



**UNIVERSITATEA  
BABEȘ-BOLYAI**

**Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences  
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**Development of pupils' socio-emotional  
competences through moral education.  
Applications in primary education**

**Scientific Coordinator,**

**Professor Ion ALBULESCU, PhD**

**PhD. Student Crina-Dumitrița POPA**

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**Key words:** socio-emotional intelligence, socio-emotional competences, respect, altruism, accountability, introspection, educational model, moral education, moral values, ludic teaching strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of post-modern, informational, knowledge-based society, skills-centering is an issue debated in educational policies. The skills paradigm capitalizes the postmodern vision of education in the direction of the holistic development of intelligence, of what the pupil is able of doing with the knowledge he/she has acquired. Therefore, the socio-emotional competences are focused on the student-centered learning, its ability to adapt authentically to social life, but also to personal life, by reporting to others and themselves. These socio-emotional skills are complex, transversal or procedural structures that allow the comprehension, operation and management of human and individual relationships.

Positive interpersonal relationships within the class-group result in a socio-affective climate with positive consequences for the group's cohesion, but also on the group's own constituent individuality, that is, i.e. upon relationship with itself.

The topic of this work is circumscribed to the context of transdisciplinary approach, in which the affective field has a crucial role, conjugating concerns from the area of education sciences, developmental psychology and ethics, of a cognitive, but also practical-applicative nature.

In terms of developmental psychology, theories stated by specialists regarding the formation of moral and cognitive concepts in children, such as Piaget (1973, 1980), Kohlberg (1958) and Galperin (1952), have been analyzed.

The ethics has contributed to the analysis of the main moral doctrines and the drawing of conclusions on pupils' behaviours, describing behavioural indicators and items in research tools.

In terms of the pedagogical concepts involved, research is based on the skills paradigm, centered on interactive learning, with a ludic character, approaching curricular contents specific to moral education. Therefore, we have developed an educational program that capitalize elements of content involving moral values in the Curriculum of the *Civic education* study discipline (fourth grade), starting from the premises of moral development in children (Piaget, 1980).



Starting from the theoretical concepts analyzed in part I of the thesis, we will develop at the level of socio-emotional competences valorized in the educational field two components of interconnected socio-emotional intelligence, empathy and self-acceptance, which implies a self-awareness of the self, awareness of the feelings of others, their needs and aspirations.

Building-development of the harmonious personality of pupils through the introspection of moral values mediated by empathy and socio-emotional intelligence converge on acquiring useful socio-emotional skills useful in the pupils' work and lives.

The virtues of a didactic act based on the affective communication of the teaching staff are the starting point of the undertaken approach, having as vectors some moral values such as altruism, respect, tolerance, solidarity, help to be involved in acquiring skills specific to socio-emotional intelligence, such as empathy, self-reliance, self-acceptance, self-awareness, etc.

John Dewey (1977) has conceptualized and established one of the basic principles of education, namely the principle of binding theory to practice, according to which purely theoretical notions do not find a purpose, utility as long as they are not applied at the practical level. It is in vain to know a specific concept at a theoretical level if you are not aware of what it uses, how you can use it in everyday life and what is its effective value. It involves a pragmatic conception upon education it promotes, linked especially to the formation of character and personality by practicing skills, thanks to which it seeks to innovate the education system by reconsidering the educational objectives and the manners for achieving them. Thus, by involving the pupils in practical activities, they become aware and learn by working, doing certain things, at first in the form of a game and subsequently through actual learning activities, through direct and immediate contact with reality.

Starting from his motto, "Learning through action in a social environment", John Dewey deems that moral education can be done without the help of moral lessons, but by "organizing school as a social institution, founding the learning method on the pupil's freedom, initiative, personal activity and pupil's creativity, as well as teaching, as a priority, of the study disciplines related to practical life ". Thus "the best moral education is accomplished when the child lives in peace with those with whom he works" (Albulescu, 2007, pp. 366-367), which also confirms the subject of our thesis, according to which *an authentic and enduring moral education is based on the affective involvement of the child/pupil in the teaching act, by acquiring in this way, positive socio-emotional skills in school and extracurricular life* (subl. ns.).

From a pedagogical point of view, *moral education* is one of the basic dimensions of the instructional-educational process whereby acquisition of moral conscience and conduct is considered, as expressions of theoretical and practical moral consciousness (Cristea, 2017, vol. 4). It determines the formation-development of the relational-value of human personality, reflected in character, general psychological dimension of personality, equivalent in social and pedagogical level, with ethics (moral education). Therefore, it is considered a social phenomenon that focuses on certain specific peculiarities (civic, religious, political, legal, professional, etc.), which form the content of moral education. At the core of the social phenomenon are certain social and mental processes involving well-defined actions, ethically represented and interiorized at higher level (as moral beliefs, supported at cognitive, affective, motivational and volitive levels).

The *moral development* of the individual can be accomplished by building the theoretical moral consciousness and conduct or moral action, as an expression of practical moral judgment. Moral consciousness has an axiological character, by analyzing and assessing human acts, by reporting to good and evil. It consists of three component parts, namely: cognitive side (information, concepts, principles, judgments, moral representations); affective side (moral feelings); volitive side (traits of will).

The three sides of the moral consciousness are interjoined; at their confluence, through the accumulation of moral knowledge resulting in moral feelings as authentic affective experiences of moral knowledge and they will subsequently substantiate what is called moral beliefs or attitude. The materialization of moral beliefs generates moral actions and deeds, shown towards itself, as well as towards the neighbours, events, etc., consequently, it will determine the moral conduct. Thus, there is a major distinction between moral consciousness and moral law in the sense that "moral law, as a subjective rule, is external and moral consciousness, as a formal rule, is internal" (Bunea, 2010, p. 36).

Moral education tackles human personality from an interpersonal view, whereby man interacts with others and from an intrapersonal view, whereby he relates to himself. It has ancient origins; ever since Antiquity, the human being was wondering about its existence and the way of living. Thus, philosophers giving a particular significance to such topic, have raised morals at the level of scientific discipline, thus resulting ethics. Therefore, ethics is the science that has the morals as epistemic object; this implies rules of behaviour, well-defined conduct and civilization, submerged on the popular wisdom, sent, throughout generations, *viva voce* or through various

literary or art works. Therefore, "the ethical element of educational activity must be considered an integrated whole, incorporating the conscience, behaviour and moral beliefs of the personality" (Bocart, 2014, p. 36).

The content of the instructional-educational action in the meaning of acquiring a desirable morality is the main source of training-development of the human personality determined by ethics, consisting of moral values, moral norms, moral rules and moral finalities (moral ideal, general strategic moral goals; general, specific and concrete moral objectives).

Moral values express the axiological concepts that must direct all human activity in order to acquire human qualities, such as honesty, righteousness, goodness, honesty, etc., but also observing duties towards the neighbours, community and towards itself.

The work is structured in two parts. The first part develops concepts of socio-emotional intelligence, socio-emotional competence, moral education, moral values (respect, altruism, accountability), behavioural patterns. The synthesis of these concepts is the research tools: questionnaires identifying the level of development of socio-emotional competences and the observation and monitoring grid of socio-emotional competences.

In Chapter I, we define and build the concept of socio-emotional intelligence from a pedagogical point of view through analysis of the models enshrined in the specialized literature and establish the socio-emotional competences at the level of education primary.

In chapter II we present a detailed description of the specificity of moral education throughout history, insisting on the fundamental pedagogical concept of moral education defined from the perspective of the curriculum paradigm and its components.

Chapter III finishes up the creation of the VMCSE educational program (moral values – socio-emotional competences), based on the use of the ludic teaching strategy, on the corroboration between the introspection of moral values (respect, altruism, responsibility) and their transposition at the level of socio-emotional competences (establishing positive relationships with children of close age and adults, showing prosocial behaviours and the showing personal responsibility).

The second part of the work is represented by experimental pedagogical research, where we analyze the potential of systematic use of the ludic teaching strategy in developing the socio-emotional competences of small school-age pupils (10-12 years). We applied an educational program within the discipline of *Civic Education*.

We selected, as experimental sample, fourth graders (age 10-12), starting from the stages of cognitive and moral development (Piaget, 1980) and affective development (Kohlberg, 1958), to which we applied the educational program. We conducted comparative analysis of results during the pretest-posttest-retest stages.

Systematic application of the ludic teaching strategy in primary education, at *Civic Education* study discipline, based on the internalization of specific curricular contents for moral education and their transfer at the level of socio-emotional competences represent the originality elements of this work.

By applying research tools throughout the group of subjects, we found the development of socio-emotional competences, identified as dependent variables. In this respect, we specify the following conclusive results for research:

Variable 1 (socio-emotional competence *of establishing positive relationships with children of close age and adults*) has an increase of approximately 33% in the experimental sample, compared to the control sample, from the pretest stage to the posttest stage and 3% from the posttest stage at the retesting stage.

Variable 2 (socio-emotional competence *of showing the prosocial behaviours*) shows an increase of approximately 44% in the experimental sample, compared to the control sample, from the pretest stage at the posttest stage and 1% from posttest stage at the retest stage.

Variable 3 (socio-emotional competence *of showing personal responsibility*) shows an increase of approximately 27% in the experimental sample, compared to the control sample, from the pretest stage at the posttest stage and 2% from posttest stage at the retest stage.

In the case of the control sample, the three socio-emotional competences recorded very small or even negative increases, with a maximum of 2%.

The results achieved outline that, following the completion of the educational program based on the VMCSE educational model (moral values-socio-emotional competences) and having a highly ludic character, the pupils of the experimental classes understood and mastered much better the theoretical knowledge of moral values, but also applied them in the formal environment, the primary education teacher being the "engine" who generated this matter. Consequently, we can state that the effectiveness of the VMCSE educational model (moral values – socio-emotional competences) has been proven, both theoretically and practically-applicatively, provided it is applied consistently and seriously.

## **Chapter I**

### **SOCIO-EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PEDAGOGICAL TERMS**

As we will find throughout this chapter, there are certain models and theories approaching social intelligence and emotional intelligence. We have dealt with the concept of socio-emotional intelligence from a pedagogical point of view, setting out the theoretical reference framework in which social and emotional intelligence act and interfere. In this regard, we analyzed theoretical models of social intelligence in the light of three authors: Robert Sternberg (1985), Karl Albrecht (2000), Daniel Goleman (2006), but also theoretical models of emotional intelligence, in the light of dedicated authors from the specialized literature: Salovey & Mayer (1990), Daniel Goleman (1995), Reuven Bar-On (1997).

We decided to choose this approach, because the theories of social intelligence and emotional intelligence, which are represented at behavioural, attitude levels are one of the most scientifically substantiated educational approaches with a positive impact on society. These models of social and emotional intelligence converted at the level of socio-emotional competences should underpin many educational programs, thereby ensuring the success of the education system.

## **Chapter II**

### **MORAL EDUCATION**

The study of pedagogy and implicitly of moral education, historically implies the relief of the main defining traits of the most important trends and pedagogical ideas promoted over time. In this context, moral education evolves continuously from a historical and pedagogical perspective, given the ethical requirements imposed by social, economic and political doctrines, as well as by the paradigms asserted in the history of pedagogical thinking and educational institutions. On a historical continuity line, argued at the level of philosophy of education, we can, however, identify, in the teleological and axiological plan, that moral education "aims-in any pedagogical and social context – the formation of the moral profile of personality and of the individual's socio-moral behaviour "(Albulescu, 2008, p. 43).

For moral education, "the main concern is directed towards the accessibility of human values and training through them, which also justifies the effort of the teacher's training" (Oprîș, 2012, p. 108).

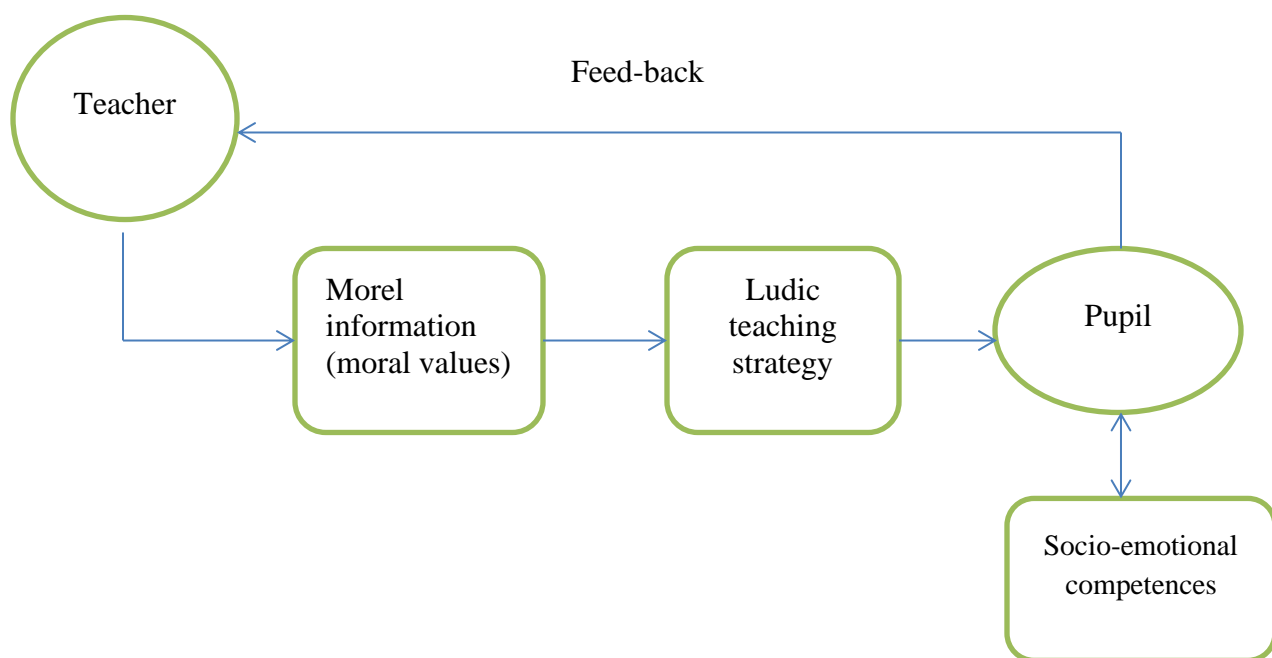
### Chapter III

#### A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES AND VALUES OF MORAL EDUCATION

Socio-emotional development is an integration of the theories and patterns mentioned on social and emotional intelligence, as well as the development of skills applied in education and accomplished through training. Therefore, based on the documentation and research of the specialized literature, we have established an educational model at the interface of socio-emotional competences and moral values, called VMCSE (moral values – socio-emotional competences).

The socio-emotional competences existing in the curriculum for primary education valorized at the level of moral education have been identified and analyzed, reported to the eight key-competences governing the normative and legislative framework of the entire education process.

The VMCSE educational model (moral values – socio-emotional competences) is schematically represented in Figure III. 1.



**Figure III.1. VMCSE educational model**

The model describes the mechanism of training and development of socio-emotional competences starting from moral information about the moral values transmitted by the teacher, which, by help of the emphasized teaching strategies transposes into the pupil's personality

through a process of internalization of notions, judgments, reasonings and subsequently becoming skills, competences applicable in the area of socio-emotional side. Based on this model, we will conduct, in the second part, an empirical research with the title *Development of socio-emotional competences of small school-age pupils (4<sup>th</sup> grade) by reevaluating the content of moral education (moral values) within the of Civic Education lessons.*

## **Chapter IV**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The central idea of our research is that moral values, such as respect, altruism, accountability, etc. can be redeemed for the development of socio-emotional skills. This is why we consider it a real use to capitalize the VMCSE educational model, created and proposed by us, for the development of socio-emotional competences through moral values and by using, as a teaching strategy, the ludic activities within the lessons of Civic education in the fourth graders. Moral education seeks to form and develop to pupils, those skills related to the application of rules of conduct in everyday life, showing some moral-civic behaviour skills and cooperation with others to solve simple tasks of (*School curriculum for civic education study discipline, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grades, O.M. 5003/12.12.2014, Bucharest, 2014*).

The development of socio-emotional competences through the internalization of moral values desirable to society is achieved by respecting others and their opinions, altruism, tolerance and consideration for the prospects of others, self-discipline, accountability, self-respect, self-esteem and self-control.

*The aim of the research* consisted in establishing the effectiveness of the application of the VMCSE educational model for the development of socio-emotional competences in the fourth graders through the internalization of moral values in teaching activities in the *Civic education study discipline*.

*Objectives of pedagogical research* proposed by us aim at:

- 1) Identifying the role of teaching-learning moral values for the development of socio-emotional competences in the school curriculum for the civic education study discipline, in the fourth grade.
- 2) Initial assessment of the development of socio-emotional competences in the th grade pupils.

3) The design of the VMCSE educational model based on the development of socio-emotional competences through moral values with the teaching support of ludic strategies for the teaching-learning of civic education study discipline.

4) Implementation of the educational intervention program based on the VMCSE model for the development of socio-emotional competences.

5) Evaluation of the results of the intervention program based on the VMCSE educational model implemented in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils for the development of socio-emotional competences through moral education.

6) Valorisation of research results in order to improve existing educational practices.

*General assumption:* implementation of an intervention program based on the VMCSE educational model (moral values – socio-emotional competences) in Civic education study discipline (in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade) contributes to the best development of socio-emotional competences at pupils.

Depending on the general assumption, we established the following specific assumptions:

1) The application of ludic teaching strategies in teaching-learning *Civic Education* study discipline by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils facilitates the process of internalizing moral values – respect, altruism, accountability – contributing to the development of socio-emotional competences: establishing positive relationships with children of close age and adults, showing prosocial behaviours, proving personal responsibility.

2) If, within the lessons of civic education in primary school (4<sup>th</sup> grade) are used highly ludic teaching strategies in teaching-learning the moral value of respect, then it will be interiorized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, establishing positive relationships with children of close age and adults.

3) If, within the lessons of civic education in primary school (4<sup>th</sup> grade) are used highly ludic teaching strategies in teaching-learning the moral value of altruism, then it will be interiorized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, manifestation of prosocial behaviours.

4) If, within the lessons of civic education in primary school (4<sup>th</sup> grade) are used highly ludic teaching strategies in teaching-learning the moral value of responsibility, then it will be interiorized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, manifestation of personal behaviours.



The *independent variable* consists in the application of the educational program based on the VMCSE model assuming activities centered on the development of socio-emotional competences through moral values within the Civic education study discipline (fourth grade). The above-mentioned model is a model designed pursuant to the documentation and research of specialized literature.

*Dependent variables* are represented by the socio-emotional competences of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils consisting of:

1. Establishing positive relationships with children of close age and adults.
2. Showing prosocial behaviours through the manifestation of positive attitudes and mutual assistance towards others.
3. Showing personal responsibility regulating relationships with others.

Selection has been made of the content elements present in the *School curriculum for the civic education school discipline, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grades*, curricular area *Man and Society*, field study: *Our relationships with things and beings, are good/bad moral values*, altruism/egoism, honor/dishonor, respect/lack of respect, responsibility/lack of responsibility, solidarity/lack of solidarity. They were applied on an experimental sample consisting of 105 subjects, who are fourth graders, from "Mircea cel Bătrân" Secondary School in Pitești. The formative intervention program was conducted in the second semester, 2018-2019 school year. To highlight the results of the formative program implemented, a comparison was made with the control sample consisting of 90 subjects.

Research methods and tools were: questionnaire-based survey, testing, observation and method of activity product analysis. Therefore, the two batches of subjects were applied the following: questionnaires identifying the level of development of socio-emotional competences, the observation grids of the level of development of socio-emotional competences, progress tests on the level of internalization of moral values and compositions/essays from which valuable information on the durability and applicability of knowledge appropriated following the Civic education lessons has been extracted.

The processing and interpretation of the data was done using the SPSS Statistics program.

## **Chapter V**

### **PREEXPERIMENTAL STAGE**

It aimed at validation of the questionnaire applicable to batches of subjects throughout the investigative endeavour in order to identify the level of development of socio-emotional

competences. Also, the research tools were used, i.e. the questionnaire and the observation grid for the level of development of the pupils' socio-emotional competences, in order to be able to make comparisons regarding their progress. Subsequently, these data were analyzed and interpreted statistically, by applying the Levene and T tests.

The objectives referred to in the pre-experimental stage were:

- elaboration of the questionnaire whereby behaviours revealing the level of development of socio-emotional competences are identified;
- validation of the questionnaire whereby behaviours revealing the level of development of socio-emotional competences are identified;
- applying the questionnaire to identify behaviours revealing the level of development of socio-emotional competences in order to pretest subjects;
- application of the observation grid to identify the level of development of socio-emotional competences.

## **Chapter VI**

### **EXPERIMENTAL STAGE**

It consisted in the implementation of the program of intervention in experimental classes by conducting didactic activities with a strong rousing highlight, using predominantly ludic teaching strategies. Didactic games such as "Consequences", "Goat and Snake", "What helps me when I feel...", etc. were used in which the emotions of children were trained, and there were some situations about the management of emotions that generate a tense atmosphere. The three moral values subject to research have been valued: respect, altruism, responsibility, found at the level of socio-emotional competences such as: establishing positive relationships with children of close age and adults, showing prosocial behaviours and the showing personal responsibility.

The formative experiment sought to achieve the following objectives:

- The application of the VMCSE educational model based on the internalization of moral values for the development of socio-emotional competences, identified as specific skills from the school curriculum to the Civic education study discipline, for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Performing didactic activities with content based on moral values such as respect, altruism and accountability.
- The application of some progress tests on the moral values involved in the development of socio-emotional competences after the intervention of the formative program.

- Identifying anti-social behaviours in pupils and prevention or removal hereof through accountability and awareness.
- Promotion of prosocial behaviours substantiated on the moral values of respect, altruism, accountability.

## **Chapter VII**

### **POSTEXPERIMENTAL STAGE**

The objectives of the postexperimental stage concerned the application of measuring tools for the level of socio-emotional competences of pupils; studying the effects generated through the implementation of the educational program, at pupils in the experimental sample and conducting comparative analyses between the pupils' results from the two samples obtained at the pre-experimental stage.

Thus, after the end of the intervention program, we applied both for progress tests to determine the level of internalization of the investigated moral values and the posttest of pupils from both samples, the control and the experimental ones, consisting in filling-in the questionnaire by pupils and assessment grids by teachers. In this respect, in the case of pupils' questioning, at that time, from the group of 105 initially established, 102 subjects participated in the experimental sample, 3 subjects were absent and 88 subjects to the control sample of the 90 initially established, because 2 subjects were absent. In the case of observation by the teacher, group consisted in 105 subjects to the experimental sample and 90 subjects to the control sample. The two instruments were applied in different days.

As regards the post-experimental stage, the proposed purpose was to identifying the extent to which the educational program, based on the use of the ludic training strategy, is operational in order to develop socio-emotional competences through internalization of moral values.

The results achieved reveal a significant development of the socio-emotional competences identified at the level of the three dependent variables, which results will be detailed in chapter IX.

We note that, in this chapter, we have also tested the degree of internalization and application of moral values, by implementing a progress test after each group of lessons, in order to determine the extent to which the pupils understood, acquired and appropriated the notions regarding moral values.

## Chapter VIII

### RETESTING STAGE

The objectives of the postexperimental stage concerned the verification of the level of socio-emotional competences of pupils in the experimental sample and the control sample, after a certain period of time (three weeks) to see the durability of their development ; Qualitative research of the pupils' activities (composition) to determine the durability and authenticity of pupils ' knowledge of the studied moral values (respect, altruism, accountability); establishing the connection between the implemented educational program and the durability over time of pupils' purchases in terms of specific socio-emotional competences.

It was also pointed out, at this stage, through the research of the composition, the subjects of the experimental sample, who achieved a higher score compared to the subjects of the control sample, 7.57 points versus 5.36 points.

There was also an insignificant increase in the level of development of socio-emotional competences, about 2%-3%, probably due to the reduced period between the two experimental stages, i.e. posttest and retest periods.

### Chapter IX COMPARATIVE STATISTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH DATA OBTAINED IN THE PRETEST, POSTTEST AND RETEST

In order to obtain an overview image of the entire research, all the data from the three experimental, pretest, posttest and retest stages were centralized in order to highlight the evolution of the development of the socio-emotional competences studied, both at pupils' level, through questionnaires, as well as at the teachers' level, by filling-in the observation grid (Table X.1. and Table IX.2.). Therefore, in the following, we will make a horizontal and vertical graphical comparative analysis of all the results obtained, namely between the experimental stages and each sampled category, as well as on each variable (socio-emotional competence) taken separately on each sampled category subject to each experimental stage.

**Table IX.1. Comparative results obtained at pretest stages – posttesting – retesting of the two samples at the level of pupils' questioning**

Variable	Stage	Sample category				Difference between the experimental sample and
		Control sample (%)	Differences between stages (%)	Experimental sample (%)	Differences between stages (%)	

						control sample (%)
Variable 1	Pretest	31,85	-	28,88	-	-2,97
	Posttest	29,54	-2,31	62,74	33,86	33,2
	Retest	31,39	1,85	65,34	2,6	33,95
Variable 2	Pretest	21,11	-	24,12	-	3,01
	Posttest	22,72	1,61	66,66	42,54	43,94
	Retest	20,93	-1,79	67,32	0,66	46,39
Variable 3	Pretest	25,18	-	26,34	-	1,16
	Posttest	26,13	0,95	52,94	26,66	26,81
	Retest	27,90	1,77	54,45	1,51	26,55

In table IX. 1, it is observed, in the case of the *control sample* as regards *variable 1*, a slight decrease in the posttest versus pretest and an insignificant increase in retest versus posttest (31.85%-29.54% – 31.39%). With regard to *variable 2*, there is an insignificant increase in posttest versus pretest and a decrease in retest versus posttest (21.11%-22.72%-20.93%) and with regard to *variable 3*, there is an insignificant increase both from pretest in posttest and from posttest in retest (25.18%-26.13%-27.90%).

In the case of *experimental sample* in relation to *variable 1*, it is observed a significant increase from pretest in posttest (approximately 34%) and a slight increase from posttest in retest (approximately 3%). The percentages obtained in the three stages are: 28.88%-62.74%-65.34%. As regards *variable 2*, a significant increase from pretest in posttest pretest is also observed (approximately 42%) and an insignificant increase from posttest in retest (approximately 1%). The percentages obtained in the three stages are: 24.12%-66.66%-67.32%. As regards the *third variable*, a significant increase from pretest in posttest is observed (approximately 27%) and an insignificant increase from posttest in retest (approximately 2%). The percentages obtained in the three stages are: 26.34%-52.94%-54.45%.

Based on the results recorded in Table IX.1, we will make a comparative analysis of the data obtained in the pretest with those obtained in the posttest by both batches of subjects, in order to be able to ascertain the existence or non-existence of progress following the application of the intervention program. In this respect, on each separate variable, identified as a socio-emotional competence, we will reveal and illustrate this matter, by verifying and confirming or invalidation of the research assumptions.

Variable 1 corresponds to the socio-emotional competence of *establishing positive relationships with children of close age and with adults* and seeks to verify the specific

assumption No. 2: If, within the lessons of Civic education in primary school (fourth grade) highly ludic teaching strategies in the teaching-learning of moral value of respect are used, it will be internalized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, establishing positive relationships with children of close age and with adults.

Variable 2 corresponds to the socio-emotional competence of showing the *prosocial behaviours* and seeks to verify the specific assumption No. 3: if, within the lessons of Civic education in primary school (fourth grade) are used highly ludic teaching strategies in the teaching-learning of moral value of altruism, it will be internalized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, showing the prosocial behaviours.

Variable 3 corresponds to the socio-emotional competence of *showing personal responsibility* and seeks to verify the specific assumption No. 4: if, within the classes of Civic education in primary education (fourth grade), highly ludic teaching strategies are used in teaching-learning of the moral value of responsibility, then it will be internalized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, showing of personal responsibility.

At the level of *observation grid* completed by teachers and centralized in table IX. 2., the dynamics of the socio-emotional competences is reproduced below.

**Table IX.2. Comparative results obtained at the pretest – posttest – retest stages by the two samples, using the observation grid**

Variable	Stages	Sample category				Difference between Experimental sample and control sample (%)
		Control sample (%)	Differences between stages (%)	Experimental sample (%)	Differences between stages (%)	
Variable 1	Pretest	24,81	-	25,07	-	0,26
	Posttest	26,66	1,85	52,38	27,31	25,72
	Retest	27,77	1,11	57,14	4,76	29,37
Variable 2	Pretest	16,29	-	18,73	-	2,44
	Posttest	18,88	2,59	43,80	25,07	24,92
	Retest	20	1,12	48,57	4,77	28,57
Variable 3	Pretest	25,92	-	19,36	-	-6,56
	Posttest	27,77	1,85	50,47	31,11	22,7
	Retest	28,88	1,11	55,23	4,76	26,35

In table IX. 2, it is observed, in the case of the *control sample*, as regards *variable 1*, an insignificant increase both between pretest and posttest, as well as between posttest and retest (24,81% - 26,66% - 27,77%). As regards *variable 2*, there is an insignificant increase between pretest and posttest versus pretest and also between posttest and retest (16,29% - 18,88% - 20%)

and as regards the *third variable*, there is an insignificant increase between the pretest and posttest, but also between posttest and retest (25,92% - 27,77% - 28,88%).

In the case of *experimental sample* in relation to *variable 1*, a significant increase is observed from pretest in posttest (approximately 27%) and a slight increase from posttest in retest (approximately 5%). The percentages obtained in the three stages are: 25.07%-52.38%-57.14%. As regards *variable 2*, it is also observed a significant increase from pretest in posttest (approximately 25%). and an insignificant increase from posttest in retest (approximately 5%). The percentages obtained in the three stages are: 18.73%-43.80%-48.57%; as regards *the third variable*, a significant increase from pretest in posttest is observed (approximately 31%) and an insignificant increase from posttest in retest (approximately 5%). The percentages obtained in the three stages are: 19.36%-50.47%-55.23%.

Based on the results recorded in Table IX.2, we will make a comparative analysis of the data obtained in the pretest with those obtained in the posttest by both batches of subjects, in order to be able to ascertain the existence or non-existence of progress following the application of the intervention program. In this respect, on each separate variable, identified as a socio-emotional competence, we will reveal and illustrate this matter, by verifying and confirming or invalidation of the research assumptions.

Variable 1 corresponds to the socio-emotional competence of *establishing positive relationships with children of close age and with adults* and seeks to verify the specific assumption No. 2, by applying the observation grid; if, within the lessons of Civic education in primary school (fourth grade) highly ludic teaching strategies in the teaching-learning of moral value of respect are used, it will be internalized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, establishing positive relationships with children of close age and with adults.

Variable 2 corresponds to the socio-emotional competence of showing the *prosocial behaviours* and seeks to verify the specific assumption No. 3, by applying the observation grid; if, within the lessons of Civic education in primary school (fourth grade) are used highly ludic teaching strategies in the teaching-learning of moral value of altruism, it will be internalized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, showing the prosocial behaviours.

Variable 3 corresponds to the socio-emotional competence of *showing personal responsibility* and seeks to verify the specific assumption No. 4, by applying the observation

grid; if, within the classes of Civic education in primary education (fourth grade), highly ludic teaching strategies are used in teaching-learning of the moral value of responsibility, then it will be internalized, contributing to the development of socio-emotional competence, showing of personal responsibility.

Following the results obtained above, we can conclude that the general assumption, as well as the specific assumptions have been validated, so the VMCSE educational model has proven its efficiency.

## CONCLUSIONS

Empirical research *Development of socio-emotional competences of pupils of small school age (fourth grade) by valorizing the content of moral education (moral values) within the lessons of Civic education* is a topic with a deep importance, because it brings together two areas arousing the researchers' interest: moral education and competences related to the socio-emotional area.

The VMCSE educational model (moral values-socio-emotional competences) based on the development of socio-emotional competences through the created moral education, with extensive and verified applicability, can be implemented at the level of primary education, both horizontally, at the fourth grade and vertically, at the other grades in the primary education, so as to ensure the specific difference between levels, through new contents and lessons, by reinforcement of the difficulty of the tasks, but also by creating teaching strategies with a ludic nature leading to the further development and enhancement of socio-emotional competences. Socio-emotional competences allow for the permanent engagement and adjustment of the individual educational course, which becomes durable and conscious, strengthening the pupils' personality in this way.

The novelty element is represented by the application of an educational program based on highly ludic teaching activities supporting the process of internalization of moral values (respect, altruism, accountability) and their transposition at the level of socio-emotional competences (establishing positive relationships with children of close age and with adults, showing prosocial behaviours and showing personal responsibility). In this context, we have analyzed the specific competences of all educational disciplines, as they contain elements specific to the affective domain, but we have chosen, as starting points, the competences specific to the Civic education study discipline (fourth grade).



The conducted comparative analyses revealed correspondences between the stages of moral development, described in the works of Piaget, Kohlberg and others, in conjunction with the process of internalizing the mental notions, such theory being formulated by Galperin and the taxonomy of the affective domain formulated by Krathwohl.

The pursued socio-emotional competences (establishing positive relations with children of close age and adults, showing prosocial behaviours and showing personal responsibility) are found as specific competences in the curriculum for Civic education study discipline (fourth grade), being transposed into behavioural items and indicators within the research tools.

The correspondences established between the constituent behavioural indicators of the observation grid and the specific competences, as well as between the items of the questionnaires and the specific competences, from the school curriculum for the Civic education study discipline, provided significant data on the effectiveness of the proposed educational program.

By applying the highly ludic teaching strategy within the lessons of Civic education, the behaviour of pupils can change, improve, acquire positive, authentic valences and the presentation of moral values/notions in a new, original, relaxed, playful manner determines the understanding and internalization in a much easier and intelligible way for the 10-12-year-old student. It presents multiple advantages and determines positive reactions in the conduct of the pupil at formal or non-formal, as well as at informal level. The example of the primary education teacher encourages the pupil in the application of knowledge acquired at Civic education study discipline.

Globally, the created educational program ensures a development of the socio-emotional competences studied, between 25% and 44% by capitalizing the contents of moral education, corroborated with the training based on the highly ludic teaching strategies. These results prove the effectiveness of the program proposed by us and confirms the general assumption of research: *Implementation of an intervention program based on the VMCSE educational model in the Civic education study discipline (fourth grade) contributes to the best development of socio-emotional competences in pupils.*

At the end of the research approach and on the basis of all the results obtained on the basis of the SPSS Statistics program in the previous chapter, we can conclude that the research assumptions have been confirmed, in other words the educational model based on the development of socio-emotional competences through moral education, VMCSE and supported by teaching strategies of a playful nature is effective, provided that it is frequently applied in

Civic education classes (according to the ANOVA variance analysis tables, see Tables X. 5., X. 9., X. 13., X. 17.). Therefore, the application of teaching strategies of a playful nature facilitates the internalization of moral values by developing socio-emotional competences within the Civic education study discipline in the fourth graders. Through teaching strategies of a playful nature, learning activities become less monotonous and even less difficult due to the active-participatory involvement of the two educational actors.

Following the application of the T-Test in each of the research stages between the two statistical populations (sample control, experimental sample) it was found that there are major differences in the development of socio-emotional competences through moral education, through the internalization of moral values such as respect, altruism and accountability.

We note that, throughout the experimental research, teachers had the mission to remind them every day, at the beginning of the program, but also at the end of the program, that they are in the period devoted to the moral value of respect, altruism, responsibility.

During the whole of investigation process during the entire semester and the observation of pupils' and teachers' behaviour, we found the following:

1. The absence, sometimes, of civic education classes, teachers preferring to teach Mathematics classes or Romanian Language and Literature instead, in order to prepare them for national competitions or assessments.
2. The existence of conflicting situations generated by puerile reasons in each experimental class-group, usually occurring between boys, which generates a tensed situation across the class.
3. Teachers do not permanently remove imminent conflicts, but only temporarily shade them away by threatening pupils by decrease their conduct grade, by lifting the tone of voice, by punishing pupils and taking them out in the corridor, in front of the door, by calling the school principal. Managing the problematic behaviour is a topic that teachers either do not know or do not want to approach as it is appropriate to prevent conflicting situations and tense states in the class of pupils.
4. Improving the behaviour of "difficult" pupils by conducting individual discussions by explaining elementary life matters, but in a non-aggressive, even affective form, we could assert, by what we were saying at the beginning of the thesis about LEARNING TO FEEL, the metaphorical phrase of introspection, self-esteem, capable of valorizing and capitalizing the human personality in living with others, but also with oneself. This should be evaluated

"learning sense" because around the concept of affectivity, which implies knowledge and socio-emotional involvement in human, interpersonal and intrapersonal interrelations, the uniform development of pupils ' personality should take place.

We consider it overwhelmingly important to have Civic education classes through teaching strategies of a predominantly playful nature, because pupils feel much more relaxed, do not perceive the assimilation of knowledge as a difficult task and they are paid great attention. Of course, in this sense, a decisive role is played by the teacher, educator, the example offered by it, especially through its own conduct. The complexity of human interactions, pupil-pupil, pupil-teacher, determines the permanent resumption of verbalization and assimilation of knowledge, information on the necessity and usefulness of moral and social values, the development of socio-emotional competences.

The teacher in primary education is the key to success and professional, especially the moral value of the pupil, is a pathfinder in the personal career of those who pursue their reactions, personality, personal and professional qualities. It should adopt tactics that do not emphasize the extrinsic control, verbal authority, coercion, to the detriment of intrinsic control, based on authentic, affective, non-cognitive observation, explanation and conversation. Pupils are human beings who must be treated with respect and affection, considered becoming personalities and not perceived as "objects" generating financial capital, thus the educational process is accomplishing in a purely mechanical way.

As regards the matters of learning contents such as moral values, promoted through didactic games requires less effort for assimilation and internalization and the responsibility of engaging in performing the game tasks leads to true and steadfast education. Activities of a playful nature are educational contexts with which pupils resonate much better, are expressed in a dissimilar, uninhibitive manner, facilitate cooperation and help between pupils, facilitate application and observance of the game rules, which can also be extrapolated outside of the ludic context in everyday life.

As regards the *limits* of the research, we can mention the shorter period during which the educational program was carried out and implemented, the accuracy of data provided by the teachers, the lower number of subjects, the uneven sampling reported at the number of fourth grades, the subjectivism of teachers in the application of the appropriated moral values, insufficient time for careful observation of all subjects.

The recommendations we propose regarding the continuation of investigative steps and for educational practice consist of:

- Emphasizing the promotion of moral and social values, as well as transferring them to the level of socio-emotional competences (positive interaction and networking skills) and less on the removal of undesirable behaviours.
- Training and development of pupils' personality by promoting moral values and socio-emotional competences, thus reducing the number of daily problems needing the teacher's intervention for primary education and finding immediate solutions, but without any echo over time.
- Through the development of socio-emotional competences, problems related to the undesirable behaviour of pupils can be resolved by calling upon confidence, goodwill, giving the pupil a free and secure expression, prompting in this A responsible and genuine attitude.
- Streamlining the didactic act and implicitly the socio-emotional competences desirable to be developed, in terms of shaping the pupils' behaviour, by applying the personal example, by observing the individuality of each of them and of their opinions.
- Introducing a larger number of classes in the education curriculum at the primary school for the *Human and Society* curricular area or through elective courses.
- The application of highly ludic teaching strategies, with a great activating potential, together with didactic processes such as heuristic conversation, debate, explanation, brainstorming, etc., determines an effective approach to the assimilation of socio-moral values and socio-emotional competences, but also the achievement of non-superficial, consistent and viable objectives.
- Through the development of socio-emotional competences, matters related to the undesirable behaviour of pupils can be resolved by appealing to confidence, goodwill, giving the pupil a free and secure expression manner, determining, in this way, a responsible and genuine attitude.
- As Alfie Kohn stated (2014, pp. 220-221) in his book *Punished by rewards*, « this trust sets in motion something that we might call a " *promising* "circle: the more confidence we have, the more the pupil will rise to the height of such trust (... ). A respectful and not a compelling attitude, a commitment to work with pupils/students to develop their ability to behave nicely, openness to find out what went wrong and to solve such problem together – all these lead to an approach that not it is more enjoyable, but it also has greater chances to give lasting results».

The emotional health of a pupil is maintained when it lives in a warm, loving and respectful environment, both from the teacher and from the pupils' team (class).

*As directions for developing future research*, we can specify that there are also other strategies for developing socio-emotional competences, not just those of a playful nature, such as teaching strategies based on experiential learning or by involvement in projects developed together with parents, interventions not polarized by parents, in terms of value.

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