with the challenges towards the first grade. It is also important that the program be introduced in different preschool frameworks and coordinate the work with first grade teachers.

**Keywords:** Educational intervention program, cognitive competences, emotional competences, preschool, play and learning, child development congruent learning, mediated learning, experiential learning, preparedness for first grade.

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Research Background**

The transition from preschool to school is an important junction in the life of children and their families and is accompanied by mixed feelings. On the one hand, the transition to a stage of life that marks maturing and arouses pride in the hearts of both parents and children; on the other hand, a fear of the unfamiliar and the unknown. Like other transitions in human life, this transition involves separation from friends and from a place, adapting to new norms and codes, meeting unfamiliar people and befriending a new environment. In transition, especially that of young children, parents play a central role in providing support and assistance.

Preparing children for the transition to school has an impact on their success and adaptation to the new framework, in which they will spend many years, and which will influence their future as grown-ups in society. Preparing children for learning is a gradual process that takes place during their childhood and is influenced by the environment in which children live, and in which the significant adults in their life - parents, preschool teachers and educational staff – take part. In this process, it is important that all developmental aspects be treated and advanced according to long-term and aim-oriented goals so that the individual potential of each child will get maximum expression. Entry to school in the State of Israel takes place around the age of six. At this age, most children reach physical, emotional, social, sensory-movement and intellectual maturity, which enables them to begin school learning with all that it entails.

There are different opinions about the factors that influence maturity for learning. There are approaches maintaining that biological maturity is what influences preparedness for learning, and other approaches maintaining that acquired competences, competences and knowledge create preparedness for learning at school. One of the definitions of maturity suggests that it is a physical, spiritual and emotional condition created by a combination of growth and experience and expressing competence and ability to start a new task (Shefatya, 2003). This definition includes an additional approach that regards maturity as

a state where biological maturity and learning through activity and experience come together.

This research examined the contribution of an educational intervention program to the development of cognitive and emotional competences towards the transition to first grade. This issue is important because the activities undertaken in preschool nurture and develop the child's competences and have a direct impact on the learning competences the child will need in school.

Most preschool children in Israel are enrolled in state education frameworks for three years. These frameworks operate according to a program in a development-congruent approach, as in the intervention program examined. According to this approach, in order to bring children to full use of their abilities, preschool teachers choose the teaching methods, taking into account the children's preferences, interests and abilities, and with regard to the culture in which children are raised. This shows that the program is important to both preschoolers, so that they arrive at First grade, and to preschool teachers, to enrich their knowledge and acquire professional and personal tools.

### **Research Aims**

- ❖ To develop the program for fostering preschool children's cognitive and emotional competences for preparation to First Grade
- ❖ To train the preschool teachers as they implement the educational program
- ❖ To evaluate the implementation of an educational program that will enable preschool teachers to prepare children for the first grade at school
- ❖ To evaluate the contribution of the educational program to the cognitive and emotional competences of kindergarten children

### **Research Questions**

- ❖ What is the contribution of the first-grade preparation program to the development of emotional and cognitive competences in preschool children?
- ❖ What is the contribution of the first-grade preparation program to preschool teachers?

The first question sought to find answers to the first, quantitative part of the research – whether the program indeed contributed to the development of emotional and cognitive competences in preschool children, by analyzing before and after tests. The second and third questions seek to find answers to the qualitative part of the research, examining the contribution of the program to preschool teachers and to the children's preparedness for the first grade.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The main research hypothesis was: The implementation of the intervention program in preschool will significantly develop the children's cognitive and emotional competences

The secondary hypothesis was: Kindergarten teachers' views about the children's school readiness before implementing the educational program will be changed after implementation

### **Gap in Knowledge**

Early Childhood Development lays the foundations for children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. Based on this insight, interventions with young children are perceived as a great opportunity to influence their normal and healthy development in the future.

Many studies point to the importance of the first years of children's life as a significant period of development, in which they develop a basis for various competences and achievements to be acquired in the future, shaping personality, and especially cognitive development (Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon, 2008).

During this period, the brain grows rapidly, and therefore environmental and biological events, as well as emotional experiences and stimuli to which children are exposed through intervention programs, have a profound, decisive and unique impact on the continuation of their development process (Schonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The program examined in this research is a unique program that combined several educational

development congruent approaches and tools for meaningful experiential learning adapted to 21st century competences:

- ❖ Feuerstein's mediating approach,
- ❖ Gardner's experiential learning
- ❖ Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory

No studies have been found that combine these theories and experiential activities, a unique combination of the program, which led to its success among children and among their teachers.

One of the most important ways to enhance learning competences among pre-school children is by learning through experiences, specifically by games and playing process (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2012).

Early childhood learning takes place during playful activity. Play is a means of understanding and constructing the world around children. Play expresses and develops children's total competences, values, and abilities. Children bring to play their rich inner world that connects the reality they know to the reality they create. The scope of creative tasks that children need to resolve during a game is broad and complex: they must find solutions, discover new ways, decipher social codes, adhere to rules and set other laws others as needed. Play is also an arena for mutual children's encounters, and encounters between children and adults. These relationships contribute to all areas of the children's development.

In order to play, children need educators who believe in the power of play as a means of advancing children and consider it important to building an enabling environment.

## **Research Field**

The research was conducted between the years 2015-2016 in preschools in Israel. The research involved 140 children, 70 in the intervention group, where the program was implemented and 70 children in the control group for whom the program was not implemented.



The program was implemented over a nine-months period, with children who were about to start the first grade. The teachers received guidance and were accompanied throughout the program, and feedback was carried out in the middle of the program in order to examine whether the goals were reached and whether there were issues that the teachers had dealt with in order to improve.

Before and after the program began, the following tests were given: (1) Preschool children test (p.c.t) for all children (N=140) who examined cognitive competences; (2) 'Mabatim' observation was conducted to examine the children's emotional competences.

Two preschool teachers who implemented the program also participated in the research: (1) A, a preschool teacher with 10 years' experience in the education system; (2) S, a preschool teacher with 25 years' experience in the education system.

In the qualitative part, the preschool teachers participated in semi-structured interviews before and after the program, and during the program, feedback sessions were held, and the researcher asked questions regarding issues and questions that emerged during the implementation of the program.

## **CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW**

For this study, an extensive literature review was conducted, discussing theories and approaches that depict the stages of development of children at these ages, and what teachers need to emphasize in the learning process, in order to significantly improve these competences and thus adapt the relevant contents for children. Developmental theoreticians have tried to construct a human journey timeline from the moment of birth, through infancy to adulthood (Miller, 2011).

**Development theories** often appear linked to a specific scholar, for example - Piaget, Freud, Erikson and Vygotsky, other theories derived from them, such as Social Learning theory, Social Information Processing theory, Dynamical Systems, and Ethology theories that are not necessarily identified with one researcher (Miller, 2011)

To advance children in diverse subject matters and improve the quality of social-emotional relationship between teacher and child as well as the teacher's teaching interaction with the child, a teacher must: (1) be familiar with the normative developmental characteristics of children in various areas and properly assess their abilities according to the stage of development; (2) become familiar with the variety of approaches to teaching and curricula in various fields; (3) be aware of children's diversity in personal, cultural and social development (Klein and Yablon, 2008, p. 26).

Different theories provide different perspectives of the development of children in early childhood. I will refer to two psychological development theories that can support my research with regard to the stages of development of six-year-olds, their emotions and perceptions of their world and environment. The first theory is Piaget's (1896-1980) and the second is Erikson's (1963). These theories constitute a theoretical umbrella for understanding the issues describing the abilities of preschool children. Differences in the development of children stem from numerous factors: genetic, social, cultural and others; however, the nature of early childhood education and its adjustment to each and every pupil is of considerable weight in the development of children's abilities in general and their preparation them for first grade in particular (Barnett, 2002).

## **I.1 Early Childhood Developmental Theories**

Developmental psychology refers to the changes that occur in a person over time, while focusing on three factors: The individual, the environment and the interaction between them. Since each of these factors changes through development, and the quality and quantity of the interactions between the various factors changes accordingly, the process of development becomes complex. The uniqueness of the intervention program in this research is that it does not only emphasize the outcome of the process (such as perceiving behaviors characteristic of each age), but also in an attempt to understand the different effects and complexity that led to these behaviors. As well, the program attempts to understand the significance of the interactions between individuals and their environment and their effect on changes in human behavior throughout life, in order to use this understanding as a significant tool in the educational process.

1. The first part deals with the individual, his/her social environment and reciprocal relationships. In this section, each of these components is addressed separately, and at the end these three components are presented as an integration of psychological theories.
2. The second part of the review deals with developmental aspects, while referring to individuals' competences and different groups' role in their development. This section refers to the nature of development and presents various approaches to explaining developmental processes, describing different areas of development according to ages.

The importance of development knowledge is that it constitutes a tool for learning the characteristics of different ages on the one hand and allows for learning about individuals and catering to their individual needs. On the other hand, theoretical knowledge of the process of development guides educators' work.

3. The third part deals with the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978; Feuerstein, 1991) as a significant part of the developmental process. This section presents theoretical aspects of preschool children's learning process. Emphasis was placed on individuals within the process and on various factors within the learning group, such as: the preschool teachers, the learned contents etc. Awareness of the interrelations between the various factors considered in the intervention program, differences between the children are revealed. Understanding and accepting diversity will lead to greater sensitivity to individuals, which is essential for educational work. In this section, concepts are used, combining them with new knowledge that describes the learning process and its various aspects. Here as well, the complexity of the interaction among various factors stands out. These factors are linked to the development process, influence young children's learning processes and each other.

## **I.2 Main Theories and Conceptual Framework**

The research was based on the following main theories:

Piaget's Early Childhood Development Theory (1962) Piaget distinguished between play, learning, and imitation activities using key concepts in the theory of schemas dealing with the interaction between a subject and the external world. The concepts are: (1) Assimilation: children perceive the external world in a way that is congruent with their internal cognitive schemas; (2) Accommodation: children change the existing schemas to fit world data. Piaget claimed that play has more assimilation than accommodation. In imitation there is more accommodation and in learning, there is a balanced relationship between assimilation and accommodation. Another theory is the Vygotsky's learning theory (1978). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural View, children acquire cognitive structures from their culture and from their social interactions, primarily by listening to the language they hear around them.

The research focused on early age children's emotional competences, and the relevant theories were: Erik Erikson's (1993) theory, which consists of eight stages, where a social conflict or crisis occurs at each stage.

The theory upon which this research was based to understand the cognitive domain is Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), a psychological learning theory that focuses on cognitive overload, an unobservable aspect of learning. The theory deals with learning design seeking to facilitate acquisition of knowledge in learning environments by reducing the undesired cognitive load (Kirschner, 2002; Paas, Renkl, & Sweller, 2003, 2004).

I focused on Gardner's (2011) Learning Theories in Early Age: to learn how children learn experientially. Gardner's (2011) theory focuses on multiple intelligences and emphasizes that there are different kinds of intelligences used by the human brain. In addition, this research addressed Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE), deriving from the notion that direct exposure and appropriate behavior strategies will allow for effective use of exposure to stimuli and lead to proper cognitive development, because people have a natural urge to change, and their cognitive system is open, flexible and modifiable (Feuerstein et al., 1908, 1991).

Early childhood preschool teachers develop various educational approaches to preschool education. This research was based on three main approaches:

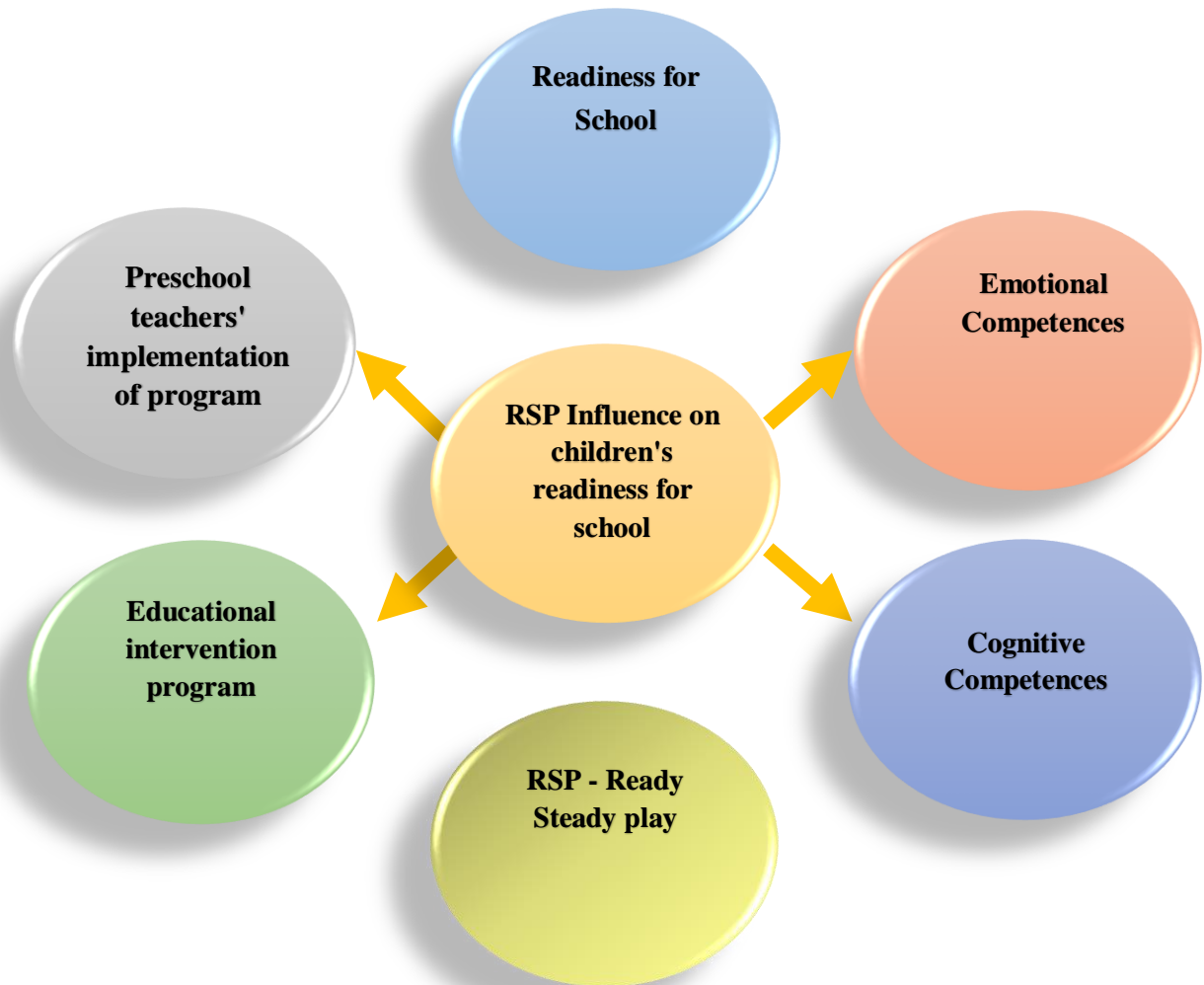
1. Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy pertains to the cognitive sphere and seeks to reach two main goals: planning studies and achievement testing. This taxonomy also offers the possibility of testing achievements in teaching processes that are based on these goals;
2. Dewey's theory (1897, cited in Zorn & Boler, 2007); Dewey engaged in two opposing schools dealing with educational pedagogy – the one dealing with the curriculum and focuses on the topic to be taught. Dewey was argued that the main flaw in this methodology is the student's lack of activity. Nevertheless, Dewey was concerned about his successors' pedagogical-educational approaches that radicalize the 'child in the center' perception. The intervention program examined in this research attempts to solve, among other things, the dilemma in this perception by its structure that creates a balance between the teachers imparting knowledge and the integrating children into meaningful experiential learning.
3. Montessori's educational approach (1907, cited in Lillard et al., 2013) and Fröbel (cited in Strauch-Nelson, 2012). At the center of the Montessori method are children, who always chooses activities that meet their inner needs. They are always happy and enthusiastic about everything because they do exactly what they want to do and not what someone else requires them to do. Gradually, with the development of their competences, they build a strong sense of independence and self-confidence. The Montessori method relies on children's natural love of learning, and it instills in them the urge to continue learning.

The current intervention program's activities were based on the relationship between informal learning that takes place in play and creativity environment to nurture the budding of literacy, and hence, it is based on theory as a strategy for early childhood learning (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2012).

In the framework of the transition to the First Grade and readiness for school, this research was based on two early childhood intervention programs; the one is the

competences only approach, and the other – the development ecological approach (Taylor & Gibson, 2016). It also relied on the Self-Kit intervention program (Opre et al., 2011).

The main concepts underpinning this research are depicted in the following figure.



**Figure 1.I: Conceptual framework**

This model presents the main concepts that accompanied the research and implementation of the intervention program in preschools. The literature review relied on children's development in terms of cognitive and emotional competences in their first years of life. In order to best establish the intervention program, it is necessary to know what is required of the child during these years. An additional concept is the transition to the first grade - what is required of teachers to prepare the children for an easy transition

in the first grade? The implementation of the program by the teachers is very important, because it will eventually lead to an easier and better emotional and cognitive transition. The intervention program was based on an educational approach based on experiential learning through play and movement, and on adapting the activities to the level of development of the child.

The intervention program was based on an educational approach based on experiential learning through play and movement, and on the adaptation of activities to the children's development level.

I believe that examining best intervention program to promote children during their transition from preschool to school is of high theoretical and practical value. As previous studies in the literature review showed, children's readiness for school is critical for their academic and social achievements. Therefore, defining an appropriate model that will enhance children's readiness and competence, so that they will be more involved in education processes will create better results for the children themselves.

This study is especially relevant in the current period, in which electronic media could contribute to this kind of readiness program by expanding knowledge transitions and assist children to be better ready for school.

## **CHAPTER II: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **II.1 Research Aims, Questions and Hypotheses**

The research aims were:

- ❖ To develop the program for fostering kindergarten children's cognitive and emotional competencies for preparation to first grade
- ❖ To train the kindergarten teachers as they implement the educational program.
- ❖ To evaluate the implementation of the educational program that will enable kindergarten teacher to prepare children for the first grade at school

- ❖ To evaluate the contribution of the educational program to the cognitive and emotional competencies of kindergarten children.

## **Research Questions**

- ❖ What is the contribution of the first-grade educational program to the development of emotional and cognitive competences in kindergarten children?
- ❖ What is the contribution of the first-grade educational program to kindergarten teachers'?

## **Research Hypotheses**

1. The implementation of the educational program (R.S.P.) in kindergarten will significantly develop the children's cognitive and emotional competences
2. Kindergarten teachers' views about the children's school readiness before implementing the educational program will be changed after implementation

## **II.1.1 Research Variables and Time Frame**

### **Dependent Variables: Cognitive and emotional competences**

- ❖ Children's cognitive and emotional competencies
- ❖ Kindergarten teachers' views

**Independent variable:** R.S.P. Educational Program

### **Time Frame**

Implementation of the program - October 1, 2016 – APRIL 1, 2017

This chapter describes the mixed methods methodology I have chosen for this study to answer the research questions and justify the research paradigm, choice of research population and research tools, and the research design. It will also feature a discussion of research reliability and validity, the researcher's involvement, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter also describes the research procedure, the research population, data collection and data analysis methods.

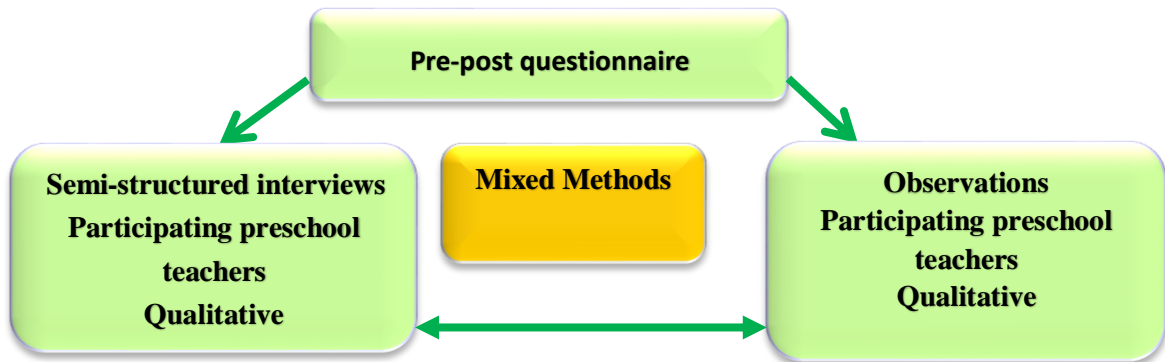


The current research paradigm is 'Mixed Methods' meaning the research will employ quantitative and qualitative research methods.

## II.2 Research Paradigm – Mixed Methods Research

The importance of this research lies in that it examined the influence of a unique program implemented as cognitive and emotional preparation for children's transition from preschool to the first-grade. In theoretical literature and research reports I have read, there is a variety of preparedness programs pertaining to this important issue. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of this research lies in the integration of significant experiential activities of play and movement within the program. This research enabled participating preschool teachers to sound their voice regarding this unique tool I have developed, and to observe and monitor the children's cognitive and emotional progress.

Figure 1.II presents the research paradigm and research tools used in In this research.



**Figure 1.II: Research Paradigm**

The current research paradigm is 'Mixed Methods' meaning the research will employ quantitative and qualitative research methods.

## **II.2.1 Mixed Methods Research**

Use of mixed methods research was first made by Campbell & Fiske in 1959, when several methods were used to research the validity of psychological insights .

Rational: Each paradigm has limitations and biases, and as such, use of more than one approach may neutralize or overcome the problems of one approach (triangulation), thus contribute to validation of findings.

The difficulty is dual. On the one hand, use of multiple concepts to describe the same method; on the other hand, using one concept to describe different specific research procedures.

Mixed methods research (the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study) is becoming an increasingly popular approach in the discipline fields of sociology, psychology education and health sciences. Calls for the integration of quantitative and qualitative research methods have been advanced in these fields (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989; O'Cathain, 2009; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). The overall purpose and central premise of mixed methods is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination may provide a better understanding of research problems and complex phenomena than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010).

**Table 1: Research design**

	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Research Tools</b>	<b>Research Population</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
<b>Stage 1: quantitative research</b>	To compare cognitive, emotional-development of children before program and after	Observations  Survey	‘Mabatim’ formal observation sheet by the Israeli ministry of education for evaluating the emotional competencies  Questionnaire – preschool children test (PCT)	Study group- 70 children in two kindergartens implementing the program. Control group- 70 children in kindergartens without program implementation.	<b>Statistics</b>
<b>Stage 2: qualitative research</b>	To examine the implementation of the educational program	Semi-structured Interviews	List of questions – personal contribution	2 kindergarten teachers	<b>Content analysis</b>

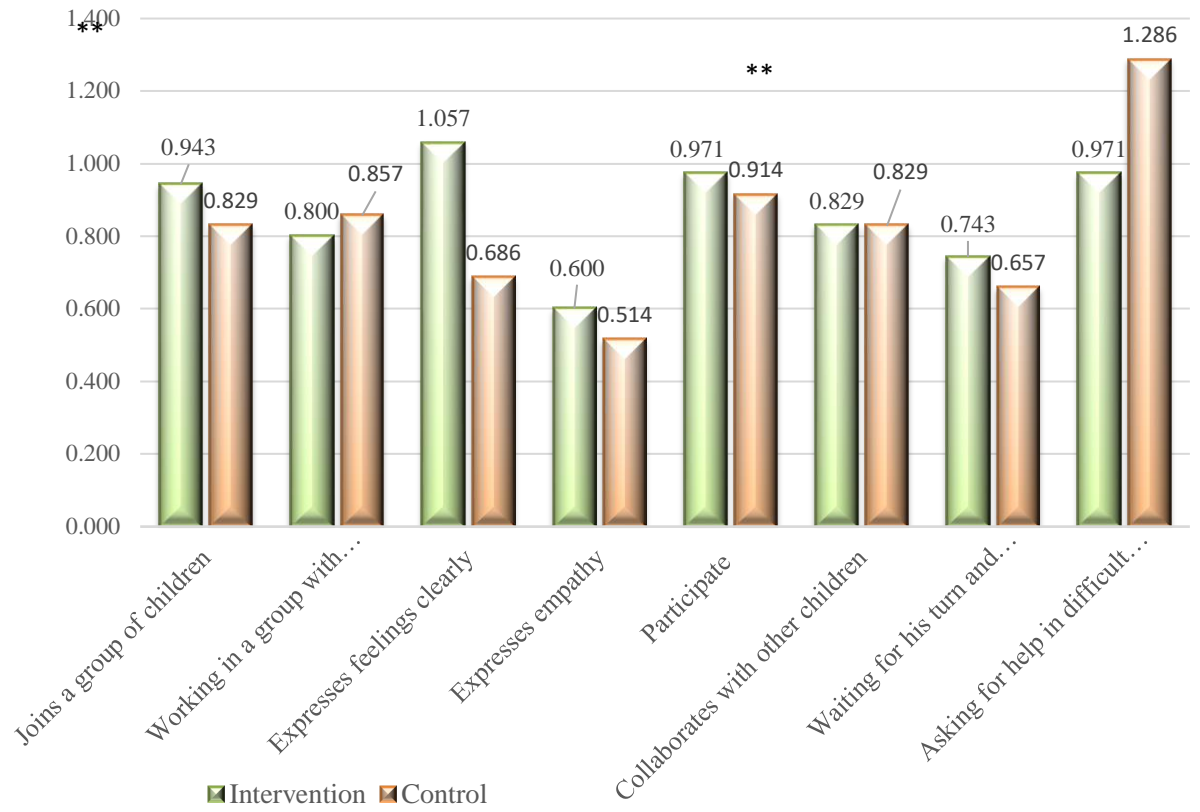
### **CHAPTER III: FINDINGS**

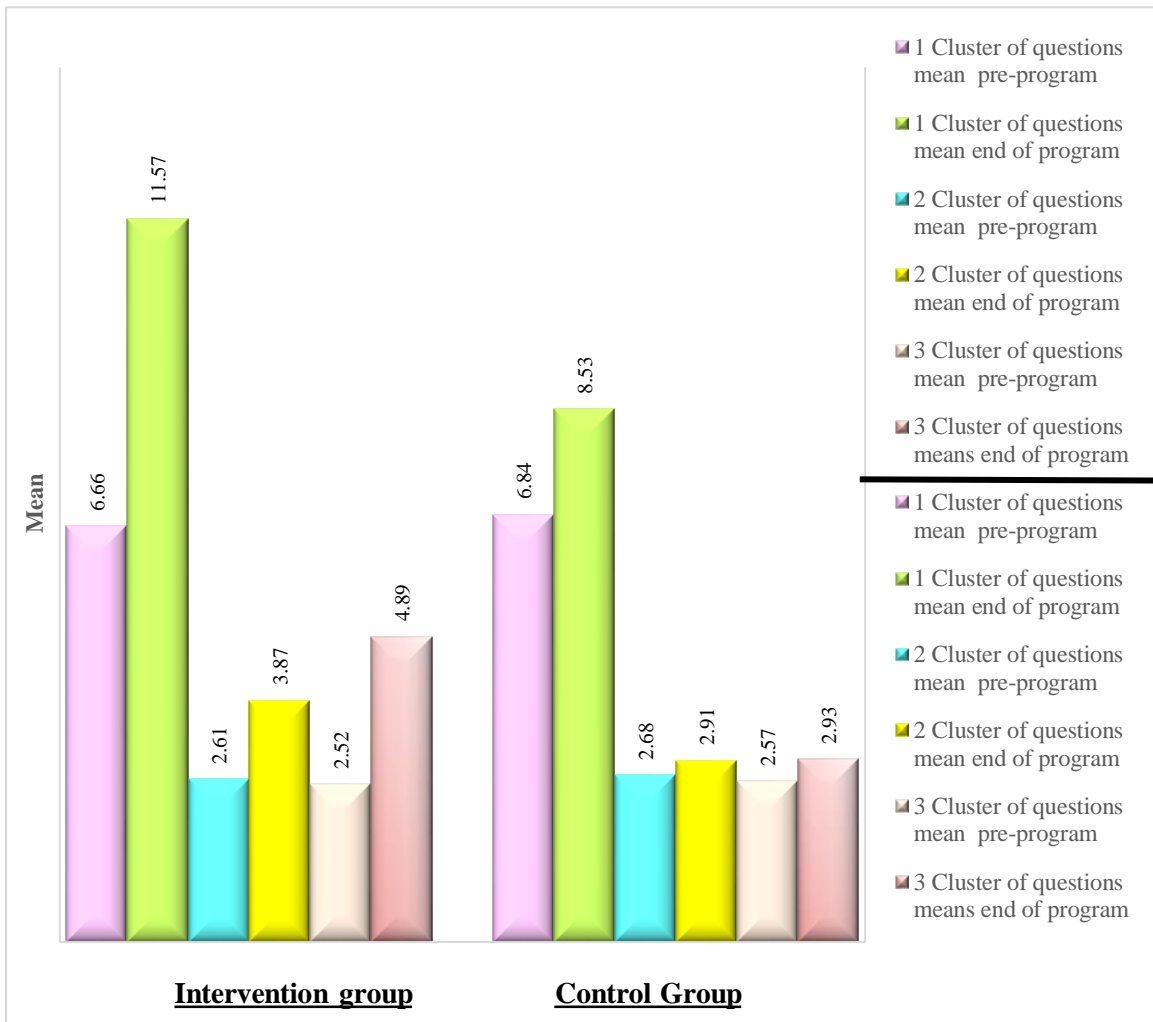
**Findings Emerging From Research Question 1:** What is the contribution of the first-grade educational program to the development of emotional and cognitive competences in kindergarten children?

**Statistical Findings that Emerged from the Research Hypothesis:**

The educational program will significantly develop children’s cognitive and emotional competencies. Hypothesis was confirmed.

Emotional competencies: **5 parameters show improvement Cognitive Competencies - the hypothesis was confirmed**





**Finding emerging from research question 2: What is the contribution of the first-grade educational program to kindergarten teachers?**

**Hypothesis 2: Kindergarten teachers' views about the children's school readiness before implementing the educational program will be changed after implementation.**

**Hypothesis was confirmed.**

### Category 1: Expectations of the Program

	Before the Program	After the Program
Expectations of the Intervention Program	A: <i>“As an experienced preschool teacher I always think about integrating programs into the daily routine, but it doesn’t always work out because I can’t find how to integrate it into my daily routine”</i>	A: <i>“I want to state favorably that the program surprised me a lot, I successfully integrated it into the daily routine exactly as I wanted to”</i>
Expectations in Emotional Area	A: <i>“I think that when a child feels ready for First Grade and does not lack confidence he can reach high, and what I mean is he is more open to learning”</i>	A: <i>“The children learned through play social and emotional competences such as – to wait patiently, express opinions while listening to friends speaking”</i>
Expectations in Cognitive Area	A: <i>“In the area of literacy I also want reinforcement for the language area and vocabulary because I have many children who don’t speak Hebrew, I am already confused by what is demanded of me, I feel that when I am frustrated and don’t know exactly how to advance language, the children also feel it”</i>	A <i>“I think the program contributed a lot to children’s cognitive competences, especially struggling children who made a huge leap from the point of view of their vocabulary and verbal ability”</i>  <i>“I liked the fact that there was a break in the midst of the research and thought given to the continuation of the process and its adaptation to preschool”</i>

### Category 2: Kindergarten Teachers’ Views toward the Kindergarten’s Role in the Transition to First Grade

Before the Program	After the Program
A: <i>“Preschool as an important role in preparing children for First Grade, but not as schools expect”</i>	A: <i>“The program greatly strengthened my attitude regarding the fact that preschool has a transitional role in preparation for school, the children acquired and strengthened areas that are critical for them for an easier transition and faster integration”</i>

## Implementation

Category 3 - Ways of Implementation		Category 4 – Partners in Educational Processes	
Before	After	Before	After
<i>“It is extremely important to me to acquire practical tools to activate the children at meetings”</i>	<i>“The integration of play is wonderful and important. The moment I play with the children they cooperate more, are less frustrated.”</i>	<i>“I presented the program to the parents, they were very happy that I had decided to participate in it, it is important to them that their children’s reading and writing will progress approaching.”</i>	<i>“I shared the success and what I felt with my colleagues, and my trainer, it was the first time I implemented a program that was not internally accompanied at the preschool, but externally.”</i>
Category 5: Essence of Emotional Preparedness		Category 6: Essence of Cognitive Preparedness	
Before	After	Before	After
<i>“From my point of view, the emotional side constitutes the foundation of all learning at preschool”</i>	<i>“The program’s activities allowed me to discuss their mistakes with the children, the reflection at the end of each activity was very important and the children had something to say about how they felt”</i>	<i>“I like it that learning cognitive competencies is done experientially, I don’t like it when children sit like ‘parrots’ and copy,”</i>	<i>“The games and activities in the area suited the competencies of learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example – critical thinking”</i>

# **CHAPTER III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: RE-THINKING PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL THROUGH RSP**

## **III.1 Conceptual Conclusions**

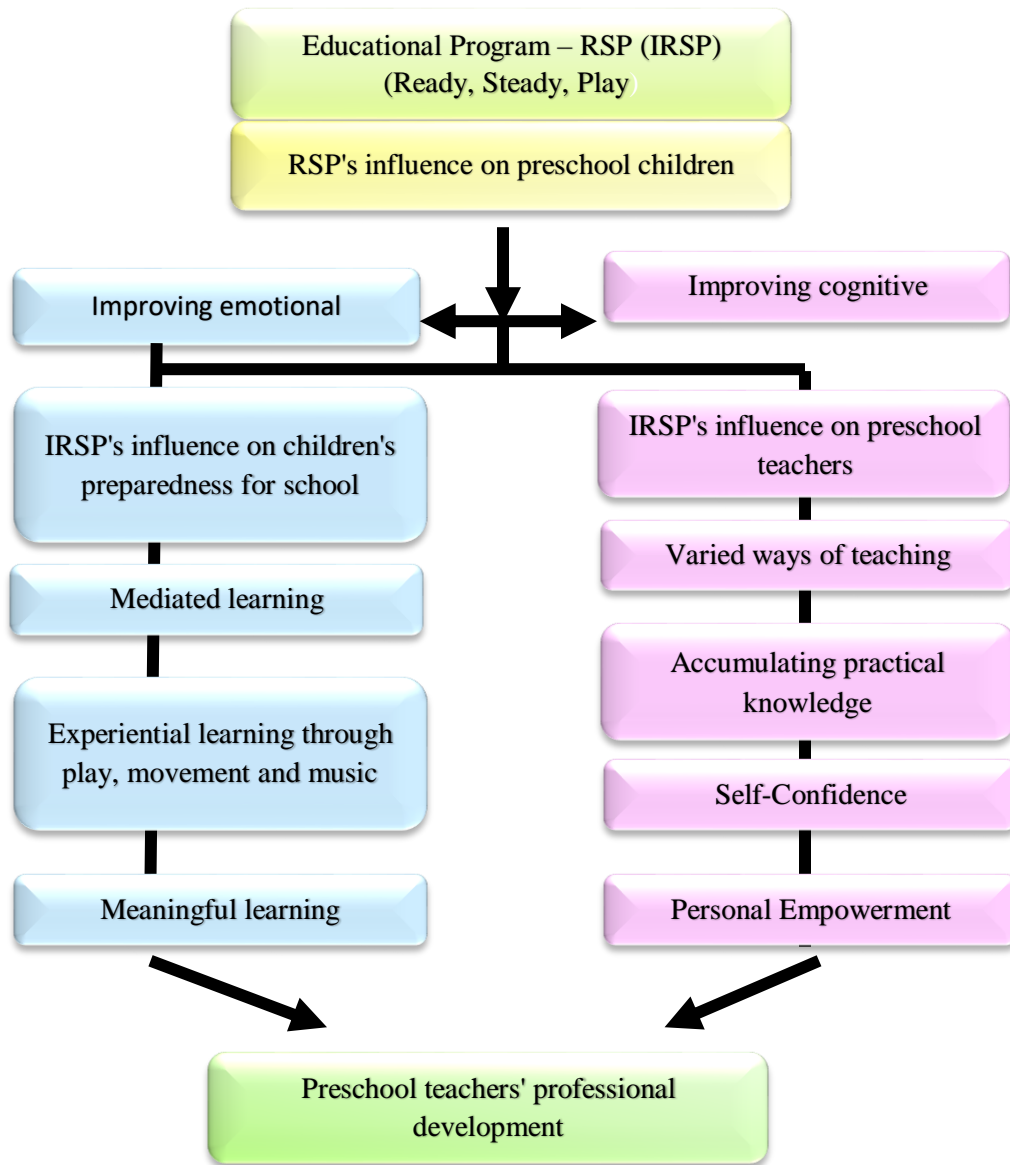
The research findings enabled the development of a new thinking framework for preparing preschool children for the transition to the first grade. Figure 1.V depicts the data-based model that emerged from the research.

The model below shows that the impact of the educational program carried out during this research is twofold. The one is influence on the preschool children and their cognitive and emotional development. The other – influence on the professional aspect of preschool teacher's work.

The program influenced preschool teachers and enhanced their self-confidence in that they felt the experience of success and the sense that they are influential figures in advancing the children. They also felt empowered with the parents of the children who saw the change, and thus commended the work of the teacher and the children's achievements. In the course of implementing the program, the teachers accumulated a great deal of knowledge in the fields of young children's development, what is required of them in order to advance the children, and as a result they also used a variety of teaching methods in their educational work, such as play, movement and music in the learning experience.

The program influenced the children's preparedness for the first grade. There was a significant improvement in their cognitive and emotional achievements. The teachers used and were exposed to mediated learning, which reaffirms the fact that with the help of the human mediator the repertoire of an individual's cognitive activity is enriched, And an individual's schema's system and acquired information expands in any interaction with the environment. there is no possibility of adaptation without mediation (the existing communication between learner and educator). Mediation is a necessary condition for children's advancement in the transition to the first grade.





**In conclusion, it can be stated that the intervention program that emerged from the study is integrative, because the reality in which we live requires coping with rapid and constant changes in all life areas. This dynamic reality, characterized by pluralism, an endless flow of information and open access to information sources - raises a challenge to the education system in general, and to preschools in particular; to introduce a fundamental change in perceptions and approaches. The alternative proposed in this study as a response to teachers' dissatisfaction with the characteristics of the**

prevalent curricula is an integrative program, which is characterized by being contextual, relevant, and aware of the constantly flowing and changing information on the one hand, and individuals' learning processes in their literate environment on the other.

The integrative approach, as expressed in this program, is motivated by the perception that the framework of the subject matter structure of one field or another does not allow for representing the changes and permutations taking place in the information world. Since information is constantly changing and renewing, it is not absolute but temporary, not objective but rather contextual, and separate subject matters that merge in dynamic processes. The approach that accompanied the implementation process is the holistic approach in education that sees all the needs of a child in early childhood and is directed at providing him with social, educational and emotional competences alongside learning solutions.

In early childhood, children spend a lot of their young life in preschool, where they learn many things that will build up the rest of their life. A **Holistic** educational intervention approach views a child as a whole, and the environment as supporting learning, even emotionally, and requires both positive and cognitive reinforcement. The program (IRSP) **supported the holistic approach**. This approach seeks to maintain a pedagogical-educational continuum over a 12-year period, in which measures are created that will enable acquaintance with and understanding of needs, mapping addressing the needs of each pupil. In addition, it was important to share all the support circles in the texture of this program - parents, teachers, and principal - and to see them as having an impact on the pupils' achievements and motivation in later stages at school. At the same time, the process of formulating the **designated** program required the researcher to examine existing basic assumptions and deepen the scope of thinking. The designated intervention program (RSP) was characterized by four main stages:

- ❖ Defining needs and structuring the process - determined in light of preschool teachers' difficulties in preparing the children for the first grade in an optimal manner and creating a program that would facilitate the children's transition to the first grade in terms of cognitive and emotional competences, through meaningful

- learning. This process marks the transition from teachers' general feelings to a structured process of thinking and planning, defining schedules and responsibilities, designing the process, building the team and formulating the intervention program, creating an "anchor" for the entire process.
- ❖ Formulating a situation report - the situation report seeks to lay the foundation for data infrastructure for the construction of a new program. To formulate this report, the researcher used her professional knowledge to collect data.
  - ❖ Determining strategic direction - Once the knowledge base has been completed, the transition to strategic planning started. This stage usually begins with the formulation of a 'instigating idea' that will constitute a conceptual anchor for the entire program. This is a challenging and very important stage in the entire planning process. After that, guiding principles, goals, objectives and target measures will be formulated. At this stage, three main components become clear: the worldview that underlies the intervention program, the language that reflects this worldview, and especially the focus of the intervention, which clarifies what the program is not about.
  - ❖ Program design activities - the final stage in the process is translating policy into goals, objectives, measures, and performance-oriented and development adaptable tasks.

Another conclusion that emerged from the study is that the RSP program is interactive.

On the one hand, it influenced and advanced preschool children in the cognitive and emotional fields, thus achieving the goal set for the children, but on the other hand, it was clear that the program contributed greatly to the professional and personal development of the teachers.

**Interactive teaching** is expressed in research in an attempt to learn what actually exists in the children's minds before, during and after the end of the interactive activities. the teachers could reach this goal when:

1. Teachers intend to teach children to think, through proper guidance using an interactive way, and to guide students to think about the issues that are essential for advancing the learning process. As a result, the child will develop the stages

- of mental structuring and cognitive and emotional competences that the teacher is trying to teach
2. Once children are required to be involved in the activity, they must emerge from their passive state.

The RSP program influenced the level of teachers' professionalism by using interactive learning styles, which led to their professional and personal development.

Interactive learning styles provide four basic feedback forms:

- ❖ **Measuring pupils' achievements** - teachers who used interactive teaching styles were better equipped with the tools to examine the level of preschoolers with regard to knowing and understanding the material studied.
- ❖ **Flexibility in teaching** - Learning methods that include two-way communication enabled teachers to quickly adjust processes and approaches.
- ❖ **Practice makes perfect** - interactive teaching improves the learning process.
- ❖ **Pupils' motivation** - This teaching approach reduces pupils' passivity and encourages involvement and therefore, motivates pupils to learn.

In the course of the program, it was evident that the teachers actually implemented the four approaches described above, which significantly improved their professional status and their influence on children's development in the best possible and proper manner.

It was also possible to conclude that the improved intervention program is **modular** in that teachers can use the principles that guided the program's construction and its improvement in order to adapt it to the specific context of preschool children they teach. Thus, teachers can maximize the children's cognitive and emotional-social abilities in accordance with their educational needs.

### **III.2 Recommendations for Kindergarten Teachers and the Ministry of Education**

**Preschool teachers:** As a researcher I would recommend that every preschool teacher in preschool use the RSP intervention program as a tool to strengthen required preschool children's cognitive and emotional competences towards their transition to the first grade.

The recommendations for the **Ministry of Education** are to introduce the program into the Ministry of Education program database so that teachers throughout the country can use it as a practical and optimal tool for developing children's cognitive and emotional skills towards their transition to the first grade.

I would recommend that the Ministry of Education inspectors train their instructors to familiarize themselves with the program and its goals in order to be able to accompany the teachers in the process, to observe them during the implementation of activities and to provide feedback following implementation. I would also recommend that the program be introduced to the Ministry of Education's professional development framework in order to expose teachers to practical and applicable tools through which the teachers will be enriched in terms of accumulating knowledge and personal professionalism. In addition, special resources should be allocated to train Ministry of Education instructors so that they be proficient in first grade goals. At the same time, instructors should be preschool teachers with at least 10 years experience in the education system, and I would recommend introducing the play tools to teacher education syllabi, emphasizing young children's ways of learning through play, movement and music.

Another recommendation is for the inspectors to emphasize the teacher's loneliness in the course of her work, which will make it easier for her to be isolated in the framework of the preschool framework she manages; for example - creating a learning community of a number of preschool teachers, mutual visits to preschools, teachers enriching one another, and creating a feedback guide regarding the teachers' activities.

### **III.3 Limitations of the Research**

Limitations related to the type of research - a limited number of participant.

Limitations related to the research tools - social desirability was minimized by not  
Limitations related to the researcher's position - my subjectivity was an advantage because I know what to ask and how to understand the data. making any judgmental remarks.

Limitations related to generalizability - triangulation was used as a strategy to increase the level of validity and strength of the findings.

### **III.4 Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge**

A data-based IRSP program was developed as a result of the findings emerging from this research. As the model closed the gap in knowledge in the area of developing reparedness for school by means of enhancing children's cognitive and social-emotional competences, the program is original. It can also be stated that the program contributed to knowledge in the area of preparedness for school.

The program suggested in this research is based on Gardner's (2011) Experiential Learning theory, and as such it contributes to knowledge in this area as well as to Feuerstein's (1999) Mediated Learning theory and cognitive load theory (CLT) (Kirschner, 2002; Paas, Renkl, & Sweller, 2003, 2004).

### **III. 5 Contribution to Practical Knowledge**

The data-based IRSP program cans serve to guide preschool teachers who wish to prepare children for the first grade in an optimal and meaningful manner. Opening professional development frameworks for these preschool teachers constitutes a change in Ministry of Education policy with regard to preschool teacher education, by introducing the program to the teacher education syllabus.

The model provides instructions to preschool teachers, regarding how to prepare children towards their transition to school in the cognitive and emotional areas through play and experiences.

### **III.6 Future Research**

1. It is recommended to undertake follow-up research that will accompany the children upon their entry to school and obtain teachers' feedback about the children cognitive and emotional preparedness, in order to better validate the expected processes of change.
2. It is recommended to undertake follow up research with a larger population
3. It is recommended to undertake follow up research in high socio-economic environments to examine how the program will influence children from this population.

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