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"EDUCATION, REFLECTION, DEVELOPMENT" DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Ph. D THESIS

PROMOTION OF EXPERIENTIAL PEDAGOGY THROUGH OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

SUMMARY

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Keywords and phrases:

- ✓ experiential pedagogy, experiential learning, learning experience, outdoor education, outdoor activity, Curriculum for preschool education, Curriculum for early education, preschoolers aged 5-6, educational intervention program based on outdoor experiential activities, personal and social development, performance, Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1.

The doctoral thesis entitled **Promotion of experiential pedagogy through outdoor activities in preschool education** is structured in nine chapters. The first three chapters include the theoretical foundation of the research, and chapters IV-VIII present the pedagogical research conducted, with the theme "Investigating the formative and informative values of an educational intervention program based on outdoor experiential activities in preschool education – preschoolers aged 5-6." The last chapter captures the final conclusions, both from a theoretical and practical-applied point of view, and from the point of view of the research undertaken.

The theoretical part of the thesis deals with the topic of *experiential pedagogy*, which underlies the effective teaching-learning activity. Focusing on the experiential educational process, at the center of this type of pedagogy is the learner with his experiences. Learning is specific to him, and his experiences underlie the discovery of new knowledge, influencing his holistic development. Closely related to the concepts of pedagogy/ experiential learning is the concept of *outdoor education*. Because it takes place outside the door of the classroom, outdoor education has many benefits for learners. Capitalizing on experiential learning, outdoor activities generate desirable learning experiences, the child being an active participant in his own learning process. Although capitalized worldwide, in the Romanian preschool education system, outdoor education is at the beginning of the road. The last theoretical chapter presents *a critical analysis of the fundamental official documents* used in preschool education: *Curriculum for preschool education* (document that formed the basis of the entire teaching activity in kindergarten in the period 2008-2019) and *Curriculum for early education* (document come into effect starting with the school year 2019-2020), highlighting the way in which outdoor education is capitalized through these documents.

The applicative part of the thesis presents the research carried out - "Investigating the formative and informative values of an educational intervention program based on outdoor experiential activities in preschool education – preschoolers aged 5-6." In the case of this section, we presented the *general coordinates of the research*, delimiting the research issue. Through this research, we aimed to verify the general hypothesis according to which the organization and development by the teacher for preschool education of a system of experiential outdoor activities, in compliance with the curriculum for preschool education, contributes significantly to the personal and social development of preschoolers. and to improve their performance.

Next, we presented the research in stages, respecting the methodology of pedagogical research. In the *pre-experimental stage* we outlined the content sample, we obtained the

approval from the directorate for conducting the research and the consent of teachers directly involved in research, we set up the experimental sample and obtained parental consent for preschoolers to participate in research. We also applied the research tools used to the participants and we evaluated their performance. The experimental stage captured the educational intervention program based on experiential outdoor activities proposed and implemented in the educational units participating in the research. In order to observe the changes that appeared as a result of the involvement in the formative experiment, in the post-experimental stage we again applied the research tools to the participants. In the part dedicated to the *analysis of the results obtained by reference to the research hypotheses*, we highlighted, based on the results obtained on all applied research tools, the confirmation of the secondary hypotheses, therefore the general one. We showed that the organization and development by the teacher for preschool education of a system of experiential outdoor activities, in compliance with the curriculum for preschool education, contributes significantly to the personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6 (level of assertiveness, behavior control, availability to form peer social skills) and to improve their performance (degree of task orientation). The research conclusions highlight the personal contributions (theoretical and practical-applied), as well as those of the experimental approach; we also identified some research limitations and some educational recommendations.

As the theoretical aspects represent the foundation of the applicative part of the thesis, we detail below each chapter.

Chapter I - Experience pedagogy in axiological approach presents definitions and particularities of this concept and treats the issue of experiential learning as a premise of quality learning.

Experiential pedagogy is based, as its name suggests, on experience, capitalizing on its importance in education. This type of pedagogy is, as Carl Rogers argued, a person-centered pedagogy that aims to learn experiences, share and process them, extract ideas and adapt to other similar situations.

The praxiological dictionary of pedagogy defines experiential pedagogy as "pedagogy that is based on practical learning experiences, capitalizing on their importance in educational processes. It is a person-centered pedagogy, which aims to carry out experiential processes, to acquire experiences, to process and capitalize on them, to adapt to other similar situations, etc." (Bocoș (Coord.), Răduț-Taciu, Stan, 2019, p. 46). In our opinion, *experiential pedagogy is the pedagogical science which studies, explains, structures, systematizes and enhances the learning experiences of individuals, for the purpose of training and development of human personality, in accordance with the educational ideal. If the overall objective is shaping the personality of*

pupils, we may define as the specific objective the facilitation of understanding and optimization of the learning process through the active involvement of the pupil.

Experiential pedagogy supports participants' intellectual activism, increases their confidence in their cognitive potential, develops their educational autonomy, supports the development of self-esteem, as well as motivation for learning and encourages curiosity about knowledge. As a result of designing guidance strategies specific to experiential pedagogy, learners acquire knowledge through their own effort, as they are involved in experiential learning tasks.

Starting from the premise that, based on the child's experience and responding to his needs (cognitive, emotional, social, motor), the participation of the learner, consciously and actively, ensures success in learning.

The learning experience, as a basic element in the experiential pedagogy, is defined as "the personalized manner of learning situation introversion, the personal experience generated by a learning situation, feeling that it can be set as objective in the amendments to the cognitive, affective or psychomotric structures" (Bocoş (Coord.), Răduț-Taciu, Stan, Chiș, Andronache, 2016, p. 175). At the base of learning experience we find both aspects of the knowledge structures and the needs, interests and aspirations of students; experiential pedagogy draws attention to the fact that it is important not only what we learn (knowledge), but also how we learn.

Experiential pedagogy is closely related to another key concept: experiential learning. The latter requires the active participation of learners in structured activities, in order to initiate the learning process. In experiential learning, participants learn from and through experience.

The term "experience" comes from the Latin "experientia", which derives from the verb "experiri" and means "to try, to make someone try". Experiential learning presents a relatively recent approach to learning, with John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Kurt Hahn, Jean Piaget, David Kolb as forerunners. If for Piaget learning is a permanent adaptation, for Kolb learning is the process by which knowledge is created by transforming experience.

Experiential learning is based on the idea that information is not a fixed element, but can be formed and reformed from experience. Learning does not aim at memorizing a volume of knowledge, but involves the formation of skills and abilities in the process of acquiring knowledge. We want our preschoolers/ students to obtain the information through their own efforts (of course, guided by the teacher) and to operate constructively with them. The information itself is of no use if learners do not know how to use it. Moreover, learning does not only mean cognition, but aims at the functioning of the organism in a unitary whole - we are interested, in addition to cognitive processes, in affectivity and psychomotor skills.

At present, the educational programs that are based on experiential learning are attracting more and more followers. Firstly this is because of active and attractive character of the proposed activities. Viewed as complementary academic knowledge, they regard changes in the whole personality - knowledge, attitudes, behaviours.

The proposed learning activities are designed to facilitate practical experience and reflection on them. Supporters of this type of learning highlight the importance of opening up to the new and of changing the individual, given that the proposed activities come to meet its needs (knowledge, emotional, psychomotric). Therefore, the person involved in the act of learning is the person who carries out the assessment (notes progress and records successes).

In experiential learning, the teacher has the role of optimizing the act of learning, creating the necessary conditions for a good conducting of the activity. The teacher does not only transmit knowledge, but becomes a facilitator in changing old ideas in line with new ones. He provides the resources needed for the pupil, shares opinions, empathizes with him, guides him when he encounters difficulties.

For David Kolb, experience is imperative in learning and development. He developed a structural model of learning, supporting the idea that the experiential learning process is a cycle of four stages:

1. " Concrete experience;
2. Observation and reflection on experience;
3. Formation of abstract concepts and generalizations as a result of lived experience and observations made on it;
4. Elaboration of hypotheses and experimentation regarding the implications of abstract concepts in new situations. Checking hypotheses in real situations leads to new experiences and the cycle can start again." (Vlaicu-Popa, 2009, p. 67).

In experiential learning, the teacher's role is to guide the child, ensuring an active dialogue between them. In the process of learning there are valorized personal experiences and personal development, learning being organized around them.

In order to have a successful activity, it is necessary to create a warm atmosphere, charged emotionally and safe. The atmosphere created from the begining of the learning process influences positively or negatively the success of the work carried out. In the light of the fact that previous experiences of the child underlie the future ones, evolutional, the learning process must be conducted according to the child's experience, his values, ideas, feelings and attitudes.

To the teacher belongs the responsibility, besides ensuring the psychosocial safe climate, to demonstrate in his relationship with the child, empathy, trust, respect, tolerance, so that the child should have the opportunity to discover himself with confidence.

Chapter II - Outdoor education or quality outside the classroom presents the definition of the concepts of education/ outdoor activity and the theories that underlie it. Also, in this chapter we outlined the profile of the teacher specialized in outdoor education and we treated the issue of planning and carrying out outdoor activities, with all its implications. Moreover, we presented the status of outdoor education worldwide (with examples of good practice - kindergartens and outdoor programs) and in our country (with examples of continuing education programs for teachers).

At the core of literature regarding outdoor education there were principles, definitions and concepts proposed and substantiated by British, American and Australian schools. References to the meaning of outdoor education-outdoor activities-in the writings of some teachers, such as J. A. Comenius, J. Dewey, J. Locke, J. J. Rousseau, J. H. Pestalozzi.

From a historical point of view, there have been many confusions related to the definition of the concept of "outdoor education". All the definitions given over time highlight some aspects that outdoor education pursues. It contributes to the personal and social development of the child, appealing to the senses and to the formation and development of a solid relationship with the surrounding nature (benefiting both the individual and the whole community). Depending on the point of view from which they were treated, the definitions of specialists related to this concept can be classified into two categories: education from a psycho-social point of view and education from an environmental point of view. In our opinion, *outdoor education refers to all the actions undertaken by the teacher (within the education system) / instructor (within non-formal education) in order to organize, structure and carry out learning tasks for the child, based on experiential learning, outside the classroom, aimed at training and developing desirable skills, attitudes and behaviors of participants, as well as acquiring new knowledge, capitalizing on the resources of the natural environment.*

The praxiological dictionary of pedagogy defines *outdoor activities* as *"activities that promote outdoor learning, recreational and fun activities, personal and social development programs, nature trips, mountain trips, environmental education, etc."* Thus, these activities have the following main characteristics: they offer the possibility of direct contact with nature, of living experiences in nature; stimulates the joy of staying in nature; supports the learning process of students with various learning difficulties; develops team spirit, self-help and fairplay; it offers countless physical, emotional, mental benefits, which subsequently contribute to the well-being of the individual and the group." (Bocoș, M. (coord.), 2016, p. 43).

In our opinion, *outdoor activities are outdoor learning activities that involve practical learning experiences, aimed at training and developing the skills of the participants, as well as*

acquiring knowledge and applying them, capitalizing on the resources of the natural environment.

In outdoor education, learners have the opportunity to learn information in a context that facilitates the understanding and implementation of new knowledge. Outdoor activities are based on experiential learning tasks and aim at interdisciplinary contents, aspects that favour the learning process (comprehension, retention, application).

Regarding our country, we consider that a first step that must be taken aims at the existence of official regulations that would give outdoor education the due status. The introduction, definition and explanation of outdoor activities in the preschool curriculum/ for early education and in the school curriculum thus becomes a desideratum. Outdoor activities must be based on experiential learning tasks and capitalize on the contents and skills formed in formal activities. Moreover, we recommend the realization of interdisciplinary activities, which allow the participants to operate with the specific contents of several experiential fields/ disciplines, to make transfers and the possibility to put them into practice.

Another aspect that we consider important for the future of outdoor education refers to the existence of a support curriculum for the organization of outdoor activities: the existence of guides, methodological guides, educational programs for certification, training, continuing education and specialization of teachers in this field. Regarding the training of teachers, this is required to be done by specialists thoroughly, and teachers to receive at the end of the program a certificate/ diploma attesting to the completion of the activities provided therein. Moreover, in our opinion, there should be a wide range of continuing education courses throughout our country, which would give the teacher the opportunity to improve in the field. In this sense, we consider necessary a close connection between teachers eager to specialize in outdoor education and organizations that capitalize on experiential pedagogy and outdoor activities. Organizations that explicitly address these issues could support the continuing training of teachers by partnering with the latter.

Last but not least, in order to encourage and successfully carry out outdoor activities, we consider that it is necessary to allocate funds specifically for this type of activities. Outdoor activities are more expensive and, at present, this aspect negatively influences the participation in these activities. The financial support from the state would determine the involvement of a larger number of teachers and, implicitly, of children in such activities.

The treatment of the subject regarding the future of outdoor education reminds us of the etymology of the word “education”. Derived from the Latin “educo, educare”/ “educe, educere”, this concept highlights the idea supported by outdoor education: children are “guided” in the process of knowledge, training and development of skills, attitude formation,

behavioral change by teachers , which “takes care” of their training as autonomous, creative personalities, able to successfully integrate into society. The instructive-educational process acquires, through outdoor education, a new connotation. For the world of tomorrow, the activity carried out in the educational institutions will no longer be a satisfactory one. We find that students (preschoolers to a lesser extent) acquire a negative attitude towards everything that school means: too difficult and too numerous contents, a rather long period of time spent in school, learning no longer generates reasons for joy, etc. . The opportunity to learn differently, that is, in the middle of the environment, becomes a challenge and a pleasure. Captivating work tasks, how to achieve them and the chosen locations place children in a new context, which does not force, but stimulates.

Chapter III - Outdoor activities in the context of the romanian preschool curriculum presents an overview and a critical analysis of both the Curriculum for preschool education (2008, document active at the time of the training experiment), as well as the Curriculum for early education (2019) in relation to outdoor education.

The curriculum for preschool education is part of the National Curriculum and, depending on the criterion of fundamental curriculum research, falls into the category of the general curriculum, having as purposes of early education:

- the holistic development of the child’s personality (free, creative, autonomous), starting from his needs;
- training and development of the ability to relate to both children and adults, in order to acquire new knowledge, the formation of skills and abilities, behavioral change;
- self-awareness, formation and development of self-image;
- supporting children in the learning process.

The curriculum for preschool education is developed from the perspective of an activating, interactive and integrated pedagogy, offering a document focused on objectives and personalized, individualized instructive-educational approaches, in accordance with the global development of the preschooler.

In the preschool curriculum we do not find specified the concepts “outdoor education” and “outdoor activity”. Despite the fact that these terms are not used, the idea of the outdoors is mentioned. Thus, in the presentation of the curriculum application methodology, in point 13, it is highlighted the possibility of carrying out the activity or the movement sequence in the form of an outdoor walk, as well as the obligation to expose children daily in the natural environment, without taking into account climate changes.

The idea of outdoor activity is found in the exemplification of behaviors in relation to the reference objectives. Thus, in the annual study topics “When, how and why does it happen?”

and “Who and how does he/ she plan/ organize an activity?”, at the age of 5-6/ 7 years, for the Science field, the reference objective “to show availability to participate in actions of care and protection of the environment, applying the acquired knowledge” (Curriculum for preschool education, 2008, p. 80) is embodied, among others, in the behavior “identifies some environmental problems he encounters in *outdoor activities* (*trips, visits, walks*)” (Curriculum for preschool education, 2008, p. 80).

Also, in the presentation of the children’s daily program (groups with normal, extended and weekly program) we find the idea of children’s participation in outdoor activities, this time being noted in the category of personal development activities (ADP).

We find that the references to the term “outdoor activity”, although they exist, are very few in number. We mention that a simple exposure of children in the kindergarten yard, for example, is not an outdoor activity. The meaning of this concept is much deeper, and the planning, organization and realization of such an activity requires a thorough preparation, with precise goals. We do not consider that too much importance is given to outdoor activities, which is to the detriment of children. The natural environment is an inexhaustible source of formative experiences. Although the curriculum provides for the exposure of children to the outdoor environment, the practice and experience of the department support the opposite, the children being in the yard during sunny and pleasant periods of time. Moreover, the curriculum foresights make more references to outdoor activities during moments of movement, routines or transitions, their integration into activities on experiential fields or their focus on experiential fields being mentioned only in the field of Sciences. Outdoor activities, although mainly focused on this field, can be carried out successfully and capitalizing on the other experiential areas, an aspect that we do not find in the curriculum.

The curriculum for early education (2019) is developed from the perspective of an activating, interactive and integrated pedagogy, centered on the child, offering a document focused on personalized educational approaches and on acquiring behaviors that would underpin the development of later skills, in accordance with the overall development of the preschooler.

In contrast to the Curriculum for preschool education (2008), in the Curriculum for early education (2019) the concept of “outdoor activity” is mentioned, emphasizing the idea of changing the location of activities. The two mentions appear in the Methodology of applying the Education Plan for early education, in point 13: “For the games and activities chosen in other spaces than the usual space of the group (*outdoor*), special attention will be paid both the organization and arrangement of the playground, as well as the safety offered to the children the respective space and the existing facilities. Also, depending on the space chosen for

conducting outdoor activities, which may be outside the institution (park, grass, forest, meadow, farm, grandparents' house, etc.), due consideration will be given to the suitability of the game and the exploration to the conditions offered by it." (Curriculum for early education, 2019, p. 10). We find that, although no details are made regarding the definition of this concept, it is emphasized the importance of the proper arrangement of the *outdoor* space in order to ensure the safety of the children and to adapt the activities to the existing conditions.

In addition to the aforementioned specifications, the idea of the outdoors is mentioned. Thus, in the presentation of the Methodology for applying the Education Plan for early education, in point 6, outdoor activities are highlighted as a thematic activity specific to preschool education. Point 25 of the Methodology highlights the possibility of carrying out the activity or the sequence of movement in the form of an outdoor walk, as well as the obligation of daily exposure of children in the natural environment, regardless of climate change. Also, in the presentation of the daily program of children in kindergartens (groups with normal, extended and weekly program) we find the idea of participating children in outdoor activities both in the stage of games and activities freely chosen, as well as during the phase of personal development activities.

In our opinion, outdoor education has seen a slight rising when the new curriculum became operative. Although there are only a few references to the concept of "outdoor activity", it is encouraging that it exists. We believe that the existence of a support curriculum that would explain, detail and exemplify the content and specificity of outdoor education would be of real benefit to teachers.

Chapter IV - General coordinates of the research provides an overview of the experimental approach undertaken, presenting the research, its design, the purpose and objectives of the research, the questions, the hypothesis and variables of the research, its strategy, the sample of participants, the sample of content and the stages of pedagogical research.

The research design is an intrasubject one, the research technique being that of the unique group. The research is experimental, practical-applied. Depending on the proposed purpose, the research is a development one, being directed longitudinally, and depending on the criterion of the number of subjects involved, the research is extensive.

The purpose of this research is to study the impact of organizing outdoor activities on the personal and social development of preschoolers (assertiveness, behavior control, peer social skills) and on their school performance (task orientation).

The research objectives that formed the basis of our approach were:

- Investigating the opinions of educators, from urban and rural areas, regarding the ways of carrying out outdoor activities / integrating outdoor activities in the daily program of preschoolers;
- Establishing the factors that facilitate and prevent the development of outdoor activities in preschool education;
- Exploring the opinions of teachers regarding the usefulness of organizing and carrying out systematically outdoor experiential activities in large groups;
- Design, implementation and testing of the efficiency of a program based on the organization of a system of experiential outdoor activities, focused on experiential fields, on the personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6 and their performance;
- Elaboration of didactic and educational recommendations regarding the development in optimal conditions of the outdoor activities and of their formative values on the personal and social development of the preschoolers and on their performances.

The main **research questions** that guided our research were:

- Can experiential pedagogy be promoted through outdoor activities in preschool education, to preschoolers aged 5-6?
- What are the formative and informative values of organizing experiential outdoor activities in preschool education, preschoolers aged 5-6?

The experimental approach aimed to verify the following basic hypothesis: **The organization and development by the teacher for preschool education of a system of experiential outdoor activities, in compliance with the curriculum for preschool education, contributes significantly to the personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6 and to improve their performance.**

Depending on the general hypothesis, the following *secondary hypotheses* were outlined:

Hypothesis 1. There are significant differences at the gender level regarding assertiveness, behavior control, peer social skills and task orientation.

Hypothesis 2. Participation in outdoor experiential activities causes significant changes in assertiveness and behavior control.

Hypothesis 3. The higher the frequency of preschoolers in experiential outdoor activities, the greater their availability to form peer social skills.

Hypothesis 4. The application, to the pre-schoolers aged 5-6, of a system of experiential outdoor activities leads to the optimization of the task orientation for pre-schoolers.

The research variables are:

Independent variable:

- organizing and conducting by the teacher for preschool education a system of experiential activities of outdoor type, in compliance with the curriculum for preschool education;

Dependent variables measured were:

- personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6, operationalized with the help of the following *indicators*:
  - the level of assertiveness;
  - the degree of behavior control;
  - availability to form peer social skills;
- the level of preschoolers' performance, operationalized with the help of the following *indicator*:
  - the degree of task orientation.

In the organization and realization of this research appeared a series of **external variables**. These were:

- teachers' opinions and attitudes regarding outdoor experiential activities;
- lack of funds for kindergarten to support the development of outdoor activities;
- the precarious material situation of the parents to implement various outdoor activities;
- the risks posed by outdoor education;
- lack of official regulations to give outdoor education its due status;
- lack of a support curriculum for organizing outdoor activities and professional training of teachers in the field of outdoor education.

In addition to the variables listed above, there are several moderator variables, which influence the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables. In this category we include:

- biological gender;
- age;
- IQ factor.

The research methods we used are a set of complementary investigation methods, which aim to collect research data. These methods interact and complement each other, following the specific rigor of pedagogical research.

We present below, in tabular form, the dependent variables, indicators and research methods correlated with the specific research tools (Table no. 1.IV.):

Table no. 1.IV.: *Functional correspondences between dependent variables, indicators, research methods and tools*

Dependent variables	Indicators	Research methods	Research tools
Personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6	The level of assertiveness	The method of observation	Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) 2.1 (taken from the literature, with the consent of the authors) – subscale Assertiveness
Personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6	Degree of behavior control	The method of observation	Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) 2.1 (taken from the literature, with the consent of the authors) – subscale Behavior control Preschooler Behavior Observation Grid (own conception)
Personal and social development of preschoolers aged 5-6	Availability to form peer social skills	The method of observation	Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) 2.1 (taken from the literature, with the consent of the authors) – subscale Peer social skills Preschooler Behavior Observation Grid (own conception)
		Sociometric methods	Sociometric test Sociometric matrix
The level of preschoolers' performance	Degree of task orientation	The method of observation	Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) 2.1 (taken from the literature, with the consent of the authors) – subscale Task orientation Preschooler Behavior Observation Grid (own conception)

In the case of the proposed research, the technique of the unique sample / group was used, corresponding to an intrasubject experimental design. A sample of 104 preschoolers aged 5-6 and 6 teachers were involved, coming from 4 state and private preschool education units

(one group from each unit), from the urban area, with extended program. The preschoolers involved were selected using class samples, samples formed prior to our research, which were constituted according to age criteria and based on random factors. Also, the questionnaire applied to teachers on outdoor education in preschool education in the pre-experimental stage was answered by a number of 198 teachers (both urban and rural), who work in the counties of Cluj, Sălaj, Bistrița-Năsăud, Hunedoara, Alba, Suceava and Mureș.

We present in detail, in tabular form, the structure of the sample of participants (preschoolers and teachers) involved in the pedagogical experiment (Table no. 3.IV.).

Table no. 3.IV.: *The structure of the sample of participants involved in the pedagogical experiment*

Curr. No.	Educational unit	County of origin of the educational unit	Type of the educational unit	No. of preschoolers	No. of teachers
1.	A	Cluj	state	29 (28%)	2 (33%)
2.	B	Cluj	private	16 (15%)	1 (17%)
3.	C	Cluj	state	30 (29%)	2 (33%)
4.	D	Sălaj	state	29 (28%)	1 (17%)
			Total:	**104 (100%)**	**6 (100%)**

Because the first hypothesis of our research refers to the biological gender of the participating preschoolers, we present below the distribution of preschoolers by units of origin according to this variable (Table no. 4.IV.).

Table no. 4.IV.: *The structure of the sample of participants according to biological gender*

Curr. No.	Educational unit	Girls	Boys
1.	A	16 (55%)	13 (45%)
2.	B	11	5

		(69%)	(31%)
3.	C	14 (47%)	16 (53%)
4.	D	14 (48%)	15 (52%)
	Total:	55 (53%)	49 (47%)

The sample of content capitalized in the training experiment aims at outdoor experiential activities, focused on the experiential areas with which the Preschool Curriculum (2008) operates and, starting with the school year 2019-2020, the Curriculum for early education (2019). The proposed activities took place between October 2018 and May 2019 (excluding holidays), once a week, these being integrated into the daily schedule of preschoolers.

We present, further, the theme of outdoor activities, as well as the period proposed for their realization.

Table no. 7.IV.: *The theme of the proposed experiential outdoor activities*

Calendar month	**Experiential outdoor activity**
Octomber	Activity no. 1: “Nature detectives”
	Activity no. 2: “Autumn colors”
	Activity no. 3: “Autumn Fairy Dress”
November	Activity no. 4: “Autumn fantasy”
	Activity no. 5: “The hedgehog’s house”
	Activity no. 6: “Three Little Pigs”
	Activity no. 7: “Enjoy your meal!”
December	Activity no. 8: “Ice balloons”
	Activity no. 9: “Decorative candle holder”
	Activity no. 10: “Christmas decorations”
January	Activity no. 11: “Winter Fairy Castle”
	Activity no. 12: “Let's get to know our planet!”
	Activity no. 13: “Maple lollipops”
February	Activity no. 14: “Cold air balloons”
	Activity no. 15: “Miniature caves”
	Activity no. 16: “Ice cubes”

March	Activity no. 17: “The tropical terrarium”
	Activity no. 18: “ The bean spindle”
	Activity no. 19: “Little men from mould”
	Activity no. 20: “Little painters”
April	Activity no. 21: “My first herbarium”
	Activity no. 22: “Great gardeners”
	Activity no. 23: “Colorful flowers, fragrant flowers”
May	Activity no. 24: “ROGVAIV”
	Activity no. 25: “May Flower Carnival”
	Activity no. 26: “In the world of those who do not speak”
	Activity no. 27: “Come on picnic!”

Our research approach respected the specifics of the psycho-pedagogical experiment, having all three stages: the pre-experimental stage, the experimental stage and the post-experimental stage. We present below the stages of our research and the period of their development.

Table no. 8.IV.: *Stages of pedagogical research. Temporal and actional aspects*

The stage of pedagogical research	**Pre-experimental stage**	**Experimental stage**	**Post-experimental stage**
Period	September 2018 – October 2018	October 2018 – May 2019	June 2019
Actions taken	- application of the questionnaire addressed to teachers regarding outdoor education in preschool education; - obtaining parental consent for children’s participation in research;	- carrying out the planning of outdoor activities; - implementation of the program based on the organization of a system of experiential outdoor activities.	- application of the questionnaire addressed to the teachers involved in the realization in the group of the experiential outdoor activities proposed; - filling the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) 2.1, the

	- filling the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) 2.1, the Preschooler Behavior Observation Grid, the sociometric test and child characterization sheet for each participating preschooler; - analysis and interpretation of applied evaluation tools; - carrying out the planning of outdoor activities.	Preschooler Behavior Observation Grid, the sociometric test and child characterization sheet (if applicable) for each participating preschooler; - testing the effectiveness of the proposed program on the personal and social development of preschoolers, as well as on their performance.

Chapter V – Pre-experimental stage presents the objectives of this stage, the research methodology used to collect the initial data, the application of the pretest and the processing and interpretation of the data.

The pretest was applied to preschoolers aged 5-6 in the 4 kindergartens in order to identify their level of personal and social development (operationalized using indicators: level of assertiveness, behavior control, availability to form peer social skills) and the level of their performance (operationalized with the help of the indicator: the degree of task orientation).

Between September and October 2018, the pretest was applied, using the tools presented above. Also during this period, the questionnaire on outdoor education was applied to teachers and the analysis of curricular and school documents specific to preschool education was performed.

Data obtained from the application of the Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1 were entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 statistical program. The presentation of the results obtained as a result of statistical processing was made from general to particular, being presented both comparatively and individually (for each indicator measured).

Next we present the descriptive analysis of all the measured variables, operationalized with the help of indicators, in the pre-experimental stage.

Table no. 9.V.: *Descriptive analysis of the measured indicators (obtained as a result of the operationalization of the dependent variables), in the pre-experimental stage*

Indicator	N	M	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
assertiveness	104	26.97	6.02	-.24	-.27
behavior control	104	28.50	6.13	-1.11	1.62
peer social skills	104	29.27	6.51	-.52	-.18
task orientation	104	28.88	6.73	-.80	.70

Analyzing table no. 9.V., we notice that preschoolers encounter difficulties in assertiveness (M = 26.97, AS = 6.02), behaviour control (M = 28.50, AS = 6.13) and task orientation (M = 28.88, AS = 6.73). Average scores were obtained in terms of peer social skills of preschoolers (M = 29.27, AS = 6.51).

As in the case of the research tool presented above, the data we obtained from the application of the Preschool Behavior Observation Grid were entered in the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 statistical program. The presentation of the results was made for each subscale separately (“Peer social skills”, “Behavior control”, “Task orientation”). Please note that we used the inverse rating for negative items.

The data we obtained after applying the sociometric test were synthesized and presented in the form of a sociometric matrix. We made a sociometric matrix for each group of preschoolers involved in the research (the groups of preschoolers did not know each other). The tables show the choices and rejections specified by each preschooler, based on the data obtained by calculating the sociometric status index and the preferential status index.

We present, below, the categories of preferential power for each educational unit, highlighting the number and percentage characteristic of each of them.

Table no. 28.V.: *Preferential power categories for all educational units involved in research, in the pre-experimental stage*

Educational unit / Category of preferential power	Educational unit A	Educational unit B	Educational unit C	Educational unit D
Very popular	-	-	-	-
Popular	-	2 (12.5%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)
Accepted	17 (58%)	6 (37.5%)	17 (56%)	16 (55%)
Indifferent	6 (21%)	2 (12.5%)	5 (17%)	4 (14%)
Marginalized	6 (21%)	6 (37.5%)	5 (17%)	6 (21%)
Total:	29 (100%)	16 (100%)	30 (100%)	29 (100%)

We notice that in the case of all educational units the maximum number and percentage belongs to the accepted preschoolers: 17 preschoolers in educational units A and C (58%, respectively 56% of the total preschoolers), 16 preschoolers in educational unit D (55%) and 6 preschoolers in educational unit B (37.5%) - in this case, the number of accepted preschoolers is equal to that of marginalized preschoolers. We also find that the number of marginalized subjects is equal (in the case of educational units A and C) or higher than that of indifferent subjects (in the case of educational units B and D). As for the popular preschoolers, they are reduced from a numerical point of view, the first educational unit having no preschooler in this category. There is no preschooler that falls into the very popular preferential power category.

In order to have an overview of the distribution of all preschoolers according to the category of preferential power in which they are included, we made figure no. 7.V.

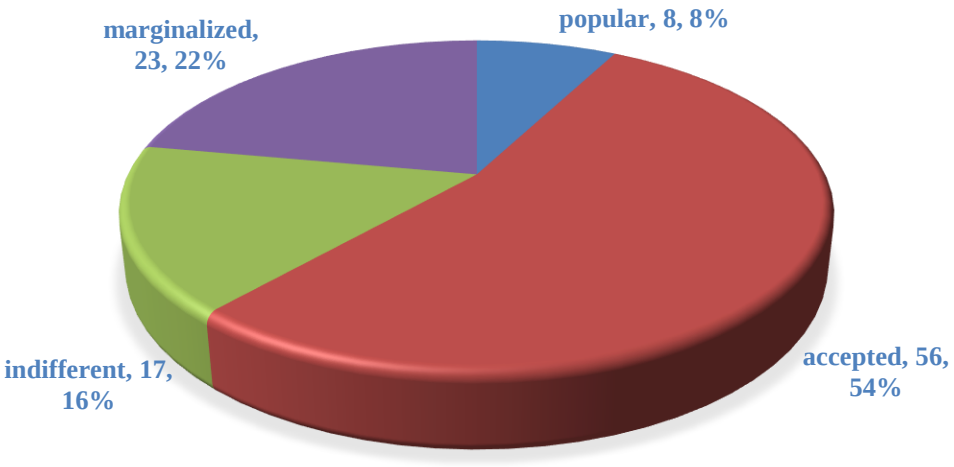

Figure no. 7.V.: *Distribution of all preschoolers according to the category of preferential power in which they are included, in the pre-experimental stage*

According to figure no. 7.V., the maximum number and percentage belongs to the accepted subjects (56 preschoolers, 54%), which means that more than half of the preschoolers involved in the research are accepted by the group colleagues; out of a total of 104 preschoolers, 23 are marginalized (22%), 17 are considered indifferent (16%) and 8 are popular preschoolers (8%).

Along with the research tools aimed at preschoolers, we applied to teachers a *questionnaire on outdoor education*, through which we sought to find out the views of respondents on how to carry out outdoor activities in the preschool education system.

Chapter VI – Experimental stage presents the objectives of this stage and details the educational intervention program based on experiential outdoor activities.

The intervention program developed and implemented by us during the 8 months of the 2018-2019 school year targeted 27 experiential outdoor activities. We remind you that the activities took place systematically, one per week (except for holidays).

The outdoor activity project is the equivalent of the activity project prepared by the teachers for the activities carried out in kindergarten. The didactic design model proposed by us targets both didactic information that appears in the usual activity projects (necessary materials, experiential field on which the activity focuses, group and duration of the activity), and novelty elements (prerequisites, professional roles of the teacher - roles related to informational-cognitive relationships and roles related to psychosocial relationships, differentiated operational objectives, extension of teaching activities and work tasks, didactic specifications, keywords and location). Regarding the way of carrying out the activity, although the methodology of teaching instructive-educational activities is observed, it is not as rigorously

carried out as in the usual activity projects, the experiential outdoor activities, by their essence, leave a greater freedom of action and support the active involvement of participants. Therefore, we proposed the following methodical approach: introduction in the activity, carring out the activity and extension of the activity/ tasks. We present, in short, the novelty elements that appear in the presentation of the activities:

- *Prerequisites* – aims at that basic knowledge and/ or skills, which are necessary for preschoolers to successfully carry out the proposed activity;
- *The professional roles of the teacher* – because in the case of outdoor activities we are interested in both the informative and the psychosocial side, we have divided these roles of the teacher into two categories related to: informational-cognitive relationships and psychosocial relationships;
- *Differentiated operational objectives* – refers both to the operational objectives targeting the whole group and to the optional objectives, valid only for preschoolers who solve a certain task of the *Extension*;
- *Extension* – presents additional activities that complement the proposed activity; the proposed task/ tasks can be performed with the whole group or with certain preschoolers (usually those who complete the previous task first);
- *Didactic clarifications* – include information/ suggestions on how to carry out the activity;
- *Keywords* – represents the concepts capitalized in the proposed activity;
- *Location* – given that the activities take place in the open air, we find mentioned here the place where the activity takes place; because the place in the natural environment most accessible to teachers and children is the courtyard of the kindergarten, most of the outdoor activities took place here.

Chapter VII – Post-experimental stage presents the objectives pursued in this stage, respectively the application of the questionnaire addressed to the teachers involved in the realization of the experiential outdoor activities proposed by the researcher; completing the research tools used in the pre-experimental stage, as well as evaluating, with the help of these tools, the performance of research participants. Regarding the research methodology used for data collection, in this stage we used the same research methods and tools as in the pre-experimental stage, in order to highlight the course of preschoolers after participating in the training experiment. The application of the post-test took place in June 2019.

As in the pre-experimental stage, the data obtained from the application of the Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1 were entered in the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 statistics program. The results are presented both comparatively and individually (for each measured indicator).

Next we present the descriptive analysis of all the measured variables, operationalized with the help of indicators, in the post-experimental stage.

Table no. 1.VII.: *Descriptive analysis of the measured indicators (obtained as a result of the operationalization of the dependent variables), in the post-experimental stage*

Indicator	N	M	AS
assertiveness	104	31.49	5.19
behavior control	104	32.13	4.79
peer social skills	104	34.03	5.46
task orientation	104	32.66	5.63

Analyzing table no. 1.VII., we find that there are optimizations at the level of all indicators. Preschoolers have developed assertiveness (M = 31.49, AS = 5.19), behavior control (M = 32.13, AS = 4.79), peer social skills (M = 34.03, AS = 5.46) and task orientation (M = 32.66, AS = 5.63). The highest scores were obtained in terms of social skills of preschoolers (M = 34.03, AS = 5.46) who, being involved in outdoor activities, easily established interactions and social exchanges with colleagues.

As in the pre-experimental stage, the data we obtained from the application of the Preschool Behavior Observation Grid were entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 statistics program. The results were presented for each subscale separately. ("Peer social skills", "Behavior control", "Task orientation"). In the case of negative items, we used the reverse rating.

As in the post-experimental stage, the data we obtained after applying the *sociometric test* were synthesized and presented in the form of the sociometric matrix. We developed a sociometric matrix for each group of preschoolers involved in research. The tables realized show both the choices and the rejections mentioned by each preschooler, based on the data obtained by calculating the sociometric status index and the preferential status index.

We present, below, the categories of preferential power for each educational unit, highlighting the number and percentage characteristic of each of them, in the post-experimental stage.

Table no. 20.VII.: *Preferential power categories for all educational units involved in research, in the post-experimental stage*

Educational unit / Category of preferential power	Educational unit A	Educational unit B	Educational unit C	Educational unit D
Very popular	-	1 (6%)	-	-
Popular	3 (10%)	-	4 (13%)	3 (10%)
Accepted	10 (35%)	4 (25%)	19 (63%)	15 (52%)
Indifferent	4 (14%)	4 (25%)	2 (7%)	4 (14%)
Marginalized	12 (41%)	7 (44%)	5 (17%)	7 (24%)
Total:	29 (100%)	16 (100%)	30 (100%)	29 (100%)

Analyzing table no. 20.VII., we find that there is a subject in the category of preferential power very popular (6% of the total percentage of preschoolers in the group to which it belongs - educational unit B). Regarding the category of popular subjects, except for the educational unit B, all the other units have subjects included in this category, representing 10% -13% of the total preschoolers in the group. The number and percentage of accepted preschoolers fluctuates, in educational units C and D dominating the other categories of preferential power (19% and 15%, respectively). The number of indifferent preschoolers is low overall (2-4 preschoolers), in the case of educational unit B representing 25% of the total percentage of the group. Regarding the marginalized subjects, their number is higher, the lowest number and percentage being in the case of educational unit C (5 preschoolers, 17%); in the case of educational unit B there are 7 marginalized subjects (44%), and in the case of educational unit A there are 12 subjects included in this category (41%). At this stage we applied a questionnaire to the teachers involved in our research. The questionnaire captured 14 questions, which concerned the opinions of teachers and preschoolers regarding the program of experiential outdoor activities in which they were involved during the 2018-2019 school year.

Chapter VIII - Analysis of the results obtained by reference to the research hypotheses highlights the data obtained with the help of the research methods and tools used, to observe the extent to which the hypotheses have been confirmed.

According to the first hypothesis, we aimed to test the extent to which it is validated that *there are significant differences in biological gender in terms of assertiveness, behavior control, peer social skills and task orientation*.

To verify this hypothesis, we used the results obtained after the application of the Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1, from the pre-experimental stage. The data obtained were processed in the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 statistical program.

Table no. 1.VIII.: *Descriptive analysis for the measured indicators (obtained as a result of the operationalization of the dependent variables), in relation to the biological gender*

Gender	Assertiveness	Behavior control	Peer social skills	Task orientation
Boys	M = 25.63 AS = 6.51	M = 26.92 AS = 6.44	M = 27.45 AS = 6.79	M = 26.87 AS = 6.72
Girls	M = 28.16 AS = 5.33	M = 29.91 AS = 5.51	M = 30.89 AS = 5.86	M = 30.67 AS = 6.27
Total	M =26.97 AS = 6.02	M = 28.50 AS = 6.13	M = 29.27 AS = 6.51	M = 28.88 AS = 6.73

Table no. 2.VIII: *Pearson correlation coefficients and coefficients of determination for measured indicators*

Indicator	1 (R^2)	2 (R^2)	3 (R^2)	4 (R^2)	5 (R^2)
1. Assertiveness	-				
2. Behavior control	-.02	-			
3. Peer social skills	.65** (.42)	.42** (.17)	-		

4. Task orientation	.68** (.46)	.22* (.05)	.67** (.45)	-	
5. Gender	.21* (.04)	.24* (.06)	.26** (.07)	.28** (.08)	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Noting the table no. 1.VIII., we find the following: girls are more assertive than boys, (M=28.16, AS=5.33 versus M=25.63, AS=6.51), they have better behavior control than boys (M=29.91, AS=5.51 versus M=26.92, AS=6.44), they present a greater availability to train social skills than boys (M=30.89, AS=5.86 versus M=27.45, AS=6.79) and have a higher degree of task orientation than boys (M=30.67, AS=6.27 versus M=26.87, AS=6.72). We mention that of the 104 preschool participants, 49 are boys and 55 are girls.

Analyzing table no. 2.VIII., we notice that there are significant correlations between the measured indicators:

- a correlation coefficient $r_{(102)}$=.65, $p<0.01$, R^2=.42 was obtained between peer social skills and assertiveness (42% of the variance of the peer social skills indicator is explained by the indicator assertiveness);
- a correlation coefficient $r_{(102)}$=.42, $p<0.01$, R^2=.17 was obtained between peer social skills and behavior control (17% of the variance of the peer social skills indicator is explained by the indicator behavior control);
- a correlation coefficient $r_{(102)}$=.68, $p<0.01$, R^2=.46 was obtained between task orientation and assertiveness (46% of the variance of the task orientation indicator is explained by the assertiveness indicator);
- a correlation coefficient $r_{(102)}$=.22, $p<0.05$, R^2=.05 was obtained between task orientation and behavior control (5% of the variance of the task orientation indicator is explained by the behavior control indicator);
- a correlation coefficient $r_{(102)}$=.67, $p<0.01$, R^2=.45 was obtained between the task orientation and the peer social skills (45% of the variance of the task orientation indicator is explained by the peer social skills indicator) (Câmpan, Bocoș, 2020a).

Considering Cohen's (1988) criteria, we can say that gender is a predictor variable in the development of the following abilities: assertiveness (R2=.04, that is 4% of the variance of the gender variable is explained by the assertiveness indicator), behavior control (R2=.06, that is 6% of the variance of the gender variable is explained by the behavior control indicator), peer

social skills (R2=.07, that is 7% of the variance of the gender variable is explained by the peer social skills indicator) and task orientation (R2=.08, that is 8% of the variance of the gender variable is explained by the task orientation indicator). After calculating the coefficients of determination, it is found that *the relationship between the gender and the measured indicators is a moderate one.*

Taking into account the results obtained and their analysis, we can say that Hypothesis 1 of our research is confirmed.

Through the second hypothesis, we aimed to verify the extent to which it is confirmed that *participation in outdoor experiential activities causes significant changes in assertiveness and behavior control.*

Table no. 3.VIII. presents comparatively the statistical data obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the indicators *the level of assertiveness* and *the degree of behavior control*.

Table no. 3.VIII.: *Comparative analysis of the indicators "assertiveness" and "behavior control", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Indicator	Stage	M	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
assertiveness	pre-experiemental	26.97	104	6.02	.59
	post-experimental	31.49	104	5.19	.51
behavior control	pre-experimental	28.50	104	6.13	.60
	post-experimental	32.13	104	4.79	.47

Analyzing table no. 3.VIII., we find that, in the pre-experimental stage, the averages obtained at the level of assertiveness (M = 26.97) and behavior control (M = 28.50) are low, noting improvements in the post-experimental stage - assertiveness (M = 31.49), behavior control (M = 32.13), as we can see in table no. 4.VIII.

Table no. 4.VIII.: *Paired Samples t test*

Indicator	Pre-test		Post-test		N	95% CI	r	t	df
	M	Std. Deviation	M	Std. Deviation					
assertiveness	26.97	6.02	31.49	5.19	104	[-5.26; -3.77]	.77	12.06*	103

behavior control	28.50	6.13	32.13	4.79	104	[-4.26; -2.98]	.84	11.21*	103

*p<0.001

Following the calculation of the t test for paired samples (Table no. 4.VIII.), a $t_{(103)}$ = 12.06, p = 0.00, was obtained for the assertiveness and a $t_{(103)}$ = 11.21, p = 0.00, for behavior control. Because t is significant for both pairs, it follows that there is a significant difference between the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages.

Calculating the effect size for the two pairs, a d = 1.14 was obtained, which means, according to Cohen's (1988) criteria, that the proposed intervention program had *a strong effect* on assertiveness and behavior control in preschoolers aged 5-6 involved in research.

For the analysis of the personal and social development variable, operationalized with the help of *the behavior control indicator*, we used the observation method, with the research tool Preschool Behavior Observation Grid, the Behavior Control subscale. In the following we present comparatively the statistical data obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the indicator of *the degree of behavior control* (Table no. 5.VIII.).

Table no. 5.VIII.: *Comparative analysis of the indicator "behavior control", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Indicator	Stage	M	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
behavior control	pre-experimental	19.27	104	3.45	.33
	post-experimental	20.38	104	4.02	.39

Observing the table no. 5.VIII., we find that, in the pre-experimental stage, the average obtained at the level of behavior control (M = 19.27) is moderate, identifying a slight increase in the post-experimental stage (M = 20.38).

We present, below, the distribution of preschoolers (numerical and percentages) according to the scores obtained in the pre-experimental and experimental stages (Table no. 6.VIII.).

Table no. 6.VIII.: *Statistical data on the scores obtained in the Behavior Control subscale, in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Stage	Low scores	Average scores	High scores	Total
Pre-experimental	16 (15%)	50 (48%)	38 (37%)	104 (100%)
Post-experimental	11 (10.5%)	28 (27%)	65 (62.5%)	104 (100%)

According to table no. 6.VIII., the low and medium scores decreased in the post-experimental stage compared to the pre-experimental one: if in the pretest there was a percentage of 15%, representing the preschoolers who obtained low scores, it became 10.5% in the post-test stage; regarding the average scores, here the difference is much more pronounced: the percentage of preschoolers who obtained such scores decreased from 48% in the pre-test to 27% in the post-test. The percentage of preschoolers who scored high on this scale increased from 37% in the pre-experimental stage to 62.5% in the post-experimental stage. We find that there are improvements in behavior control among preschoolers aged 5-6, with the highest percentage going to those who scored high.

Taking into account the results obtained, we can say that our intervention program had a positive impact on preschoolers, registering optimizations in their behavior control.

Taking into account all the information and conclusive elements in this subchapter, in which the results obtained related to Hypothesis 2 were analyzed, we can say that this hypothesis was confirmed.

According to the third hypothesis, we aimed to test the extent to which it is validated that *the higher the frequency of participation in outdoor experiential activities of older preschoolers, the greater the availability to form peer social skills.*

The dependent variable, the personal and social development of the preschooler, was operationalized, in this case, with the help of the indicator *the availability to form peer social skills*. This indicator was followed using two research methods: the observation method and the sociometric method. The research tools used were: T-CRS 2.1 - Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1 and Preschool Behavior Observation Grid, Peer Social Skills subscale - for both instruments, the sociometric test and the sociometric matrix.

Table no. 7.VIII. presents comparatively the statistical data obtained following the application of the scale Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1 in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the indicator *availability to form peer social skills*.

Table no. 7.VIII.: *Comparative analysis of the indicator "peer social skills of preschoolers", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Indicator	Stage	M	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
peer social skills of preschoolers	pre-experimental	29.27	104	6.51	.64
	post-experimental	34.03	104	5.46	.53

Analyzing table no. 7.VIII. we find that in the pre-test the average obtained at the level of peer social skills (M=29.27) is moderate, noting optimizations in the post-test stage, where M=34.03, as we can see in table no 8.VIII.

Table no. 8.VIII.: *Paired Samples t test*

Indicator	Pre-test		Post-test		N	95% CI	r	t	df
	M	Std. Deviation	M	Std. Deviation					
peer social skills of preschoolers	29.27	6.51	34.03	5.46	104	[-5.45; -4.06]	.83	13.56*	103

*p<0.001

Following the calculation of the Paired Samples t test (Table no. 8.VIII.), a $t_{(103)} = 13.56$, $p = 0.00$, was obtained for peer social skills of preschoolers. Because t is significant, it results that there is a significant difference between the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages.

Calculating the effect size, a $d = 1.33$ was obtained, which means, according to Cohen's (1988) criteria, that the proposed intervention program had a strong effect on the peer social skills of preschoolers aged 5-6.

We further present, in a comparative manner, the statistical data obtained in the Grid for observing preschool behavior in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the indicator *availability to form peer social skills* (Table no. 9.VIII.).

Table no. 9.VIII.: *Comparative analysis of the indicator "peer social skills of preschoolers", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Indicator	Stage	M	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
peer social skills of preschoolers	pre-experimental	33.97	104	7.24	.71
	post-experimental	35.65	104	7.44	.73

Analyzing table no. 9.VIII., we find that, in the pre-experimental stage, the average obtained at the level of peer social skills (M = 33.97) is moderate, identifying a slight optimization in the post-experimental stage (M = 35.65).

Table no. 10.VIII. captures the distribution of preschoolers (both numerically and as a percentage) according to the scores obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages.

Table no. 10.VIII.: *Statistical data on the scores obtained at the subscale "peer social skills of preschoolers", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Stage	Low scores	Average scores	High scores	Total
Pre-experimental	29 (28%)	46 (44%)	29 (28%)	104 (100%)
Post-experimental	17 (16%)	54 (52%)	33 (32%)	104 (100%)

According to table no. 10.VIII, the percentage of preschoolers who scored low decreased in the post-experimental stage (16%) compared to the pre-experimental stage (28%), while the percentages of those who obtained average scores increased (from 44% in pre-test to 52% in post-test) and large (from 28% to 32%). We find that more than half of the preschoolers obtained average scores at the end of the intervention program, the number of preschoolers who obtained low scores decreasing significantly. As a result of the recorded results, we can say that preschoolers aged 5-6 have improved their peer social skills.

Based on the results analyzed above, we can say that following our intervention program we found improvements in terms of peer social skills of preschoolers aged 5-6.

Taking into account the experimental sample as a whole, in terms of the sociometric test, we find that the percentages of subjects considered very popular, popular and marginalized increased, while the percentages of accepted and indifferent subjects decreased. Although the

number of marginalized preschoolers increased in the post-experimental compared to the pre-experimental stage (31 compared to 23/30% compared to 22%), we notice that the lowest preferential status index in the pre-test was -0.76, while in the posttest it became -0.52; on this line, we notice a slight evolution in a positive sense. Also, out of the 31 marginalized preschoolers, more than half (18 preschoolers) obtained a preferential status index < -0.20, which means that the difference between the choices and rejections received is not very large. Taking into account the number of choices received from colleagues in the two stages, we can say that it has increased, while the number of rejections received has remained relatively constant.

Regarding the evolution of preschoolers with special educational needs, we found a progress in the case of subjects C.4 and D.3. Preschooler C.4 has a CES certificate, being with a cochlear implant; he received, in the pre-experimental stage, 3 elections and no rejection from colleagues, and in the post-experimental stage he obtained 5 elections and no rejection. Taking into account the choices and rejections received, the preschooler is in the category of accepted subjects. Preschooler D.3. has attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); in the pre-experimental stage, he obtained 14 rejections and no choice (being the modal individual in terms of rejections), while in the post-experimental stage he received 8 rejections and 5 elections from his group colleagues. Even if it was in both stages in the category of marginalized subjects, there was an evolution both in terms of the number of rejections and the number of assessments.

We can say, therefore, that the experimental sample changed its composition, a good part of preschoolers changing their preferential status in the groups they come from, during our research. The obtained results highlight *a moderate availability of preschoolers to form peer social skills* as a result of participating in our intervention program.

Taking into account all the information and conclusive elements in this subchapter, in which the results obtained related to Hypothesis 3 were analyzed, we can say that this hypothesis has been confirmed.

The fourth hypothesis supports the idea according to which *the application, to preschoolers aged 5-6, of a system of experiential outdoor activities leads to the optimization of the task orientation and, implicitly, to the increase of the preschoolers' performance level.*

In the case of this hypothesis, the dependent variable is represented by the level of performance of preschoolers aged 5-6, operationalized with the help of the indicator of the *degree of task orientation*. This indicator was monitored using the observation method, with the research tools T-CRS 2.1 - Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1 and the Preschool Behavior Observation Grid, Task Orientation subscale - for both instruments.

For the analysis of the degree of task orientation indicator, we applied Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1, subscale Task Orientation, the data obtained being processed in the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 20.

Table no. 13.VIII. presents comparatively the statistical data obtained at the Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1, subscale Task Orientation, in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for the indicator of *the degree of task orientation*.

Table no. 13.VIII.: *Comparative analysis of the indicator "task orientation", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Indicator	Stage	M	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
task orientation	pre-experimental	28.88	104	6.73	.66
	post-experimental	32.66	104	5.63	.55

Analyzing table no. 13.VIII., we find that in the pre-test the mean obtained at the level of task orientation is slightly low (M=28.88), noting optimizations in the post-test stage, where M=32.66, as we can see in table no. 14.VIII.

Table no. 14.VIII.: *Paired Samples t test*

Indicator	Pre-test		Post-test		N	95% CI	r	t	df
	M	Std. Deviation	M	Std. Deviation					
task orientation	28.88	6.73	32.66	5.63	104	[-4.47; -3.08]	.84	10.76*	103

*p<0.001

Following the calculation of the t test for paired samples (Table no. 14.VIII.), a $t_{(103)} = 10.76$, $p = 0.00$, was obtained for the task orientation. Because t is significant, it results that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test stages.

Calculating the size of the effect, a $d = 1.05$ was obtained, which means, according to the criteria of Cohen (1988), that the proposed intervention program had *a strong effect* on task orientation to preschoolers aged 5-6.

Next, we present comparatively the statistical data obtained following the application of the Preschooler's Observation Grid in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages for *the degree of task orientation* indicator (Table no. 15.VIII.).

Table no. 15.VIII.: *Comparative analysis of the indicator "task orientation", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Indicator	Stage	M	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
task orientation	pre-experimental	37.18	104	7.07	.69
	post-experimental	38.96	104	7.53	.73

According to table no. 15.VIII., in the pre-experimental stage, the average obtained at the level of task orientation (M = 37.18) is moderate, identifying a slight optimization in the post-experimental stage (M = 38.96).

We present, below, the distribution of preschoolers (numerical and percentage) according to the scores obtained in the pre-experimental and experimental stages (Table no. 16.VIII.).

Table no. 16.VIII.: *Statistical data on the scores obtained at the subscale "task orientation", in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages*

Stage	Low scores	Average scores	High scores	Total
Pre-experimental	14 (13%)	53 (51%)	37 (36%)	104 (100%)
Post-experimental	13 (12%)	31 (30%)	60 (58%)	104 (100%)

Corresponding to table no. 16.VIII., we find that the low scores were obtained in both stages by approximately the same percentage of preschoolers (14% in pretest, 13% in posttest), there being no major changes. The average scores were recorded by a lower percentage of preschoolers in the post-experimental stage (30%) compared to the pre-experimental stage (51%), being a significant decrease. Regarding the high scores, they registered a major increase, being obtained by 37% of preschoolers in the pre-experimental stage and by a percentage of 60% of preschoolers in the post-experimental stage. Taking into account these percentages, we notice that at the end of our intervention more than half of the preschoolers registered high scores and 30% of them obtained average scores.

Taking into account the results presented above, we can say that preschoolers aged 5-6 recorded significant improvements in the task orientation and, implicitly, in increasing the level of performance.

Corroborating all the information and conclusive elements in this subchapter, in which the results obtained related to Hypothesis 4 were analyzed, we can say that this hypothesis has been confirmed.

In this part of the paper we presented several case studies between the subjects of our research (one subject from each participating educational unit), with their course from the pre-experimental stage to the post-experimental stage. The data for the description of the case were obtained through the Child Characterization Sheet. We also presented the results obtained from the application of research tools in the two stages.

Chapter IX – Conclusions highlights some general ideas about our own contributions, as well as the results obtained from our research. We have offered new definitions of the concepts "experiential pedagogy" and "outdoor education", as it is known that the latter term has been controversial over time, and there is no unanimously accepted definition of its meaning.

By graphically rendering the results obtained from the research tools used, we showed that the items had a positive, upward trajectory, both in terms of personal and social development (assertiveness, behavior control, peer social skills), as well as in terms of their performance (task orientation). Desirable behaviors have become increasingly common, while undesirable behaviors have decreased in frequency.

We concluded by saying that the results obtained confirmed our expectations, respectively the research hypothesis. We have shown that the realization and development of outdoor activities with preschoolers aged 5-6 contributes significantly to the social development of preschoolers and to the improvement of their performance.

We identified as the ***limits*** of this research:

- The relatively small number of preschoolers participating in the study;
- Difficulties in carrying out outdoor activities aimed at content specific to music education and education for society;
- Lack of a bibliography, based on consistent theoretical-fundamental and practical-applied pedagogical research, carried out in Romania, with the theme of outdoor education, with emphasis on preschool education.

Currently, in kindergarten we notice that more and more people are advocating for the allocation of a period of time in order to carry out daily outdoor activities. Even if most often games and recreational activities have as a space the natural environment (kindergarten yard), we found that outdoor activities, focusing on experiential areas, can be successfully conducted in the environment and we encourage teachers to carry out such activities. We are convinced that the imagination, creativity, mastery, experience and openness of teachers can lead to the

planning, organization and development of successful outdoor activities, with a strong positive impact on children.

Of course, we intend to expand the study in future research, both in terms of the duration of research and in terms of the types of outdoor activities that can be carried out at the level of each age group, so as to contribute both to increase the interest of teachers in carrying out such activities, as well as increasing the complexity of the data. We believe that the involvement of parents in conducting a research would be an advantage, as it would help them realize the importance of creating a desirable relationship between the child and the environment by participating in outdoor activities. In addition, we want to propose directions for action for the efficient implementation of outdoor experiential activities, in the context of the curriculum for early education.

We also want to expand the program of outdoor activities to other levels of education, to study the impact of this type of activity on students of different ages, but also the impact on other skills of learners. Moreover, we consider that the existence of an optional outdoor education would be a real help. In our opinion, the possible outdoor activity hours (conducted as an option), to go outdoors (regardless of the level of education chosen), can be an opportunity to bring the child closer to everything that school means. Detaching from the daily routine and, nevertheless, supporting the learning process (through the active involvement of the child) is done effectively through outdoor activities, offering the possibility of achieving a closer emotional connection between the educable and the school environment. And, at the same time, between the educable and the environment.

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