

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES
DOCTORAL SCHOOL "EDUCATION, REFLECTION, DEVELOPMENT"

PhD THESIS
SUMMARY

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BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

**FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES
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*Designing and implementing
educational programs based on experiential learning
for the personal and social development of
adolescents*

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INTRODUCTION

Key words and phrases: experiential learning, personal and social development, adolescents, competences, 21st century competences, educational agents, personalization of education, design and implementation of educational programmes, non-formal education, educational environment, business environment, social environment

PhD Thesis *Designing and implementing educational programs based on experiential learning for the personal and social development of adolescents* started from a personal interest in the period of adolescence and the challenges adolescents go through in the process of transformation into young adults and adults.

Current scientific problem solved

As the world becomes increasingly complex and unpredictable, the importance of experiential learning in preparing adolescents for the challenges of the 21st century has become increasingly evident. Naturally, questions such as "*How can experiential learning support adolescent development?*", "*What examples of good practice and methods of experiential learning can change agents use to develop adolescents in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments?*" and "*What examples of good practice and methods of experiential learning can change agents use to develop adolescents in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments?*" arise.", "*What are the Mayn factors of personal and social development that should be taken into account in the design and implementation of programmes based on experiential learning, so that the personal and social dimension of adolescents is developed?*", "*What competences should be developed in an adolescent to help him/her prepare for the future?*", "*Are there organisations offering educational, experiential learning programmes in Romania and abroad? What are their common elements and what good practices can we extend?*", "*What is the impact of a programme based on experiential learning in the personal and social development of adolescents?*", "*What is the impact of a programme based on experiential learning in the personal and social development of adolescents?*" and "*What are the personal and social development needs of adolescents not yet identified by school and family?*"

We consider this topic to be of scientific interest as it succeeds in answering these questions, providing solutions and examples of good practice for integrating experiential learning in the personal and social development of adolescents and promoting partnership between educational agents in Romania.

The aim of the present research is to provide a model for the design and implementation of educational programmes based on experiential learning and applicable in non-formal learning contexts for the personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19. We also want to provide scientific suggestions and practical recommendations for educational agents to use in their own educational programmes, projects and initiatives aimed at the personal and social development of Romanian adolescents through experiential learning.

The present research aims to contribute to the improvement of educational practices and methods applicable in non-formal learning contexts, with potential for expansion, and in formal and informal contexts by educational agents in Romania.

Scientific novelty and originality

In order to achieve the goal, as a **first element of originality**, we designed an intervention program based on experiential learning, based on findings from the literature and our own professional experience.

The **second element of originality** was the implementation of the programme as a **partnership between educational agents from business and education** for the benefit of adolescents. As no literature has been identified in which the collaboration between business and education in Romania has been exploited through development programmes for adolescents designed on the basis of experiential learning, the **first two studies of the scientific research represent a first step in this direction.**

Since the aim was to extend the research outside the municipality of Cluj-Napoca and to increase the complexity of the data, **the third contribution was to open the dialogue between the educational research environment and the adolescents in Romania** in order to meet the needs of young people with concrete and relevant solutions. To this end, an **exploratory and descriptive online study** was carried out, which provided us with new information on the design and implementation directions of programmes based on experiential learning. 775 respondents, aged between 14 and 19, from the counties of Bistrita-Nasaud, Braila, Cluj, Iasi, Maramures, Suceava and Bucharest were involved in this study.

However, as can be seen from the results obtained in the three studies, there is a need for future harmonisation between the agents of change in the educational, economic and social environments so that the training offered to adolescents is able to provide the qualitative basis for the skills needed for their personal, social and, subsequently, professional development. We have found that this is best achieved by developing our own organisation. Which leads us to the fourth **original contribution of this research, the establishment of the Grow Up for Life centre through which** educational programmes based on experiential learning can be created

on a national scale and beyond. In this way, not only are the results of this research exploited, but also the opportunities of the future.

Thesis structure

The thesis is organised in three parts (I. Theoretical background, II. Description of applied pedagogical research and III. Additional practical research developments and contributions) structured in 12 chapters. The bibliography contains 177 titles and Internet references. In addition, there are 8 appendices, 89 figures and 220 tables. The results are published in two scientific papers.

In the first part of the thesis (chapters I-V), the theoretical study is addressed. We consider it essential to understand the importance and role of experiential learning, 21st century skills, and the methodology behind designing a programme based on best practices exemplified and organisations providing this type of service.

In the second part of the thesis (chapters VI-X), applied pedagogical research on "Personal and social development of adolescents through educational programmes based on experiential learning" is addressed.

The third part of the thesis (Chapter XI) presents additional practical research developments and contributions and introduces us to the sustainability of the PhD research project.

The paper concludes with Chapter XII which presents the theoretical and practical contributions, general research findings, research limitations and educational recommendations for future research development directions.

Application value of the work

Starting from the direct beneficiaries of the programs initiated in the PhD thesis, adolescents aged 14-19 years old from Cluj-Napoca municipality, the PhD thesis can become a useful tool for direct and indirect beneficiaries in Romania and beyond, interested in their own personal and social development. We take into account the fact that adolescence represents the age of great questions, challenges and transformations, being the favourable ground for the development and consolidation of competences whose effects will be manifested in the level of school performance, in the resilience manifested in different life situations, in the quality of intra and interpersonal relationships and, subsequently, in the efficiency and effectiveness of professional results.

We also note that internationally, experiential learning has seen a variety of successful implementations and significant progress in the US, UK, France, Germany, Finland, Austria, Singapore and South Korea. Romania is no exception to the global trend towards the modern

paradigm of learning in which the learner actively participates in his/her own training and development and the partnership between him/her and educational agents is promoted. Through its internationally recognised benefits, experiential learning has come to be addressed in both educational and business learning contexts in Romania. As a result, the creation of educational programmes based on experiential learning becomes a categorical and unconditional necessity for the development, at national level, of a viable extracurricular alternative for the development of adolescents, all the more so as the economic, educational and social environments have agents of change with a significant impact on the development of young people.

This is why we believe that experiential learning is a viable alternative in the education of the future, as it has the potential to bring together family, education, business and social environments. While there is a belief that schools should develop individuals capable of generating value in the labour market, education will develop from the synergy of the three types of education, formal, non-formal and informal, giving rise to new, complementary educational models in which flexibility and collaboration will lead to the creation of new developmental frameworks for adolescents.

Our conviction is that business and education can and must work together with the social environment to create educational programmes necessary for the development of today's youth. We want this initiative and this work to be a starting point and an encouragement to all professionals willing to extend good practices and ideas for improvement, beyond the borders they have been used to, for the benefit of present and future generations.

This PhD thesis is placed in the area of extracurricular and out-of-school activities, offering practical, implemented and tested solutions that have experiential learning methodology as a principle.

Last but not least, this work is a confirmation of the fact that educational actors (teaching staff, school principals, professionals from various fields, representatives of non-profit organisations and the business world), through their combined efforts, can support the formation of desirable social skills and behaviours that will form adolescents with skills and attitudes needed in diversified life situations, for social inclusion and professional insertion with future projections.

PART I. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Chapter I addresses the first two research questions, "*How can experiential learning support adolescent development?*" and "*What examples of good practice and methods of experiential learning can change agents use to develop adolescents in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments?*".

In line with the first objective of the scientific research, namely to identify the role and importance of experiential learning in adolescent development, a diachronic overview of the concept of experiential learning has been presented, which, since the 19th century, has emerged as a form of learning complementary to the traditional, formal learning developed with the industrial revolution.

In the view of the fathers of experiential education, **John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Carl Rogers and David Kolb**, learning is achieved through direct experience, and competencies, seen as the ends of learning, are acquired as a means to achieve goals and objectives related to each individual's life (M. E. Vlaicu-Popa, 2009). Their theories emphasized both the environment and the need for practical experience, valuing both individuality and personal experience, learning groups, development through different methods, volitional. We thus see that the theories of the fathers of experiential learning continue to inspire contemporary educational initiatives today. In the following we highlight the main ideas from the theories of experiential learning parents, related to the first research objective and question.

John Dewey (1859-1952) is known for his theory of mental activity and his experimental school, *The University Elementary School*, where he continued to test and improve his own theories throughout his life. Two elements are noteworthy about Dewey's (J. Dewey, 1897, 1929, 1938) view of experiential learning: the first relates to the receptivity of the recipient, which is influenced by the extent to which his or her participation is intentional, volitional, and emotional, and the second relates to the coordinator of the experience who must prepare the most appropriate strategies for each type of experience to facilitate in-depth experiences.

Kurt Lewin's (K. Lewin, 1947, 1959) view of experiential learning emphasizes group learning through interaction and repetition, social space theory and group dynamics. Learning becomes social, change occurs at a faster rate, and the environment becomes a catalyst for development.

From **Carl Ransom Rogers'** non-directive theory and learner-centred pedagogy (C. R. Rogers, 1942, 1983) we note the importance of creating an appropriate learning environment and context and the significance of this factor on the development of the learner's competences. Also, the idea of familiarising the learner with experiential learning tools and methods that they can use throughout their lives in future learning contexts, once they have been understood, emerges.

In developing experiential learning theory, **David Kolb** (1939) integrated the ideas of his predecessors, **William James** (1842-1910), **John Dewey** (1859-1952), **Mary Parker Follett** (1868-1933), **Carl Gustav Jung** (1875-1961), **Kurt Lewin** (1890-1947), **Lev Vîgotski** (1896-1934), **Jean Piaget** (1896-1980), **Carl Ransom Rogers** (1902-1987) and **Paulo Freire** (1921-1997), who considered experience to be central to their own theories (A., Kolb, 2020). Building on the work of these prominent 20th century scholars, David Kolb developed his own holistic model of learning, the *experiential learning cycle*, in 1984. According to him, "learning is the process in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). What is to be learned from **Kolb's** experiential learning theory (A., Kolb, 2020) is the need to create a structure that supports the unfolding and understanding of lived experiences in contact environments so that experiences become a source of learning to complement the traditional system of learning. We can say that Kolb's experiential learning theory offers opportunities for shaping the future in the context of the demands of the 21st century. Today, David Kolb is the founder and president of the Institute for Experiential Learning (1981), a global service organisation dedicated to promoting the experiential learning model through consulting, training, coaching, assessment, research and a community of practice called "Learning from Experience" (www.learningfromexperience.com/).

In line with the second objective of the scientific research, to identify examples of good practices and methods of experiential learning that can be used by educational agents in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments, we collected and organized forty methods by levels of educational development. Some examples are: group discussions, role-playing, team projects, volunteering, problem-solving, simulations, drama, modelling, discussions with experts, company practice, visits, excursions, trips, camps, cultural exchanges, festivals.

In order to exemplify methodological resources and best practices applicable in experiential learning contexts, we have taken into account that each adolescent perceives and interprets information in different learning styles. In our study we considered three models, developed by **Walter Burke Barbe, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford and David Kolb**.

At the end of the chapter, we have correlated thirty-one suggestions and recommendations for experiential activities with active, reflective, theoretical and pragmatic learning styles. We found that regardless of the predominant learning style, experiential learning becomes, through its active characteristic, in which the learner participates and engages, a core component of deep learning and an effective way in which learners can be trained and achieve the desired outcomes.

These methods, methodological resources and activities are of particular significance in the context of the implementation of development programmes through experiential learning for competence building at different ages. The examples provided can be applied in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts and can become tools for improving the learning process.

CHAPTER II. FACTORS AND THEORIES OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Chapter II answers the research question: "*What are the Mayn factors of personal and social development that need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of programmes based on experiential learning so that the personal and social dimension of adolescents is developed?*"

From the literature review, we found that there are three Mayn factors to consider: heredity, environment and education. The chapter examines the impact of these factors on human development to identify the extent to which they have an effect on the personal and social development of adolescents. The intention was to establish a strategy for working within developmental programmes.

Heredity has been the field of dispute of many scholars, among them **Gregor Mendel** (1822-1884) and **Francis Galton** (1822-1911), who contributed considerably to the emergence of genetics as a science, **Cesare Lombroso** (1835-1909), who supported the idea of negative traits as genetically determined, **Noam Chomsky** (1928), who supported the genetic origin of language, **Jean Piaget** (1896-1980), who, in opposition, supported the constructivist view, **James D. Watson** (1928) and **Francis Crick** (1916-2004), whose discovery of DNA won them the Nobel Prize in 1953. However, studies in the field of genetics have not been able to provide clear data, from a psycho-pedagogical point of view, on the effect of genetic determinants on human personality (M. Bocos, D. Jucan, 2010), which means that heredity is not a predominant element of interest for this thesis.

More convincingly, the contribution of the environment to the development of the human personality was considered. The environment includes both external factors, specific to the physical and socio-human environment, and internal factors, i.e. natural, biological factors (M. Bocos, D. Jucan, 2010). In analysing the importance of the environmental factor, arguments from the *social learning theory* are brought to bear (A. Bandura, 1930), *perceptual learning theory* (E. J. Gibson, 1969), *theory of mental actions* (P. I. Galperin, 1952), *theory of psychogenesis of knowledge and mental operations* (J. Piaget, 1930), as well as the role of the family in creating an environment that supports adolescent development. These theories are characterised by the fact that they emphasise the major influence of the environment on human development in the learning process and consider behaviour from a general developmental perspective. Last but not least, since the family has a significant role in creating an environment

that supports the development of personality and social dimensions, we have devoted a sub-chapter to this topic.

As far as the educational factor is concerned, the arguments are based on the analysis of *the theory of mental activity* (J. Dewey, 1910), *cumulative-hierarchical learning theory* (R. Gagné, 1975) and *cognitive theory or accessibility theory* (J. S. Bruner, 1970). These action learning theories are characterised by their emphasis on the major influence of education on human development.

What is important to emphasise in this chapter is that in the individual and social formation and development of the younger generation, the emphasis should be on the education factor and the environmental factor. In the context of designing and implementing educational programmes for the personal and social development of adolescents, experiential learning, combining the influence of the educational and environmental factors, can facilitate adolescent development.

CHAPTER III. 21st CENTURY SKILLS - A PREPARATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS

Chapter III answers the research question *"What skills should be developed in a teenager to help them prepare for the future?"*

This chapter identifies and presents the competences nominated by the National Education Act, the Council of the European Union and the World Economic Forum to clarify the requirements of the 21st century regarding the aims of youth education. Furthermore, the chapter includes a comparative analysis between the visions offered by the three authorities in order to name the main similarities, the common competences and to highlight what each vision brings in addition. This chapter brings clarity to the role of 21st century competences in adolescent development through experiential learning.

Knowing and anticipating the future is a necessity in the design and implementation of educational programmes for adolescents. However, without a coordinated initiative that unifies national, European and global requirements, we run the risk of designing educational programmes that widen the gaps between what is taught theoretically in the educational environment, the programmes developed for adolescent development, the skills required by the labour market and the aspirations of adolescents. Preparing young people for the future is coherent if there is an integrative vision of the future. In this way, we realise why the education of the future is evolving from pedagogy geared towards the acquisition of knowledge to pedagogy focused on the acquisition of skills (V. Chiş, 2005) and from pedagogy by objectives to pedagogy of lifelong learning.

We note, therefore, that in the context of personal and social development, competences play a key role in curriculum development, as they provide direction on the purpose of learning outcomes. In terms of measuring adolescent progress during or after the programmes, we recommend measuring the level of newly acquired or developed knowledge, skills and behaviours (R. Răduţ-Taciu, M. Astilean, 2011).

In order to clarify the specific competences recommended by national, European and global authorities and the labour market trends worth taking into account in the design and implementation of experiential learning-based programmes, for a start, we have sought to identify the main competences to be developed in adolescents according to the highest national authority. In this regard, we have analyzed the articles of the National Education Law no. 1/2011 updated on June 5, 2022 in which we find references to these competences and learning contexts for their development.

Next, we looked to identify the Mayn competences to be developed according to the highest authority at European level. In this respect, we analysed two official documents in which clarifications are made. Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018, in the Official Journal of the European Union and Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021, published on 30.06.2021. Account has been taken of the data provided in both documents, starting from the 2018 vision and supplementing the information with the 2021 updates.

The World Economic Forum is the leading authority on the identification of key competences considered a global priority in education. In "*The future of jobs*" (A. Gray, 2016), "*The Future of Jobs Report 2020*" (World Economic Forum (2020a) and "*New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning through Technology*" (www.weforum.org, 2015), we find key competences highlighted for the period 2015-2025, as well as a set of 16 lifelong learning competences that the organisation considers to be 21st century competences.

If we were to sum up the essence of this chapter to one Mayn idea, it would be that there are currently national, European and globally regulated competences that educational agents deserve to know, to study in depth, and then to take into account in the design and development of experiential learning-based programmes.

We believe that the four visions can be used together as a source of inspiration and guidance in setting objectives related to competences seen as educational goals. In this way, the results will be useful and meaningful in the long term and, not least, will be relevant to adolescents.

CHAPTER IV. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES BASED ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Chapter IV deals with the stages of curriculum design and implementation and provides examples of good practice and success factors that can be taken into account by educational agents in their own educational approaches. The chapter also includes ways of measuring the degree of personal and social development of adolescents in programmes and concludes by outlining the most significant aspects of some of the educational initiatives of the last ten years through which different agents of change have provided recommendations and tools for developing programmes anchored in the needs of the present and the future. The role of this chapter is to provide clarity and practical solutions for designing and implementing programmes with measurable results.

IV.1. Stages in the design and implementation of educational programmes

The design and implementation of educational programmes are two of the most important and relevant processes to consider in the delivery of quality educational services. We believe that a complementary approach that brings together both educational and business change agents can develop a coherent vision in line with the findings mentioned so far in this paper and the needs of the future.

Throughout the chapter, we find influences from classical management theories (F. Taylor, H. Fayol), but also influences from bureaucratic organization theory (Max Weber, early 20th century) and human relations theory (George Elton Mayo, 1920-1930) (Educational Management, n.d.). Regarding good practices in educational management, we find contributions as early as 1970 (V.V. Popescu 1973; I. GH. Borca, 1978; N. Andrei, I. Dumitrescu, 1983; I. Jinga, 1983), but also more recent ones (I. Jinga, 1993, 1998; Ș. Toma, 1994; R.M. Niculescu, 1994; E. Joița, 1995; M. Cerchez, E. Mateescu, 1995; S. Cristea, 1996, 1998; E. Păun, 1999; R.B. Iucu, 1999, 2000; S. Iosifescu, 2000). Due to its evolution and improved practices, educational management has become an explicit concept and a methodology of action oriented towards educational success in Romanian education (E. Joița, 2000).

However, since the continuous improvement approach is closest to experiential learning, most of the best practices will come from the area of Kaizen Management and Quality Management, since the theories of the leading quality specialists (W. Edward Deming, Joseph

M. Juran, Philip B. Crosby, Armand V. Feigenbaum, Walter Shewhart, Kaoru Ishikawa, Genichi Taguchi and Masaaki Imai) have addressed all the key processes and systems that contribute to the success of an organisation and the processes within them.

IV.1.1. Programme design

From the design stage, it is essential to take into account both the process and the socio-emotional dimensions of the programme. In the following, we will mention each stage of the programme design, highlighting the role of their use.

- **NEEDS - Identify and understand the needs of the target group:** establish a vision of the end results and the ideal to be achieved. Furthermore, the most appropriate strategy to achieve the desired vision can be established.
- **OBJECTIVES - Setting objectives:** clarify the objectives to be pursued, in specific terms, orienting us towards the educational goals. It is recommended to set objectives related to competences, but also to the quality of relationships.
- **TEAM - Coordination of the educational agents involved:** involves the coordination of the partners involved (individuals, legal entities, local authorities, etc.) The role of this stage is to ensure the involvement and Maintenance of the team, to stimulate and achieve the desired performance.
- **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES - Programme planning:** determine what competences will be developed, what educational content will be delivered, who will deliver it and what tools and methods will be used (L. Peculea, D.R. Ignat, R. Brănişteanu, C. Macri, M. D. Bocoş, 2015).
- **RESOURCES - Secure and organise resources:** acquire and organise the necessary resources. The role of this stage is to create a structure to support the planned activities.
- **ENVIRONMENT - Selecting suitable locations and resourcing them:** it is recommended to select locations that are directly in line with the competences to be developed, the objectives of the programme and the planned activities. The role of this stage is to increase the quality of the experiential learning process.
- **TRAINER PREPARATION:** the trainer acts as a mental and emotional guide and coach for the participants. The role of this stage is to prepare the trainer both physically and psychologically for the delivery of the programme, to help him/her build a conducive learning atmosphere and a trusting relationship with the participants that will lead to the expected results.

IV.1.2. Programme implementation

Implementation involves carrying out the planned activities and monitoring and controlling them. In the event that changes occur with respect to the initial planning during the implementation of the activities, corrective, improvement or modification actions will be established to take into account the new conditions and ensure the success of the educational process (C. Glava, 2006).

IV.1.3. Evaluation and improvement of the programme

For optimal improvements, evaluation is recommended to be carried out along the following dimensions: evaluation of design and implementation, evaluation of results achieved, evaluation of participants, (self-)evaluation of the coordinator or trainer (C. Glava, 2006). For the evaluation of results achieved during the programmes, formative evaluation according to Donald Kirkpatrick's model is effective (D. Kirkpatrick, 2010), which measures: participants' reaction, learning, behaviour and results. This decision-making model provides the framework for adapting and improving programmes according to the requirements of the direct beneficiaries and the quality standards desired by facilitators of experiential learning programmes.

IV.2. Additional success factors needed to enhance personal and social development in the programmes

We summarise the Mayn success factors mentioned throughout this chapter that contribute to measuring the degree of personal and social development in the programmes:

- shaping participants' attitudes under the influence of external factors such as environment and experiential learning;
- Addressing the causes of behaviours and offering solutions to remedy, adjust, correct undesirable and punishable behaviours at society level;
- deliberately exposing young people to adults whose behaviours are socially desirable and can be successfully imitated by them;
- Educational agents to teach adolescents how to create their own environments in which to perform.

IV.3. Educational initiatives of the last decade - premises for designing and implementing programmes based on experiential learning

Some of the global or national educational initiatives and programmes from which educational agents can take ideas and effective methods to ensure a better adaptation of contemporary pedagogy to the demands of society and the real training and development needs of young people are: Litteris et virtuti. Education through the eyes of young people (2012), GlocalTour project on education for development (2010-2013), innovations recommended by S. Zuboff in the article "*Zero-based strategic thinking*" (Zuboff, 2014), initiatives on education and teaching recommended by Ken Robinson (2015), the impact of the fourth industrial revolution and education for development, educational innovations identified by the Brookings Institute (2018) and the Promoting Mental Health in Schools Project (2019-2022).

CHAPTER V. ORGANISATIONS FACILITATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAMMES WORLDWIDE AND IN ROMANIA

Chapter V addresses the following research questions: *"Are there organisations offering educational, experiential learning programmes in Romania and abroad? What are their common elements and what good practices can we extend?"* Twenty organisations from abroad and from Romania were identified and analysed. The chapter concludes by summarising the common elements of these organisations and the good practices that can be extended. The role of this chapter is to provide clarity and useful practical solutions to change agents who want to design and implement educational programmes or even set up organisations that could, in Romania, contribute to the personal and social development of adolescents through experiential learning.

The criteria against which the organisations in this chapter were selected and analysed were: longevity, expansion of activity from regional or national to international level, involvement of a significant number of collaborators and participants from a variety of backgrounds, and a measurable level of quality of facilitated experiential programmes.

The Mayn organisations that have been facilitating programmes built on the principles of experiential learning for decades, contributing to a better world are World Learning (since 1932), The Association for Experiential Education (since 1972), Global Expeditions Group (since 1985), European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning (EOE) (since 1996), Via Experientia (since 1998), Go Abroad (since 1998), Outdoored.Eu (since 1998), Nicodemus Wilderness Project (since 2000), The Graham School (since 2000), Cascades Academy (since 2003), Camp Europe (since 2003), Khan Academy (since 2007), Think Global School (since 2010), School on the Cloud (since 2013). Furthermore, Experience Based Learning Systems, LLC (EBLS) was founded in 1981 by David Kolb (1939) himself, the father of experiential education, to provide the general public with the latest findings from the ongoing research and practice of experiential learning.

In Romania, the Mayn accredited organisations facilitating programmes and projects based on experiential learning are: the Scouts of Romania - O.N.C.R (since 1912), the New Horizons Foundation (since 2000), the Outdoor Education and Culture Association - AECO (since 2006), the School of Values (since 2009), Teach for Romania (since 2013) and Saga Kid (since 2013).

Next, nine good practices are presented that are found in most of the organizations studied, suggesting that these practices they have in common are, in fact, success factors to be

considered, both in the design and implementation stages and in the improvement of adolescent development programs.

1. Experiential learning has no barriers, limits or boundaries, it can be done anywhere, by anyone, anytime, in any country, in any offline and online learning context, including in disadvantaged environments.

2. All organisations and programmes based on experiential learning emphasise the learning environment as an essential and catalytic factor in the development of participants.

3. The objectives of the programmes emphasise both essential, life skills and social skills and complex, cross-curricular skills.

4. Learning takes place through a process of choice and empowerment on the part of the participants, who have the opportunity to choose what suits them.

5. Intercultural exchanges increase the level of cohesion between individuals and peoples, extend the benefits of experiential learning from local communities abroad and contribute to the accelerated development of 21st century skills.

6. Learning is accelerated by creating spaces and allocating time and opportunities for reflection, open discussion and dissemination of results.

7. The experiential learning process continually adapts and improves according to the personalized goals of the participants and the changes of different environments. Programmes evolve, adapt and diversify, which is understood and embraced by each organisation studied.

8. Organisations with the highest results are those where the Mayn agents of change work simultaneously and as a team for the benefit of the participants.

9. Through the organisations and good practices presented in this chapter, the foundations of a school for all can be seen where adolescents can learn alongside their older and younger siblings, peers, parents and adults, under the guidance of teachers, trainers, coaches, subject specialists and mentors. The aim of this educational framework is to create and train the core competencies, complex skills and character traits of adolescents so that they can continually develop their personalities and social relationships with their peers and communities to improve their own lives and the quality of life of those they interact with.

These good practices are examples of success factors that can be used by change agents in their own educational initiatives as a starting point for designing and implementing programmes based on experiential learning that contribute to the personal, social and, subsequently, professional development of adolescents.

**PART II. DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLIED PEDAGOGICAL
RESEARCH ON "PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF
ADOLESCENTS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES BASED
ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING"**

CHAPTER VI. GENERAL COORDINATES OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter VI provides an overview of the research approach undertaken, presenting the research problem, the research design, the research strategy and the content sample.

In order to have an overview of the scientific research, we illustrate in the following table the correlation between the research questions, the research objectives and the studies carried out during the investigations.

Table VI.1.

Correlation between research questions, research objectives and studies conducted

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (S.O.)	STUDIES
1. How can experiential learning support adolescent development?	S.O. 1: Identifying the role and importance of experiential learning in adolescent development.	Theoretical study
2. What examples of good practice and experiential learning methods can change agents use to develop adolescents in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments?	S.O. 2: Identify good practices and experiential learning methods that can be used by change agents who want to develop adolescents in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments.	
3. What are the Mayn factors of personal and social development that need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of programmes based on experiential learning so that the personal and social dimension of adolescents is developed?	S.O. 3: Identify the key personal and social development factors that need to be integrated into experiential learning programmes.	
4. What skills should be developed in a teenager to help them prepare for the future?	S.O. 4: Identifying 21st century skills to develop in adolescents.	
5. Are there organisations offering educational, experiential learning programmes in Romania and abroad? What are their common elements and what good practices can we extend?	S.O. 5: Identify organisations running experiential learning programmes in the world and in Romania.	
	S.O. 6: Identify good practices of these organisations to be taken into account in programme design by interested educational agents.	
6. What is the impact of a programme based on experiential learning on the personal and social development of adolescents?	S.O. 7: Design an educational programme based on experiential learning for the personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.	Studies I and II - practical application
	S.O. 8: Implement the programme in a group of at least 10 adolescents aged 14 to 19 during one school year.	
	S.O. 9: Verify the impact of the implementation of the educational intervention programme based on experiential learning on the personal and social development of adolescents.	

	S.O. 10: Analysis of the programme and its results to improve the programme and create useful materials for educational agents.	
7. What are the characteristics of the backgrounds of high school students (age group 14-19) and what backgrounds do they aspire to be in the future?	S.O. 11: Identify the characteristics of the environment from which adolescents come, learn and develop.	Study III - exploratory
	S.O. 12: Identify the characteristics of the environment to which adolescents aspire and want to go.	
8. What are the Mayn learning methods and tools that adolescents use in their training and development? To what extent are experiential learning tools preferred?	S.O. 13: Identify ways in which adolescents learn and develop.	
9. What skills do adolescents want to develop, based on 21st century skills?	S.O. 14: Identify the skills they want adolescents to develop, based on a selection of 21st century skills.	
10. What are the personal and social development needs of adolescents, not yet identified by school and family?	S.O. 15: Identify current needs and educational interests of adolescents in the short and medium term.	
	S.O. 16: Identifying adolescents' long-term interests, aspirations and development needs.	
11. Are there differences between the short, medium and long-term educational interests and needs of adolescents depending on their study profile, gender and age?	S.O. 17: Identify the relationship between the study profile, gender and age of adolescents and their short, medium and long-term educational interests and needs.	
12. What would be the fundamental elements of designing and implementing educational programmes that ensure the training of adolescents for any life situation, anywhere and anytime, regardless of the field of activity?	To capitalise on the results of the studies by setting up an organisation based on experiential learning to support the research objectives during the research and to continue the personal and social development of Romanian adolescents after the completion of the scientific research by involving educational agents in the development of young people.	Further developments and contributions

Hypothesis tested: implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning can lead to personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.

Research variables:

Independent variable (I.V.) = implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning.

Dependent variable (D.V.) = level of personal and social development.

D.V.₁ = level of personal development.

D.V.₂ = level of social development.

The hypothesis was tested in correlation with the first two studies. The third study, being exploratory, focused on achieving the proposed objectives and did not aim to test a hypothesis.

Participants

All three studies, the practical-applicative studies and the online study, focused on the following target group:

- Age: 14-19 years old (8th, 9th, 10th and 12th grade students).
- Gender: female and male.
- Location: urban and rural, Romania.
- Income: zero or from scholarships and merit scholarships (apart from family funding).
- Family: parental and single-parent.

Research strategy

Table VI.2.

General data about the studies conducted (research design, method used, research instrument, research locations, collaborators, participants and research period)

Studies carried out	Research design	Method	The tool	Venues	Contributors	Number of participants	Research period
Study I - field	Qualitative and quantitative, practical-applicative, experimental, intrasubject, correlational and predictive, cross-sectional.	The pedagogical experiment	Evaluation form of the training programme Evaluation questionnaire of the training programme	Municipality of Cluj - Napoca	"George Coşbuc" National College	25 participants	September 2017 - June 2018
Study II - field	Qualitative and quantitative, practical-applicative, experimental, intrasubject, correlational and predictive, cross-sectional.	The pedagogical experiment	Evaluation form of the training programme Evaluation questionnaire of the training programme	Municipality of Cluj - Napoca	"Anghel Saligny" Technical High School	13 participants	October 2017
Study III - online	Quantitative, exploratory, descriptive.	Questionnaire survey	Self-conception questionnaire	Bistrita-Nasaud, Braila, Cluj, Iasi, Maramures, Suceava and Bucharest counties	County School Inspectorates of Suceava and Cluj, Grow Up for Life Centre	775 participants	December 2018 - June 2019
TOTAL	3 studies	2 methods	3 instruments	6 counties nationwide and one municipality	5 Mayn contributors	813 participants	2 school years

Table VI.4.

Functional correspondences between dependent variables, research methods and instruments for the research hypothesis

Dependent variable	Research method	Research tool	Status of the research tool
Level of personal and social development	The pedagogical experiment	Evaluation form of the training programme: level 1 (participants' feedback)	Built
		Formative programme evaluation questionnaire: level 2 (learning)	Built
	Observation method	Level 3: behaviour	-
	Method of analysis of the products of the activity	Level 4: results	-
	Self-observation method	Trainer Self-Assessment Form	Built

Application of the research project

In the following three chapters, we will detail the methodology and results obtained in each of the three studies conducted, with a separate chapter for each study.

CHAPTER VII. STUDY I - PRACTICAL-APPLICATIVE RESEARCH IN THE "GEORGE COȘBUC" NATIONAL COLLEGE IN CLUJ-NAPOCA

Implementation of personal and social development programme through experiential learning

VII. 1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research approaches to the design, implementation and application of a programme based on experiential learning in an educational unit in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca in order to test the hypothesis. The study represents the first of two practical-applicative studies answering the question "*What is the impact of a programme based on experiential learning in the personal and social development of adolescents?*".

VII.2. Methodology

The aim of this study was to examine the impact of an intervention programme designed on the basis of experiential learning and implemented over one school year on the level of personal and social development of a group of adolescents aged between 14 and 19.

In order to achieve this goal, the research questions were transformed into **objectives**, which we then linked to research instruments (Table VI.1.).

In terms of **research design**, the research was both quantitative and qualitative depending on the nature of the specific methodology used, practical-applicative, depending on the nature of the issues addressed, experimental, depending on the methodology and instrumentation that were used, intrasubject, as we conducted evaluations on the same group, correlational and predictive. Depending on the proposed purpose, it was developmental research, and depending on the direction of approach, cross-sectional. The present study is experimental, correlational and predictive, with the following predictor variable: personal and social development programme through experiential learning.

Hypothesis tested: implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning can lead to personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.

Research variables:

Independent variable (I.V.) = implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning.

Dependent variable (D.V.) = level of personal and social development.

D.V.₁ = level of personal development.

D.V.₂ = level of social development.

In order to test the hypothesis, we designed a 9-module program, in which 21 experiential activities were incorporated, with the aim of developing 15 personal and social competences. The criterion variables are the level of personal and social development, measured by the items (questions) that make up the evaluation questionnaire of the level 2 (constructed) formative program.

Participants : the research targeted adolescents aged 14 to 19 years old from urban areas in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The aim was to collaborate with a group of adolescents interested in getting involved in a personal and social development programme.

Tools : we developed a program evaluation form and a learning assessment test that we used as research tools according to the requirements of the study. Both the test used for pre-testing and final testing and the evaluation form were completed by the adolescents in the meetings on printed sheets.

Procedure : three stages were completed: pre-experimental stage, formative experiment stage and post-experimental stage. In the following table, the investigation procedures are presented:

Table VII.1.

Stages of pedagogical research in the study I. Temporal and action aspects

	Pre-experimental stage	Formative experiment stage	Post-experimental phase
Period	July - September 2017	October 2017 - May 2018	June 2018
Actions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Investigating the context for the implementation of the programme.✓ Programme development.✓ Development and application of the pretest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Introducing the independent variable to the experimental class by implementing the personal development through experiential learning program.✓ Measuring progress through interim assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Measuring the impact of the educational programme on the level of personal and social development of adolescents.✓ Analysis of the programme and development of support materials useful to educational agents.

Data analysis : was done on 25 adolescents, participants in the study. Processing, statistical analysis of the data and graphical representations were carried out in *IBM SPSS*

(*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) software, version 26. Continuous variables were analyzed for normality and then expressed by mean±standard deviation, minimum and maximum. To compare parameter means between paired samples, the Wilcoxon test was used (when comparing 2 samples), the Friedman test for comparing more than two paired samples when the dependent variable is ordinal, and the McNemar test for comparing two dichotomous variables for the same sample. A statistical significance coefficient value of $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

VII.3. Results obtained

The results of the study are presented according to the 4 levels of evaluation, developed according to D. Kirkpatrick's model (D. Kirkpatrick, 2010):

- Level 1 assessment: measures the participants' reaction during the programme; we will present the results obtained during the programme in six of the modules.

- Level 2 assessment: measures the level of learning in personal and social development; we will compare the results of the pre-test and the final test.

- Level 3 assessment: records transformations at the behavioural level; we will present how this is done and some snapshots from the programme.

- Level 4 assessment: also records the results, this time from the participants' point of view; we will present how this is done.

The implementation of the educational program started on 06.10.2017.

Level 1 and 2 assessments started from 06.10.2017 to 24.11.2017, during which the implementation of the Personal and Social Development through Experiential Learning programme began. First the pre-test was applied, then the implementation of the programme started.

Twenty-five adolescents from a state high school in Cluj-Napoca took part in the research. The group studied was from the real section "Natural Sciences", 9th grade, age group 14-16. Of the 25 participants, 10 were present at all 6 interim assessments during the programme.

Age: The majority of adolescents in the study (84%) were aged 15. The minimum age found was 14 years, representing 12% of the participants while the maximum age was 16 years, represented by only one participant (4%). *Gender:* the study sample included adolescents of both genders, with 28% of the participants being male while 78% were female. *Family type (parental, single parent):* more than three quarters (84%) of the adolescents who participated in the study live in a family with 2 parents while 16% live with one parent.

These data reflect that the conditions of participation in the programme set for hypothesis testing were met, which demonstrates that the group of adolescents worked with is in direct correlation with the hypothesis and the objectives set.

Level 1 assessment - results:

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "very bad" and 5 is "excellent", adolescents were asked to rate the level of the items below during six meetings in the experiential learning designed intervention programme.

As can be seen from the table (highlighted in green), statistically significant increases were found following the implementation of the intervention programme for only one item, i.e. adolescents' opinion on the *relevance of the topics addressed*.

Although it can be seen that the mean score on the relevance assessment of the topics had an increasing trend from an initial mean value of 4.10 to a final mean value of 4.70, the result of the Friedman test [$\chi^2 = 6.822$; $p = 0.234$] shows that there are no significant differences over the 6 assessments.

The Wilcoxon test result, on the other hand, however, indicates that the intervention programme designed on the basis of experiential learning had a significant effect on the opinion on the relevance of the topics addressed, with **significant differences between the baseline and the sixth assessment (Z=-1.979; p=0.048)**.

We recall that one of the success factors mentioned in the design is the need for volitional involvement of the participants, which can be influenced by the relevance of the designed activities compared to the personal and social needs of the beneficiaries.

Table VII.93.

Level 1 assessment – results "George Coşbuc" National College

		Level 1 assessment - results "George Coşbuc" National College		
Research tool	Item/Scale	Evolution of the appreciation score (average value)	Friedman test result	Wilcoxon test result
Evaluation form of the training programme: level 1	Topics covered	4,5 -> 4,6	$\chi^2=3.554$; p=0.615	Z=-0.816; p=0.414
	Relevance of topics	4,1 -> 4,7	$\chi^2=6,822$; p=0.234	Z=-1.979; p=0.048
	Presentation	4,3 -> 4,6	$\chi^2=5,224$; p=0.389	Z=-0.690; p=0.490
	Balancing theory and practice	4,3 -> 4,6	$\chi^2=7,194$; p=0.207	Z=-0.884; p=0.377
	Interaction	3,5 -> 4,1	$\chi^2=5,092$; p=0.405	Z=-1.308; p=0.191
	Atmosphere	3,5 -> 4,6	$\chi^2=8.003$; p=0.156	Z=-1.308; p=0.191
	Facilitator	4,4 -> 4,7	$\chi^2=7,000$; p=0.221	Z=-1.508; p=0.132

From the data obtained, we can see that the other items were rated at a high level from the first meeting, which is also due to the preparation of the programme according to the good practices mentioned in Chapter IV, which made the evolution not statistically significant.

Level 2 assessment - results:

The level 2 assessment, learning, was carried out in two stages, before the programme (pre-test or pretest) and at the end of the programme (post-test, hereafter referred to as the final test), by completing the questionnaire in Annex 4.

The pretest was held on 10.10.2017 and included 18 adolescents. All questionnaires were valid. Final testing was conducted on 25.05.2018 and included 16 adolescents. All questionnaires were valid.

In comparison, between pre-testing and final testing, the following results were obtained:

Table VII.94.

*Level 2 assessment - progress between pre-test and final test - Results "George Coşbuç"
National High School*

		Level 2 assessment - progress between pre-test and final test Results "George Coşbuç" National High School	
Research tool	Item/Scale	Evolution of the appreciation score (average value)	Wilcoxon test result
Questionnaire of Evaluation of the training programme: level 2	Extent to which participants are aware of the personal and social roles they fulfil	2,8 -> 2,0	Z=-2.136; p=0.033
	Extent to which participants are satisfied with the way they fulfil these roles	3,35 -> 2,50	Z=-2.200; p=0.028
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and improve mental health	2,45 -> 2,0	Z=-1.315; p=0.188
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and improve body health	1,90 -> 1,81	Z=-0.431; p=0.666
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and enhance fulfillment (emotional and spiritual)	3,15 -> 2,50	Z=-1.888; p=0.059
	Extent to which participants are aware of the ways in which they can contribute to the community and social environment of which they are a part	2,95 -> 3,19	Z=-0.778; p=0.436
	Extent to which participants are familiar with the concept of "experiential learning".	3,25 -> 2,06	Z=-3.134; p=0.002
	Extent to which participants consider that experiential learning can develop personal and social life	2,65 -> 2,06	Z=-0.953; p=0.341
	Extent to which participants are interested in learning about and using experiential learning	2,3 -> 2,0	Z=-1.134; p=0.257
	Extent to which participants have so far had contact with an environment where learning is achieved through experimentation	3,40 -> 3,13	Z=-0.425; p=0.671
	Extent to which participants would prefer an environment where learning is predominantly practical/experiential	1,80 -> 1,56	Z=-.877; p=0.380
	Extent to which participants would be willing to spend time outside school hours on practical activities designed to develop their areas of personal interest	2,20 -> 1,81	Z=-1.310; p=0.190
	Extent to which participants felt that education would need to be tailored to the individual learner	1,45 -> 1,81	Z=-1.311; p=0.190

The answers to the questions were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents "very much" and 5 "very little".

The most obvious, statistically significant increase was in the extent to which participants are aware of the social and personal roles they fulfil. The mean score at baseline

was 2.80 and at endline was 2.00, showing a statistically significant positive development ($Z=-2.136$; $p=0.033$). There was also an increase related to the extent to which participants were satisfied with the way they fulfilled their social and personal roles. Calculating an average score of the responses received, there is an improvement in the final evaluation (2.50 versus 3.35), with the difference between the two evaluations being statistically significant ($Z=-2.200$; $p=0.028$).

A third item on which a statistically significant difference was found is the extent to which participants are familiar with the concept of 'experiential learning'. While initially 20% of the students were very and very familiar with the concept of "experiential learning", at the final assessment this increased to 81.3%, making the difference statistically significant ($Z=-3.134$; $p=0.002$).

Level 3 and 4 assessment - behaviours and outcomes

This evaluation was carried out using the following tools: self-observation method, observation method and activity product analysis method.

VII.4. Discussion, conclusions, limitations and further developments

This research provides a starting point for designing and implementing programmes that support adolescents to actively participate in their own development in line with their own interests and aspirations.

We would like to mention one of the limitations of the analysis: the space provided made it difficult to carry out the designed experiential activities. Given the importance of the environment in the implementation of the programme, one of the recommended further developments would be that the environment should be selected and arranged according to the intended quality requirements. Furthermore, the independent variable could be tested in different environmental conditions, e.g. in a nature camp, then in a company in a business environment, and last but not least in a learning context combining formal and non-formal learning environments.

However, through this approach, new hypotheses can be developed regarding the design and implementation of programs based on experiential learning for the personal and social development of adolescents in Romania, a topic of interest with implications for optimizing practices, methods and tools specific to experiential learning.

CHAPTER VIII. STUDY II - PRACTICAL-APPLICATIVE RESEARCH IN THE "ANGHEL SALIGNY" TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN CLUJ- NAPOCA

Implementation of personal and social development programme through experiential learning

VIII. 1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research approaches to the design, implementation and application of a programme based on experiential learning in an educational unit in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca in order to test the hypothesis. The study is the second of two practical-applicative studies answering the question "*What is the impact of a programme based on experiential learning in the personal and social development of adolescents?*".

VIII.2. Methodology

The aim of this study was to examine the impact of an intervention programme designed on the basis of experiential learning and implemented over one school year on the level of personal and social development of a group of adolescents aged between 14 and 19.

In order to achieve this goal, the research questions were transformed into **objectives**, which we then linked to research instruments (Table VI.1.).

In terms of **research design**, the research was both quantitative and qualitative depending on the nature of the specific methodology used, practical-applicative, depending on the nature of the issues addressed, experimental, depending on the methodology and instrumentation that were used, intrasubject, as we conducted evaluations on the same group, correlational and predictive. Depending on the proposed purpose, it was developmental research, and depending on the direction of approach, cross-sectional. The present study is experimental, correlational and predictive, with the following predictor variable: personal and social development programme through experiential learning.

Hypothesis tested: implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning can lead to personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.

Research variables:

Independent variable (I.V.) = implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning.

Dependent variable (D.V.) = level of personal and social development.

D.V.₁ = level of personal development.

D.V.₂ = level of social development.

The criterion variables are the level of personal and social development, measured by the items (questions) that make up the level 2 (constructed) formative programme evaluation questionnaire.

Participants: the research targeted adolescents between 14 and 19 years of age from urban areas in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The aim was to work with a group of adolescents interested in getting involved in a personal and social development programme.

Instruments: we developed a program evaluation form and a learning assessment test that we used as research instruments in accordance with the requirements of the study. Both the test used for pre-testing and final testing and the evaluation form were completed by the adolescents during the meetings on printed sheets.

Procedure: three stages were completed: pre-experimental stage, formative experiment stage and post-experimental stage. In the following table, the investigation procedures are presented:

Table VIII.1.

Stages of pedagogical research in Study II. Temporal and action aspects

	Pre-experimental stage	Formative experiment stage	Post-experimental phase
Period	July - October 2017	26-27 October 2017	October - December 2017
Actions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Investigating the context for the implementation of the programme.✓ Programme development.✓ Development and application of the pretest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Introducing the independent variable to the experimental class by implementing the personal development through experiential learning program.✓ Measuring progress through interim assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Measuring the impact of the educational programme on the level of personal and social development of adolescents.✓ Analysis of the programme and development of support materials useful to educational agents.

Data analysis : was done on 13 adolescents, participants in the study. Processing, statistical analysis of the data and graphical representations were carried out in *IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)* software, version 26. Continuous variables were analyzed for normality and then expressed by mean±standard deviation, minimum and

maximum. To compare parameter means between paired samples, the Wilcoxon test was used (when comparing 2 samples), the Friedman test for comparing more than two paired samples when the dependent variable is ordinal, and the McNemar test for comparing two dichotomous variables for the same sample. A statistical significance coefficient value of $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

VIII.3. Results obtained

The results of the study are presented according to the 4 levels of evaluation, developed according to D. Kirkpatrick's model (D. Kirkpatrick, 2010):

- Level 1 assessment: measures the participants' reaction during the programme; we will present the results obtained during the programme in six of the modules.

- Level 2 assessment: measures the level of learning in personal and social development; we will compare the results of the pre-test and the final test.

- Level 3 assessment: records transformations at the behavioural level; we will present how this is done and some snapshots from the programme.

- Level 4 assessment: also records the results, this time from the participants' point of view; we will present how this is done.

The implementation of the educational programme started on 26.10.2017 and ended on 27.10.2017.

The level 1 and 2 assessments were carried out on 26-27.10.2017 within the framework of the "Different School Week", during which the personal and social development through experiential learning programme was implemented, as per Annex 1.

Thirteen adolescents from a state high school in Cluj-Napoca took part in the research. The group studied was from the real section, "Civil Construction", class XI, age group 17-19 years.

Age: The majority of the adolescents participating in the study (61.5%) were aged 17. The minimum age found was 15 years, representing 7.7% of the participants, while the maximum age was 18 years, represented by one participant (7.7%). *Gender:* the study sample included adolescents of both genders, with 92.3% of the participants being male while 7.7% were female. *Family type (parental, single parent):* three quarters (76.9%) of the adolescents who participated in the study live in a two-parent family while 23.1% live with one parent.

These data reflect that the conditions for participation in the programme set for hypothesis testing were met, demonstrating that the group of adolescents worked with is in direct correlation with the hypothesis and objectives set.

Level 1 assessment - results:

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "very bad" and 5 is "excellent", adolescents were asked to rate the level of the items below during the two meetings of the experiential learning designed intervention programme.

As can be seen from the table, there were no statistically significant increases following the implementation of the intervention programme.

From the data obtained, we can see that the items were rated at a high level from the first meeting, which is also due to the preparation of the programme according to the good practices mentioned in Chapter IV, which made the evolution not statistically significant.

Table VIII.79.

Level 1 Assessment – Results "Anghel Saligny" Technical College

		Level 1 Assessment – Results "Anghel Saligny" Technical College	
Research tool	Item/Scale	Evolution of the appreciation score (average value)	Wilcoxon test result
Evaluation form of the training programme: level 1	Topics covered	4,69 -> 4,75	Z=-1.000; p=0.317
	Relevance of topics	4,54 -> 4,83	Z=-1.414; p=0.157
	Presentation	4,92 -> 5,00	Z=-1.000; p=0.317
	Balancing theory and practice	4,69 -> 4,75	Z=-0.272; p=0.785
	Interaction	4,38 -> 4,75	Z=-1.667; p=0.096
	Atmosphere	4,38 -> 4,67	Z=-1.414; p=0.157
	Facilitator	5,00 -> 5,00	Z=-0.000; p=1.000

Level 2 assessment - results:

The assessment of level 2, learning, was carried out in two stages, before the programme (pre-test) and at the end of the programme (final test), by completing the questionnaire in Annex 4. The pretest included 13 adolescents. All questionnaires were valid. The final test included 8 adolescents. All questionnaires were valid.

It can be seen that students from single-parent families did not complete level 2 by taking the test. Fear of assessment, lack of involvement, lack of support from the family or low parental interest in the child's development may be reasons why those from single parent families did not take the final assessment.

These are similar reasons to those that lead to failure in schools where pupils from single-parent families drop out more often than those from two-parent families, which is an educational risk factor.

In comparison, between pre-testing and final testing, the following results were obtained:

The table below highlights in green the cases where statistically significant increases were found following the implementation of the intervention programme compared to the time of pre-testing.

From the comparative presentation of the data analysed before and after the implementation of the intervention programme, for the phenomenon studied, the following results were relevant:

Table VIII.80.

*Level 2 assessment - progress between pre-test and final test - Results "Anghel Saligny"
Technical College*

		Level 2 assessment - progress between pre-test and final test Results "Anghel Saligny" Technical College	
Research tool	Item/Scale	Evolution of the appreciation score (average value)	Wilcoxon test result
Questionnaire of Evaluation of the training programme: level 2	Extent to which participants are aware of the personal and social roles they fulfil	2,31 -> 1,64	Z=-2.271; p=0.023
	Extent to which participants are satisfied with the way they fulfil these roles	2,38 -> 2,09	Z=-1.081; p=0.279
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and improve mental health	2,08 -> 1,55	Z=-1.725; p=0.084
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and improve body health	2,31 -> 1,64	Z=-1.518; p=0.129
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and enhance fulfillment (emotional and spiritual)	2,38 -> 1,64	Z=-2.333; p=0.020
	Extent to which participants are aware of the ways in which they can contribute to the community and social environment of which they are a part	2,62 -> 1,91	Z=-2.121; p=0.034
	Extent to which participants are familiar with the concept of "experiential learning".	2,92 -> 2,18	Z=-1.642; p=0.101
	Extent to which participants consider that experiential learning can develop personal and social life	2,23 -> 2,00	Z=-1.205; p=0.228
	Extent to which participants are interested in learning about and using experiential learning	2,31 -> 2,00	Z=-1.027; p=0.305
	Extent to which participants have so far had contact with an environment where learning is achieved through experimentation	2,54 -> 1,82	Z=-1.496; p=0.135
	Extent to which participants would prefer an environment where learning is predominantly practical/experiential	2,08 -> 1,82	Z=-0.632; p=0.527
	Extent to which participants would be willing to spend time outside school hours on practical activities designed to develop their areas of personal interest	2,00 -> 1,82	Z=-0.491; p=0.623
	Extent to which participants felt that education would need to be tailored to the individual learner	1,85 -> 1,55	Z=-0.707; p=0.480

The most obvious, statistically significant increase was in the extent to which participants are aware of their current social and personal roles. The mean score at baseline was 2.31 while at endline was 1.64, showing a statistically significant increase ($Z=-2.271$; $p=0.023$).

While at baseline the mean score of adolescents on the degree to which they are aware of habits that maintain and enhance their fulfillment (emotional and spiritual) was 2.38 (5 representing very low and 1 representing very high), at the final assessment the mean score was 1.64, with a statistically significant improvement from baseline ($Z=-2.333$; $p=0.020$).

In terms of the extent to which adolescents are aware of ways in which they can contribute to their community and social environment, there was a significant improvement ($Z=-2.121$; $p=0.034$) in the final assessment compared to the initial assessment, with the mean score rising from 2.62 initially to 1.91 at the end.

Level 3 and 4 assessment - behaviours and outcomes:

This evaluation was carried out using the following tools: self-observation method, observation method and activity product analysis method.

VIII.4 Discussions, conclusions, limitations and further developments

As we could see from the data collected in this study, the differences in learning improvement are not statistically significant. However, in a different context, the same programme might have a different impact. Future studies deserve to address the need to study the correlation between participants' growth and development environment and habits that support mind and body health.

We would like to mention one of the limitations of the analysis: it could be found that the time allocated was insufficient compared to the need of young people to connect and engage in learning activities. One of the recommended further developments would be that the meetings should last between 3 and 4 hours for each module, with experiential activities and reflective discussions and transfer allocated, and the cadence should be agreed upon, preferably once a week.

However, through this approach, new hypotheses can be developed regarding the design and implementation of programs based on experiential learning for the personal and social development of adolescents in Romania, a topic of interest with implications for optimizing practices, methods and tools specific to experiential learning.

CHAPTER IX. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICAL-APPLICATIVE PROGRAMME BASED ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Chapter IX highlights the good practices, lessons learned and opportunities for improvement identified from the implementation of the practical-application programme between October 2017 and June 2018 in the two schools. The aim of this analysis was to identify what were the strengths of the programme and success factors that can be leveraged in the future in the design and implementation of future experiential learning-based programmes. Equally, it sought to identify weaknesses and opportunities for future programme improvement. In this way, an objective picture of the programme is obtained.

Following the completion of this critical analysis, ideas and working tools were developed for educational agents interested in using them in their own approaches, namely:

- Standard of work useful to educational agents according to the experiential learning cycle model.
- Key success factors to consider in programme design and implementation.
- Programme design - planning and preparation - self-check sheet for the trainer.

These self-check materials can be a starting point for the trainer/educational agent to develop their own self-check sheets. In practice, the trainer/educational agent himself goes through the stages of experiential learning, following David Kolb's model, and uses experiential learning as a tool to improve his own programmes.

CHAPTER X. STUDY III - ONLINE RESEARCH

Identifying the educational needs of adolescents in relation to personal expectations and interests

X. 1. Introduction

Chapter X deals with the third research study confirming and completing the conclusions drawn from the previous studies, succeeding in answering the last research question: "*What are the personal and social development needs of adolescents not yet identified by school and family?*" This study started as a result of a personal desire to open a dialogue between the educational research environment and adolescents in Romania in order to meet them with concrete and relevant solutions anchored in the needs of today. By involving adolescents in the preliminary stage of designing programmes dedicated to them, adolescents can become, in this way, co-participants in their own development in accordance with their own ideal of life, their own objectives and their own values.

X.2. Methodology

The aim of the study was to identify the training and development needs of adolescents aged 14-19, not yet identified by school and family, the influence of the environment on the formation of these needs, the methods by which adolescents learn and develop, and the skills they want to develop. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to the design and implementation of educational programmes based on experiential learning for the personal and social development of adolescents in Romania.

In order to achieve this goal, the research questions were transformed into **objectives**, which we then linked to research instruments (Table VI.1.).

In terms of **research design**, the research was quantitative depending on the nature of the specific methodology used, the study was exploratory and descriptive as the situation is little known and studied.

Participants : the research targeted adolescents aged 14-19 years old, from urban and rural areas in Romania. A total of 775 respondents from the counties of Bistrița-Năsăud, Brăila, Cluj, Iași, Maramureș, Suceava and Bucharest participated.

Research instrument : an online questionnaire of own design was created, developed and validated according to the requirements of the study. In the development of the research instrument, findings from the theoretical study were integrated. The platform for creating and

disseminating the questionnaire was Google Docs. The questionnaire avoided the collection of identification and contact data. The questionnaire can be accessed here: <https://forms.gle/Av5NniyccuyLnGSU6>

Procedure : actual data collection took place from 2.12.2018 to 21.06.2019. In a first stage, private and state high schools with different profiles in Cluj-Napoca municipality were selected. Subsequently, the County School Inspectorates of Cluj and Suceava were approached and agreed to support the research. The questionnaire was also distributed on social media through the Grow Up for Life startup page. Thanks to this approach, it was possible to collect responses from the counties of Bistrița-Năsăud, Brăila, Iași, Maramureș and Bucharest. In total, 775 questionnaires were collected on 21.06.2019.

Data analysis: was done on the sample of 775 adolescents. Processing, statistical analysis of the data and graphical representations were carried out in *IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)* software, version 20. Descriptive analysis of variables (mean, median, modal value, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) and cross tabulation were used in the research. Percentages and totals are related to the number of subjects surveyed.

X.3. Results obtained

The study involved both urban (57%) and rural (43%) adolescents, making the data a balanced view of the needs, preferences and expectations of the adolescents surveyed. Some 83% of the study participants come from families where parents are married and live together and 97% of them are studying at a state school. Of these, 56% are in real education, 28% in humanities, with the difference coming from vocational schools, economic high schools and vocational schools.

The Mayn issues analysed in line with the objectives set are captured below. The results helped us to conclude the following:

According to the first specific research objective of the study "to identify the characteristics of the environment from which adolescents come, learn and develop", we found that a significant percentage of respondents, 83%, grow up in a nuclear family, in a stable environment where parents are present and married. The Mayn environments in which respondents spend their time are at school (68%) and at home (43.5%), which means that we are talking predominantly about a high connection to the social and personal environment, but low connection to the natural environment. 13% of respondents spend time in the community/social space and 10.3% in nature. Based on these findings, we see that subsequently, the needs of adolescents are influenced by the environment in which they spend their time.

The second specific research objective of the study was "to identify the characteristics of the environment to which adolescents aspire and want to go". We found that for 51.4% of the surveyed adolescents, the ideal learning and development environment is a combination of school under the guidance of teachers, out of school with an education specialist and all the continuous experiences of everyday life. 11.7% of the respondents specified that the ideal learning and development environment is in school (from kindergarten to university) under the guidance of teachers. 11.9% considered that the ideal learning and development environment is outside school (NGOs, camps, excursions, practical workshops and games) with a trainer, education specialist, while 21.5% considered that the ideal learning and development environment is everywhere (anytime, anywhere, with anyone) through their own experiences in everyday life.

No less than **71.1% of the adolescents in the study see themselves continuing their studies at a university in the future.** Other things adolescents see themselves doing in the future are: **travelling and exploring the world (mentioned by 45%** of respondents), graduating from high school (38.3%), getting a job (36.1%), volunteering (22.5%) or making it professionally as a business owner (14.5%). Some mentioned that they would like to be self-employed (5.7%) or investors (3.7%).

The majority of respondents (**57.8%**) **said they preferred working in a crowded environment.** Significant percentages also preferred to work in an institution, organisation (19.5%), in nature (9.8%), with machinery, equipment, devices (7.4%) or with people, animals and plants (7.5%), but an equally significant percentage (25.7%) preferred to work in an environment where there was a balance between the above.

According to the third specific objective of the research "to identify the ways in which adolescents learn and develop", we observed that the top preferences are travel to new places (87.2%), free discussions with friends (86.5%), free discussions with adults in areas that appeal to them (84.2%), free discussions with family members (80.1%), camps (77.7%), individual study (77.1%), shared hobbies (76.9%), debates on different topics (73.6%) and solving problems as a team (71.2%). In other words, adolescents prefer experiential learning methods and tools.

The fourth specific objective of the research "to identify the competences that adolescents want to develop" started from a selection of 21st century competences. Analysing the data, we found that the most desired skills are emotional intelligence (85.5%), decision-making (84.7%), creativity (84%), communication (83.7%), productivity (82.6%), health of body and mind (82%), initiative (81.5%) and critical thinking (80.4%). Health of body and mind was added to the list of 21st century skills to check the extent to which this core skill

is of interest to the survey respondents, and the high percentage (82%) shows that there is a high interest in developing habits that are good for body and mind.

The fifth specific objective of the research "to identify the current needs and educational interests of adolescents in the short and medium term" helped us to highlight that for the adolescents participating in the study the most important needs are self-actualization/personal development (57.9%), social recognition (57.2%) and belonging to social groups (57.2%).

In the short to medium term, at the top of adolescents' choices of **what they would like to learn, if they could choose, is experiential education (specified by 20.3%** of survey participants) followed by **personal development (18.8%)**, foreign languages (12.9%), mathematics and natural sciences (9.9%), music, theatre and fine arts (7.9%) and financial education and entrepreneurship (7%).

According to the sixth specific objective of the research "to identify the long-term interests, aspirations and development needs of adolescents", we found that more than a third of those surveyed (**37.7%**) want to **travel**. A further **15.2%** of respondents want to **be professionally and personally fulfilled**, **12.3%** want to **be social entrepreneurs/help people**, **12%** want to **own their own business** and 6.7% want to be surgeons/doctors/psychologists/therapists.

The seventh specific objective of the research was "to identify the relationship between the study profile, gender and age of adolescents and their interests and training needs in the short, medium and long term". The majority of adolescents studying in the **real profile** would like to study **experiential education (20.3%)**, personal and social development (18.5%), mathematics and natural sciences (12.8%), technology, engineering, computer science (11.7%) and foreign languages (11.3%). Those studying in the **human profile** have personal and social development (22.5%), **experiential education (17.4%)**, foreign languages (15.6%) and music, theatre and fine arts (10.1%) as their top preferences. Adolescents studying a **vocational profile** showed a predominant interest in **experiential education (25.7%)**, foreign languages (20%), personal and social development (14.3%), music, theatre and fine arts (11.4%) and technology, engineering, computer science (11.4%). More than a third (**36.4%**) of those still in **secondary school** would like to learn, if they could choose, **experiential education**. 18.2% would like to learn personal and social development, 13.6% mathematics and natural sciences, 9.1% foreign languages and 9.1% music, theatre and fine arts.

Most adolescents, regardless of the profile they study, would like to **travel** if they had the time, energy, money, confidence and family support. Top of the wish list for those learning the real profile is also to have professional and personal fulfilment (17.6%), to own their own

business (12.2%), to be social entrepreneurs/help people (11%). **The desires of learners in the human profile are similar to those of those in the real profile, namely, in addition to travel, they want to be social entrepreneurs/help people (15.6%), be professionally and socially fulfilled (13.3%) and have their own business (11.9%).** The desires of learners in a **vocational profile** differ slightly from those mentioned above. Thus, **40% want to travel**, 14.3% want to have their own business, want to do music/theatre/film/performing arts, and want to be social entrepreneurs/help people. 11.4% want to be professionally and socially fulfilled. Those who are still in secondary school top their wishes to travel (36.4%), own their own business (18.2%), be social entrepreneurs/help people (13.6%), be law and order (9.1%), be professionally and socially fulfilled (9.1%) or be athletes/dancers (9.1%).

Girls' preferences in terms of their desire to learn are Maynly directed towards: **personal and social development (22.2%), experiential education (20%), foreign languages (14.8%),** mathematics and natural sciences (9.7%) and music, theatre and fine arts (8%). Topping the **list of boys' preferences** are **technology, engineering, computer science (22.6%), experiential education (16.5%), personal and social development (11.7%),** financial education and entrepreneurship (10.1%), foreign languages (8.9%) and music, theatre and fine arts (7.7%).

No less than **43.1% of teenage girls want to travel, 13.9% want to be social entrepreneurs/help people, 13.3% want to be fulfilled professionally and socially,** and 10.4% want to own their own business. **Boys most want to travel (26.2%), be professionally and socially fulfilled (19.4%), have their own business (15.3%),** be a social entrepreneur/help people (8.9%), be an athlete or dancer (7.7%) or be a developer/designer/engineer/IT specialist (7.3%).

The desires for what adolescents would like to learn, in the short and medium term, if they could choose, are relatively similar, regardless of their ages.

Also, their long-term desires, if they had time, energy, money, confidence and family support, are relatively similar, regardless of age. This is also where the most (13%) undecided adolescents who do not know what they would most like to do in life if they had time, energy, money, confidence and family support.

X.5. Discussion, conclusions, limitations and further developments

The results of this study can be useful for parents, teachers, school principals, trainers as well as entrepreneurs and employers, who can use this information on the current trends and needs of young people to develop. It is important to identify methods and tools through which these learning needs can be met, whether we are talking about formal, non-formal or informal learning environments. A limitation to be mentioned is that the study data come from a limited sample of adolescents and can only partially be extrapolated to the level of adolescents in Romania. Therefore, as an opportunity for future research development, the number of counties, educational institutions and participants could be expanded for a nationally representative sample.

However, the results are a confirmation that adolescents want to work with educational actors (family, teachers, school principals, professionals from various fields, representatives of non-profit organisations and business specialists) to develop personally and socially.

PART III. ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

CHAPTER XI. GROW UP FOR LIFE - CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning research is often conducted with the aim of improving educational practices or enhancing the learning experience. It was important for us to ensure that the thesis considered the practical applications of the scientific research conducted and provided applicable recommendations and solutions, to educational agents. But more importantly, it answers the question "*How can we build on the results presented above?*".

The solution for the implementation of the scientific results was the establishment and development of the Grow Up for Life Centre, which, besides being the framework for the achievement of the research and study objectives, also aims to support the personal and social development of adolescents in Romania by involving the Mayn educational actors (family, school, community and business organizations).

Chapter XI presents this approach and answers the final research question, building on the final conclusions and results of the studies carried out (theoretical, field and online) into a viable solution in an organised, long-term framework. It should be noted that this organisation has been designed starting from the needs of today's adolescents and taking into account the trends and opportunities of future education.

Elements of constitution and identity

In the following, we will present the strategic management of the organisation for more clarity on the direction taken in the design of the Grow Up for Life centre.

Currently, the Grow Up for Life Center is a non-profit start-up founded on August 30, 2017 and officially launched on November 17, 2017 through

<https://www.facebook.com/growup4life/>.

The mission of Grow Up for Life is to support the personal and social development of adolescents through experiential learning in supportive environments, involving key

educational agents, to successfully adapt to contemporary demands and seize the opportunities of the future.

The vision of Grow Up for Life is to be the non-formal educational setting in which adolescents interested in their own development find resources, guidance and support from educational agents to develop their habits, personality, social relationships, life skills and 21st century skills in harmony with their own vision and the demands of the future.

The vision is achieved through continuous improvement of the educational offer, taking into account the needs and expectations of direct and indirect beneficiaries, in the following directions:

- developing easy habits and tools for maintaining and improving physical, mental and emotional health throughout life, facilitated in social spaces, through hands-on learning, relaxation and connecting with nature;
- personality development to discover who they are, who they want to become and where they want to go;
- developing essential, life skills useful in different environments (at home, at school, in society, in nature and in future jobs);
- development of social competences and 21st century skills for use in personal, social, academic and professional contexts at national and international level;
- active involvement and valuable contribution in actions that have a beneficial impact on disadvantaged people, the social, educational and professional community and the natural environment.

The Grow Up for Life **values** are experiential learning, respect, collaboration, self-efficacy, involvement, responsibility and equality of opportunity.

The organization's **motto** is "*Growing for life and for life*" to emphasize the importance of using experiential learning as an ongoing tool for life growth and development.

The first **members of the centre's team** come from the Multicultural Business Institute's network of professionals, partner and collaborator, which includes trainers, specialists, practitioners and researchers in a variety of fields related to human development and community development, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, pedagogy, philosophy, history, legal sciences, administrative sciences, communication and public relations, economics, management, marketing, accounting, finance, social entrepreneurship. More details about the team can be found on these pages: <https://mcb-institute.org/academics/> and <https://mcb-institute.org/academia/>. This network can be joined by partners from business and education with whom we have collaborated over the last twelve years depending on their

availability and the opportunities offered by future projects. The intention is to connect adolescents with the right specialists.

Centre strategy and organisation

The Grow Up for Life Centre is focused on five strategic directions designed to support the mission, vision and values of the entity. The Centre's strategy is as follows:

Table XI.1.

Grow Up for Life strategy - long-term vision

Mission	Vision	Values	Strategic directions	Subdirectorates	Services and products - long term	Media
Grow Up for Life supports the personal and social development of adolescents through experiential learning, in supportive environments and involving key educational agents to successfully adapt to contemporary demands and seize future opportunities.	Grow Up for Life is the non-formal educational setting where adolescents interested in their own development find resources, guidance and support from educational agents to develop their habits, personality, social relationships, life skills and 21st century skills in harmony with their own vision and the demands of the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Experiential learning ✓ Respect ✓ Collaboration ✓ Self-efficacy ✓ Get involved ✓ Responsibility ✓ Equal opportunities 	1. Developing physical, mental and emotional health	1. Development programmes for adolescents	1.1. Workshops 1.2. Customised programmes 1.3. Camps 1.4. Collaborations in the "Other School" week Company visits 1.6. Practice in companies 1.7. Volunteering in the community	Physical
			2. Personality development	2. Independent learning for anyone, anytime, anywhere	2.1. Articles 2.2. Practical guidelines 2.3. Booklets 2.4. Books and e-books 2.5. Online programmes and courses	Online
			3. Life skills development	3. Collaborations with educational agencies	3.1. Group and individual meetings with authorised and qualified specialists from different sectors of activity. 3.2 Webinars on topics of interest to adolescents, parents, teachers, business and educational collaborators.	Physical and online
			4. Social skills development	4. Research, development and continuous improvement	4.1. Scientific articles 4.2. Running a doctoral research programme 4.3. Digital innovations 4.4. Testing of new services and programmes	Online
			5. Developing 21st century skills	5. Leadership and social involvement	5.1. Forming the collective mindset through appearances/disseminations of results/postings in the online and media space. 5.2. Involvement in regional and national projects with beneficial social, personal and environmental impact.	Online and physical
			6. Developing active involvement and social contribution			

Target group: the centre's products and services are aimed at adolescents and include the following educational agents:

1. parents, family members;
2. teachers, trainers and trainees;
3. specialists from companies, from business;
4. specialists from organisations, school and social communities (schools, universities, NGOs, foundations, etc.).

How the Centre is organised: in concrete terms, strategic programmes (lasting several years) will be drawn up on the basis of the strategic directorates and sub-directorates, to which annual projects will be attached. Annual projects will be supported by annual objectives and monitored by performance indicators and measurable targets. The setting of annual targets will be based on the results achieved in the previous year, changes and new trends and the identification of new opportunities for improvement during the year. And standards and procedures will be used to ensure and improve the desired level of quality through the services and products designed and implemented. The role of standards is to stabilise the centre's processes, increase productivity, minimise losses and risks and support the achievement of objectives, monitoring and improvement of results.

Resources of the centre: at the moment, the centre's resources come from private funding. All activities and results achieved so far have been covered entirely from own sources.

Depending on the speed of development of the centre, the most appropriate strategy will be decided to cover the budget, both in terms of administration, training and remuneration of the team involved and partners, and for the development of services and products.

Stages of development of the centre

For the development of the Grow Up for Life centre, *the* three-stage model of organisational development is followed (P. Kotler, 1999):

- ✓ Start: 2017 - 2018
- ✓ Grow: 2018 - 2019
- ✓ Strategize: 2019 - present

Start phase: 2017 - 2018: in this phase a product, a direct beneficiary, a marketing channel and a sales message were defined. The interface of the online environment was tested, first data about adolescents, their interests and other information of interest for the research was identified. The *Start* phase spanned seven months from 17 November 2017 to 6 August 2018. From 6 August 2018, the *Grow* phase was entered.

Grow phase: 2018 - 2019: this phase aimed at a multiplication of products and services. Posts were created according to a fixed structure, which led to a uniformity of messages sent and received. The online questionnaire was developed and launched via the website so that it could be completed and distributed to other young people interested in joining the research. The paper "Thoughts on Man and Life" (2018) published through the collaboration with *Multicultural Business Institute* was also developed and published, based on the results of the practical-applicative research carried out in 2017-2018. The paper aims to develop 20 personal and social skills with applicability for the rest of life, starting from adolescence. The *Grow* phase spanned six months from 6 August 2018 to 1 February 2019.

Strategize stage: 2019 - present: this is the stage in which, through the establishment of the centre, the results of theoretical, practical-applied and online research are exploited. This stage has a long time horizon. It includes the design and implementation of products and services based on experiential learning, building on the strategy outlined above.

Results of the centre online

In order to identify more demographic, sociographic and psychographic data on adolescents in Romania, a campaign to promote the centre was carried out from 10 May to 8 September 2020, using chapters published in the book "Thoughts about man and life".

The promotion areas were Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The target audience was the 13-21 age group. The objectives were to increase visibility and interaction on the Grow Up for Life page and to collect additional data about adolescents in order to identify new opportunities for improving communication with them in the future.

Following the promotion of ten posts (articles), we achieved the following results, measured by four performance indicators:

- impact: **34,291 people exposed to posts**
- number of views: **59,290**;
- interactions with posts: **3,415**
- clicks on posts: **1,233**

Impact is the number of people who have seen the posts at least once and have been exposed to the message. The **number of views** refers to the number of times the posts were displayed on the screen. **Post interactions** are the total number of actions taken by users involving the posts. **Link clicks** represents the number of clicks on links in the post that led to destinations specified by the promoter within or outside *Facebook*. Link clicks are a way to measure the interest generated by the post among the audience (Facebook, 2020).

Discussions, conclusions, limitations and further developments

At the moment, from the data collected and analyzed, it can be seen that the online page of the Grow Up for Life center brings to the attention of adolescents in Romania, and not only, information and materials in written and video format with the aim of raising awareness of their potential for personal, professional and social development.

However, although the online page has potential for growth, the work of the centre should not be limited to the online environment, but should use it as a platform to communicate with direct beneficiaries and agents of change.

Since the mission of the centre is to support the personal and social development of adolescents, through experiential learning, in suitable environments and involving the Mayn educational agents, in order to successfully adapt to contemporary requirements and seize the opportunities of the future, since September 2020 the Mayn activity of the centre has been oriented towards the development and coordination of internship programs carried out in a company in the business environment, in collaboration with three educational institutions within the municipality of Cluj-Napoca. For this reason, in the period September 2020 - April 2023, the online activity of the centre has decreased in intensity to the benefit of direct activity with adolescents. The collaborations were carried out on the basis of agreements on the performance of practical training in a private company by students from vocational and technical high school education, as well as from a university. The traineeships were organised by the educational establishments and the economic agent was the traineeship partner. Although the above activity was not initiated, coordinated and run through the Grow Up for Life Centre, it supported the mission and vision of the Centre through my direct involvement in the development of adolescents and their skills in the business environment.

In the medium and long term, Grow Up for Life aims to be a non-formal educational setting where adolescents find programs, products and services according to the presented strategy offered by adults, trainers, specialists with results in their fields to develop their health level, personality traits, basic skills, social skills, 21st century skills and active citizenship.

CHAPTER XII. CONTRIBUTIONS. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS. BENEFITS

This chapter outlines the own contributions, general conclusions and results of the research undertaken. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the research, the educational recommendations, the beneficiaries and the Mayn ways of exploiting the results obtained.

The theoretical contributions made in the first section of the thesis were as follows:

- 1) We studied experiential learning from a diachronic perspective and the theories of the fathers of experiential education, John Dewey (1910), Kurt Lewin (1947), Carl Rogers (1942) and David Kolb (1984), to clarify the role and importance of experiential learning in adolescent development. We have found that these theories continue to inspire contemporary experiential learning development initiatives today.
- 2) We collected 40 experiential learning methods and organized them into four levels of educational development (pre-school, primary, middle school and high school). We exemplified 72 methodological resources and 31 examples of experiential activities according to the participants' learning styles. We provided educational recommendations so that these experiential learning tools can be used by educational agents who want to develop adolescents in non-formal and formal learning environments.
- 3) We have identified the Mayn factors of personal and social development that are important to consider when designing programmes based on experiential learning, namely environment, education and heredity. We studied theories that highlight the impact of the environment on the educational process from the perspective of Albert Bandura (1930), Eleanor Jack Gibson (1969), Pyotr Yakovlevich Galperin (1952) and Jean Piaget (1930). We have also selected three theories that focus on education, proposed by John Dewey (1910), Robert Gagné (1975) and Jerome S. Bruner (1970). Environment and education were found to be the Mayn factors influencing personal and social development. Heredity has not been considered a relevant factor to be explored further in this paper because it is a difficult factor to control and measure through an intervention programme, but also because it may be the subject of separate research.
- 4) In order to clarify the educational aims of the programmes, we have identified the 21st century competences that need to be developed in adolescents according to the vision of national, European and global authorities. We found that one of the desires of these authorities is to develop, in addition to 21st century skills, basic skills and personality

traits. We looked individually and in parallel at the competences recommended by the National Education Act, the Council of the European Union and the World Economic Forum and highlighted the common competences and what each vision brings in addition.

- 5) We organized the Mayn steps and best practices of designing, implementing and improving educational programs based on experiential learning, starting from best practices in Kaizen Management, Quality Management and Educational Management. We highlighted ways to measure the degree of personal and social development of adolescents in programmes through the lens of attitude modelling methods. Last but not least, we have nominated seven educational initiatives launched in the last ten years through which different agents of change have provided recommendations and tools for developing programmes anchored in the needs of the present and the requirements of the future.
- 6) We identified and analysed 20 organisations running experiential learning programmes around the world and in Romania. We analysed these organisations individually and by comparison. From each of them we have extracted good practices that can be extrapolated by educational agents, and in the conclusion of the chapter we have highlighted nine success factors common to these organisations that can be taken into account both in the design and implementation stages and in the improvement of adolescent development programmes.

These theoretical contributions can be found in the first part of the thesis, in chapters I-

V.

Practical contributions made in the second and third sections of the thesis were as follows:

- 1) Based on the findings from the theoretical study, we established a working hypothesis and designed a pilot personal and social development programme based on experiential learning. Furthermore, we developed tools to test the hypothesis.
- 2) We have implemented the development programme in two educational establishments with different profiles in Cluj-Napoca, namely "George Coşbuc" National College and "Anghel Saligny" Technical College. We tested the hypothesis on two groups of adolescents aged 14 to 19 years, totalling 38 participants.
- 3) We found that the items testing the hypothesis experienced a partially positive path in terms of adolescents' personal and social development through the experiential learning-based program.

- 4) We conducted a critical analysis of the programme and the results achieved, reviewed and deepened the methodology of programme design and implementation, and developed materials and working tools for interested educational agents, based on the lessons learned, for use in their own approaches.
- 5) I set up the Grow Up for Life Centre at the design stage of the programme with the aim of creating a community of adolescents to interact with during the research. Following the completion of the research, I established a strategy for the development of the centre in order to build on the results and continue the personal and social development of adolescents through experiential learning in the future.
- 6) We have created an online page for the Grow Up for Life Centre through which educational materials have been read by around 40,000 adolescents and adults in the five years since its creation.
- 7) We conducted an exploratory and descriptive online survey with 775 respondents. We identified particular educational development needs and aspirations of young people in six Romanian counties and the capital, with the help of which different development programmes can be designed.
- 8) In total, we involved more than eight hundred adolescents, two school principals, two head teachers, two school inspectors and numerous teachers in practical research.
- 9) We published two scientific articles in which we disseminated the results of studies and findings on the role of experiential learning in the development of 21st century competencies in adolescents, as well as the developmental needs and aspirations of adolescents in Romania. The article "*The importance of experiential learning in the development of the XXth century skills on adolescents*" was published by Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Psychologia-Paedagogia Journal in 2019, and the article "*The developmental needs and aspirations of adolescents, premises for the implementation of programs based on experiential learning*" was published by Romanian Journal for Multidimensional Education in 2021.
- 10) I attended the International Conference at the Faculty of Education Sciences, "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, with the theme *Teacher Education for Promoting Well-being in School* under the aegis of *the European Association for Teacher Education in Europe - ATEE* (<https://atee.education/>) to disseminate the results of the research related to the online study.
- 11) We have started collaborating with Multicultural Business Institute to attract educational agents dedicated to the personal and social development of young people in

Romania, but also to capitalize on a network of specialists with whom we can develop programs and projects after the completion of scientific research.

- 12) We published the book "Thoughts on People and Life" through the Multicultural Business Institute and conducted research on the impact of the skills discussed in the book in the online environment through the Grow Up for Life page.
- 13) For my own skills development, I completed the training session in experiential learning through the "CRED - Course for Rediscovering Education and Development" program, facilitated by Actions for Change, from September 2017 to May 2018 (40 hours of training) and used the experience gained during the implementation of the program in the two educational units.
- 14) I completed the "Online Trainer" course, facilitated by Euro Best Team Training and consulting, from August to September 2020 (30 hours of training) and obtained the certification of trainer accredited by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.
- 15) We participated in online courses for developing experiential learning skills through the SELLification Educator Community from 2020-2022 (over 40 hours of training). I have applied the learnings and skills acquired in internal practice sessions at my company's premises.
- 16) During the scientific research we collaborated simultaneously with the business environment and three educational establishments in the educational environment and facilitated, through the employing company, more than 1,200 hours of experiential learning activities in the professional internship programs in the school years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022. A total of 282 adolescents benefited from these work experience programmes, in which we included ten 21st century skills on our own initiative and measured their progress during their work experience.
- 17) We developed and tested experiential learning teaching materials for the 282 adolescents aged 14-19 in the professional practice programmes, which led to refining the ideas and improving the research in this paper.

General conclusions of the scientific research

The present research was initiated with the following aim: to provide a model for the design and implementation of educational programmes based on experiential learning and applicable in non-formal learning contexts for the personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.

The hypothesis tested was the following: the implementation of an educational programme based on experiential learning can lead to the personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.

In order to fulfil the general purpose of the research and to verify the hypothesis, two practical-applicative studies were carried out in two educational establishments with different profiles in Cluj-Napoca, namely "George Coşbuc" National College and "Anghel Saligny" Technical College. The direct beneficiaries were two groups of adolescents from the 9th and 11th grade respectively. Although the programme was implemented in a formal environment, facilitated by the two educational establishments, it was non-formal in nature due to the activities carried out and the use of the model proposed by the modern learning paradigm.

The design chosen in the conduct of Studies I and II was intrasubjects. The evolution of the group of adolescents during the implementation of the programme was therefore followed. The criterion variables were represented by the level of personal and social development measured by the items (questions) that make up the two instruments constructed.

Given that the hypothesis was tested on two groups in two educational establishments, in the following, we will present the data in parallel in order to have a final, overall picture of the research results of Study I and Study II.

Table XII.1.

Comparison of research results from Study I and Study II on "Evaluation of the Formative Programme: Level I - Participant Reaction (Feedback Sheet)"

Research tool	Item/Scale	Evolution of the appreciation score (average value)		Wilcoxon test result	
		Study I	Study II	Study I	Study II
Evaluation form of the training programme: level 1	Topics covered	4,5 -> 4,6	4,69 -> 4,75	Z=-0.816; p=0.414	Z=-1.000; p=0.317
	Relevance of topics	4,1 -> 4,7	4,54 -> 4,83	Z=-1.979; p=0.048	Z=-1.414; p=0.157
	Presentation	4,3 -> 4,6	4,92 -> 5,00	Z=-0.690; p=0.490	Z=-1.000; p=0.317
	Balancing theory and practice	4,3 -> 4,6	4,69 -> 4,75	Z=-0.884; p=0.377	Z=-0.272; p=0.785
	Interaction	3,5 -> 4,1	4,38 -> 4,75	Z=-1.308; p=0.191	Z=-1.667; p=0.096
	Atmosphere	4,0 -> 4,6	4,38 -> 4,67	Z=-1.308; p=0.191	Z=-1.414; p=0.157
	Facilitator	4,4 -> 4,7	5,00 -> 5,00	Z=-1.508; p=0.132	Z=-0.000; p=1.000

As can be seen from the table (highlighted in green), statistically significant increases were found following the implementation of the intervention programme for only one item, i.e. adolescents' opinion on the *relevance of the topics addressed*. Significant differences are noted in the case of the group from the "George Coşbuc" National High School, between the initial values and those from the sixth evaluation ($Z=-1.979$; $p=0.048$). From the data obtained, we can see that the other items were rated at a high level from the first meeting, which is also due to the preparation of the programme according to the good practices mentioned in Chapter IV, which made the evolution not statistically significant.

The table below highlights in green the cases where statistically significant increases were found following the implementation of the intervention programme compared to the time of pre-testing. From the comparative presentation of the data analysed before and after the implementation of the intervention programme, for the phenomenon studied, the following results were relevant:

Table XII.2.

Comparison of research results from Study I and Study II on "Evaluation of the Formative Programme: level 2 - learning (pre-test questionnaire and final test)"

Research tool	Item/Scale	Evolution between pre-test and final test - average score		Wilcoxon test result	
		Study I	Study II	Study I	Study II
Questionnaire of Evaluation of the training programme: level 2	The extent to which participants are aware of the personal and social roles they fulfil	2,8 -> 2,0	2,31 -> 1,64	Z=-2.136; p=0.033	Z=-2.271; p=0.023
	The extent to which participants are satisfied with the way they perform these roles	3,35 -> 2,50	2,38 -> 2,09	Z=-2.200; p=0.028	Z=-1.081; p=0.279
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and improve mental health	2,45 -> 2,0	2,08 -> 1,55	Z=-1.315; p=0.188	Z=-1.725; p=0.084
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and improve body health	1,90 -> 1,81	2,31 -> 1,64	Z=-0.431; p=0.666	Z=-1.518; p=0.129
	Extent to which participants are aware of habits that Mayntain and enhance fulfillment (emotional and spiritual)	3,15 -> 2,50	2,38 -> 1,64	Z=-1.888; p=0.059	Z=-2.333; p=0.020
	The extent to which participants are aware of the ways in which they can contribute to the community and social environment of which they are a part	2,95 -> 3,19	2,62 -> 1,91	Z=-0.778; p=0.436	Z=-2.121; p=0.034
	Extent to which participants are familiar with the concept of "experiential learning".	3,25 -> 2,06	2,92 -> 2,18	Z=-3.134; p=0.002	Z=-1.642; p=0.101
	The extent to which participants consider that experiential learning can develop personal and social life	2,65 -> 2,06	2,23 -> 2,00	Z=-0.953; p=0.341	Z=-1.205; p=0.228
	Extent to which participants are interested in learning about and using experiential learning	2,3 -> 2,0	2,31 -> 2,00	Z=-1.134; p=0.257	Z=-1.027; p=0.305
	The extent to which participants have so far had contact with an environment where learning is achieved through experimentation	3,40 -> 3,13	2,54 -> 1,82	Z=-0.425; p=0.671	Z=-1.496; p=0.135
	Extent to which participants would prefer an environment where learning is predominantly practical/experiential	1,80 -> 1,56	2,08 -> 1,82	Z=-.877; p=0.380	Z=-0.632; p=0.527
	The extent to which participants would be willing to allocate time outside school hours for practical activities designed to develop their areas of personal interest	2,20 -> 1,81	2,00 -> 1,82	Z=-1.310; p=0.190	Z=-0.491; p=0.623
	The extent to which participants felt that education would need to be tailored to the individual learner	1,45 -> 1,81	1,85 -> 1,55	Z=-1.311; p=0.190	Z=-0.707; p=0.480

The pooled results from Study I and Study II show that 1/7 items showed statistically significant improvement in the assessment of participant response as measured after each encounter and 5/16 items measured through pretest and posttest also showed statistically significant improvements. This shows us that the hypothesis is partially confirmed..

From the data obtained, we could see that the other items were rated at a high level from the first meeting, which was also due to the preparation of the programme according to the good practices mentioned in the paper.

As the results were influenced by the independent variable, in this case the intervention programme, we conducted a critical analysis of the programme and the results achieved, reviewed and deepened the programme design and implementation methodology and developed materials and tools for the educational agents concerned.

In conclusion, based on the results obtained, we can consider that **the hypothesis, according to which the implementation of an educational program based on experiential learning can lead to the personal and social development of adolescents between 14 and 19 years old, formulated at the beginning of the research, is partially confirmed.**

In order to achieve the specific objectives of Study III of the scientific research, data collected from 775 adolescents aged 14 to 19 were used.

According to the data processed in this study, the portrait of the teenager can be described as follows: he is oriented towards practical learning, he wants to know how to do concrete things, to be active, to make things with his hands. He is interested in learning foreign languages of international circulation (Spanish, English) and ready to learn languages such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hebrew or Nordic languages. He wants to travel and experience new cultures and civilisations from which to learn and develop personally, socially and professionally. Afterwards, she wants to return home and open her own business where she can monetise her personal interests but also help her community. More than having a business that generates profit, the teenager wants to help his neighbours, through social impact projects, ngos, hospitals, organisations that help people in disadvantaged areas or environments.

This young man wants to help make the world a better place, i.e. help solve problems that threaten our well-being and that of the planet. Having developed 21st century skills, he may be able to solve complex problems related to our physical and mental health, resource consumption, environmental and animal protection, reforestation and the fashion industry. They want to learn engineering, mathematics, computer science, work in research and find cures for diseases and other problems affecting our collective well-being. The fact that he wants to deepen the psychology of the ages, to develop his emotional intelligence, to be a psychologist, a doctor, a counsellor, denotes a need for the educational environment, the business environment and free agents offering training, advice and guidance to work together for the harmonious development of young people.

7. At all stages of the research it was confirmed that young people are willing to supplement their formal education with non-formal education programmes, which have the effect of developing 21st century skills.

This generation of adolescents, if sufficiently supported by professionals who have the ability to facilitate learning spaces, mentoring, coaching and experiential counselling, could be a foundation for the development of a better society that experiences tangible well-being.

Research limitations, educational recommendations and new research directions

The first limitations were identified at the design and implementation stage of the experiential programme, as can be seen from the analysis developed in Chapter IX "CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING-BASED PRACTICAL - APPLICATIVE PROGRAMME".

Second, the data come from a limited sample of adolescents and can only be partially extrapolated to the level of adolescents in Romania. Therefore, as an opportunity for future research development, the number of participants could be expanded to a nationally representative sample.

Another limitation stems from the application of the programme to two groups of adolescents with a high level of educational preparation before the programme started. A solution for future research would be to apply the programme in different settings, including socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged environments, where the implementation of the programme is likely to generate more statistically significant changes in the level of personal and social development of the participants.

In conducting the research, the intrasubject design was chosen. In order to obtain more data, the research design could be changed in the future to include a control group.

Another limitation may be associated with the research instruments constructed for hypothesis testing. As the choice was made to create new tools, linked to the programme under analysis, these limitations were taken into account from the beginning of the approach. An alternative, in the future, would be to collaborate with specialists in the field of psychology to develop and validate new standardised instruments correlated with new working hypotheses.

The working environment was formal, rigid and made it difficult to carry out experiential activities. In the future we aim to ensure that the working environment is selected and arranged in accordance with the intended quality requirements.

Also, the time allocated for each module proved to be too short for the number of participants and the cadence either too high or too low. Solutions could be to extend the duration

of each module to 3-4 hours, to reduce the number of participants or experiential activities and to set a cadence in line with the objectives of the programme.

One limitation was the collaboration with only one educational agent, namely teachers, which leads us to the recommendation to include different educational agents in future programmes through exposure to different environments.

Last but not least, the non-existence of a bibliography related to the research topic has been corrected by publications and the present paper.

These limitations, however, serve as opportunities for improvement for future programs and provide a solid foundation from which to design new programs both through the Grow Up for Life Center and through educational agencies interested in expanding the results of this research.

The new **research directions** we propose are the following:

- developing new research by implementing programmes based on experiential learning in different environments and through collaboration with different agents
- identify and analyse the extent to which educational agents are aware of the needs of adolescents
- analysis of the influence of the growing-up environment on adolescents' habits and skills
- comparing the needs of adolescents in public and private education
- the extent to which initial needs, expectations and preferences may change and the reasons why, through a longitudinal study

Beneficiaries and exploitation of results

In terms of the *usefulness of the results*, it should be noted that the information gathered from the research undertaken (theoretical, field and online) serves the following categories of educational agents interested in introducing experiential learning into the adolescent learning and development programmes, initiatives and activities with which they interact:

- agents from educational institutions who participated and were involved in the field and online studies carried out;
- agents from national and international learning communities (educational establishments, non-governmental organisations, companies and associations);
- trainers and teaching staff concerned with introducing these ideas into the programmes they design and run and the learning activities they coordinate;
- agents in infrastructures connected to the reality of today's generations (social networks, dedicated websites, course trainers, workshops and cultural and educational events);

- authorities, specialists from research and development institutes, knowledge-based organisations;
- experts from various fields of business;
- parents and family members;
- organisations that focus on staff development through internal training and skills development programmes;
- knowledge-oriented organisations, independent consultants and firms specialising in the development of education systems.

As for the *exploitation of the research results*, it will be done through Grow Up for Life. Based on the results obtained, educational projects and materials will be implemented to become useful in the activities of education and development of adolescents.

This research has not exhausted the possible directions for studying the design and implementation of experiential learning-based programs for the personal and social development of adolescents. The intervention program applied in the two educational establishments in Cluj-Napoca municipality contains experiential activities that can be improved and customized according to the group of adolescents to be worked with, their interests and development goals, and the environments where the program will be applied. We believe that the experiential learning approach offers a perspective of empowering adolescents in their own development and attitude towards learning. Although until now the subject has been little addressed in the literature in Romania, we believe that a first approach to bring the business environment closer to the educational environment has been achieved with the completion of this thesis.

We are confident that this research will encourage future studies and future educational agents from different backgrounds to get involved in order to improve adolescents' access to experiential learning-based programs to increase their personal and social development.

In conclusion, our research has made essential contributions to the improvement of educational practices and methods applicable in non-formal learning contexts, with potential for expansion, and in formal and informal contexts by educational agents in Romania. Throughout the paper, we have provided scientific suggestions and practical recommendations for educational agents to use in their own educational programmes, projects and initiatives aimed at the personal and social development of adolescents in Romania through experiential learning. In other words, the aim of the present research has been achieved, namely to provide a model for the design and implementation of educational programmes based on experiential learning and applicable in non-formal learning contexts for the personal and social development of adolescents aged 14-19.

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