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MODERN TEACHING RESOURCES - A NECESSITY IN
MODERN TIMES

Diana Mariana (Boeriu) Sfăt (a)*, Cristian Nicolae Stan (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Doctoral School Education, Reflection, Development, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, CJ, Romania,
boeriu_dianamariana@yahoo.com

(b) Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, CJ, Romania

Abstract

This paper will make a presentation of the impact of the online way of conducting the instructional-educational process on teachers, parents and direct beneficiaries of education services. In the current context, when the activity of schools occurs exclusively online, rethinking the way of teaching, on all components, is a necessity. Teachers in Romania experience this way of carrying out the activity without having benefited from a professional training on this component, children, and parents being forced to adapt. It is interesting to analyze both their perception of this system, but at the same time the degree of readiness of educational institutions to implement the online activity. Predominantly, the typology of teaching resources involves significant changes, the place of the traditional ones being taken by the information technologies that are too little used at the level of preschool education. The attitude of teachers and parents towards accessing these types of teaching resources is dramatically changing so that the initial resilience turns into acceptance, and this is primarily because the new type of teaching resources becomes a necessity. The study conducted on an impressive number of parents and teachers reveals a surprising reality, generating spectacular results, which impose mandatory measures to support the education system in general and especially preschool

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1. Introduction

Concepts such as “e-Learning”, “distance learning”, “online learning”, “virtual classroom” (Ionescu & Bocoș, 2009) are nowadays reflected in modern didactics and it means a type of learning that differs from the traditional style that we still find in many educational institutions and is the effect of the use of “new information and communication technologies” (ICT) at the school level. Saying that they were the desideratum of a modern education, system which means innovative ways of achieving an interactive environment focused on the needs of the child, the situation changes radically, in these times.

Globally, society as a whole is forced to react to an unprecedented situation in the context of an imminent danger posed by the threat of SARS-CoV-2 virus contamination. Thus, it produces effects throughout humanity, in all areas of activity, including the education system. Countries around the world are required to take an exam in which they will demonstrate their ability and limitations. The study on the impact produced by the activity in the online system, „The quality of life during the pandemic: problems and response policies. A synthetic point of view” carried out by a group of sociologists from the Institute for Quality of Life of the Romanian Academy (2020) highlights the changes caused at the level of the whole society.

Since 11.03. 2020, in Romania, the courses in the pre-university education system were suspended, and the activity took place exclusively in the online system. What was once a goal now becomes a challenge, in a unique context. Computer-assisted learning, otherwise controversial means of education, are becoming a necessity. Smartphone, computer, tablet, internet connection - are indispensable and put to the test, both the teacher, forced to use them, and the parents of children, who are conditioned to reconsider their principles, given that there are conflicting opinions with on their effects on development. The need for change is fierce, and the systems that will succeed in transposing into the online environment the components of the instructive-educational process, traditionally carried out, using the driving force of each “human resource” involved, as “agents of change”, will be considered “impact schools” (Hattie, 2014).

At the preschool level, the impact of “new technologies” or “digikids” (Stan, 2016) is a controversial topic, widely debated by many specialists nowadays, who see both the advantages and disadvantages of their constant use in this age. Manfred Spitzer (2020), one of the most famous neuroscientists in Germany, underline the need to change the education system “so as not to lose its relevance” but warns of the dangers posed by “new technologies” due to non-use of the brain, which causes it’s efficiency to decrease, speaking of “digital dementia”.

From a different perspective, it invokes the need to accept the difference that exists between the children of the current generation and those of “yesterday”, both physically and cognitively and psychosocially (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2018). Under these conditions, everything is a “need”, genetically planned, “Homo zappiens” or “instant generation” (Veen & Vrakking, 2011) exists, it is a different human species, it lives in a globalized world, based on multimedia, which we, the adults, are obliged to admit and facilitate its development.

Therefore, it is necessary to restructure the entire educational system and not only due to the current context, but especially the real needs of learners.

2. Problem Statement

The study aimed to establish the impact that the development of the teaching process in the form of online activity had on teachers, preschoolers and their parents, in the conditions of suspending classes.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Hypothesis

Worldwide, the development of the activity exclusively online infected has become a necessity, in the current situation, generated by the danger of getting sick with SARS-CoV-2. In this respect, there are no studies presenting official data on the impact of online activity on the direct or indirect beneficiaries of the education system, prior to this period. However, there are enough data to illustrate the position of teachers, parents, preschoolers regarding the use of "new technologies". And these, most of them, do not refer to the age group 3-7 years. According to the data, the idea of increasing the level of use of "new technologies" in preschool age is accredited, as well as the increased resilience of adults (teachers, parents) on their use by preschoolers. Based on this assumption, we consider the following working hypothesis: teachers as well as parents understand the need for online activity, but consider that this type of activity, in its current form, fails to achieve the established educational goals.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to establish the impact of online activity on teachers, preschoolers and their parents, in order to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this type of activity.

The objectives of the study:

Establishing the frequency of online activities took place during the suspension of courses;

Identifying the forms of teaching activities that took place online;

Identifying the factors that influenced the development of the online activity, both from the perspective of teachers and preschoolers, respectively their parents;

Analysing data in order to collect all the data making reference to means of improving online activity.

5. Research Methods

To conduct this study, preschool level, representative of Zalău Municipality with 260 preschoolers and 21 teachers. Each teacher, from the selected ones, carried out during the suspension of the online activity courses with the preschoolers from the group to which they were assigned and, at the same time, participated in all the activities coordinated by the kindergarten, during the reference period.

The research was conducted using online questionnaire. Due to the age of the children (between 2 and 7 years old), their parents were asked about the activity carried out by preschoolers during the suspension of classes.

The questionnaires applied contain various types of questions (open, closed) offering the possibility of clear, detailed answers, which gives the survey great objectivity and relevance.

The entire survey was conducted exclusively online, as it took place during the lockdown period. The answers were recorded and processed accordingly, without being vitiated in any form. The respondents were provided with all the necessary conditions to days of substantiate the answers, given the fact that the investigation took place following to 75 days of lockdown.

6. Findings

To the questionnaire addressed to parents 249 answers were expressed out of a total of 260 requests sent, respectively a percentage of 95.76%. We consider that the study was not flawed due to the fact that the percentage of respondents in this category was not 100%. In the case of the questionnaire addressed to teachers, 21 answers were collected from the total of 21 requests sent, respectively a percentage of 100%.

The distribution by age groups of the preschoolers who were the subject of the study was done as follows:

2 - 3 years - 49 preschoolers (19.7%), 3 - 4 years - 60 preschoolers (24.5%), 4 - 5 years - 70 preschoolers (28.1%), 5 - 6/7 years - 70 preschoolers (28.1%).

220 parents (88.4%) confirm that during the period of suspension of courses they participated in online activities, and 29 parents (11.6%) say that they did not participate in online activities.

To the question “Which category of staff carried out online activities with children?”, The answers were as follows: 215 (86.3%) - teachers, 28 (11.2%) - school counsellor, 26 (10.4%) - speech therapist teacher, 24 (9.6%) - no category, 34 (13.7%) - other categories.

Regarding the typology of online teaching activities, we have the following distributions: knowledge - 211 (84.7%), fun - 191 (76.7%), sports, movement - 138 (55.4%), plastic, practical, manual work - 213 (85.5%), musical - 135 (54.2%), language - 126 (50.6%), conduct - 80 (32.1%), others - 36 (14, 5%).

To the question “What difficulties did you encounter in carrying out the online activity?”, The parents of preschoolers answered as follows: lack of technology - 19 (7.6%), lack of materials needed to perform the tasks submitted - 60 (24.1%), disinterest of the child - 66 (26.5%), lack of time - 134 (53.8%), do not consider this type of activity efficient - 32 (12.9%).

The respondents appreciated the teachers' performance in the online activity, giving marks from 1 to 5 (1 - the lowest grade, 5 - the highest grade). The following answers were recorded: 1 - 4 (1.6%), 2 - 4 (1.6%), 3 - 14 (5.6%), 4 - 34 (13.7%), 5 - 193 (77.5%).

To the open question, regarding the offer of suggestions for improving the way of carrying out the online activity, the parents offer diverse answers, among which we mention the most relevant:

- Activity on a closed platform, to which each child has personalized access;
- The activity should involve more child-teacher interaction, not to be limited to the transmission of tasks and providing feedback;
- Providing for each child a laptop, computer, printer, specific materials, etc., in order to participate in the online activity;
- Planning activities that do not require the presence of the parent.

Teachers, in a percentage of 100%, answer that they carry out online activity with preschoolers, and the frequency with which they carry out this type of activity is daily (100%).

With reference to the practical way of carrying out this activity, to the question “What educational platform / application do you use?”. The answers are the following: WhatsApp –7 (33.3%), Facebook (closed group with parents) - 16 (76, 2%), Messenger - 10 (47.6%), Zoom - 5 (23.8%), Skype - 0, Phone - 8 (38.1%).

As types of educational resources used in the online activity, teachers list the following: worksheets - 17 (81%), educational films / videos - 21 (100%), PPT presentations - 11 (51.4%), auxiliary didactic - 9 (42.9%), fun games - 1 (4.8%), photographs / story books / poems - 1 (4.8%), created stories - 1 (4.8%), practical activities, movement games - 1 (4.8%).

To the question “What were the ways in which you identified the resources used?”, The answers expressed by the teachers are the following: created by me - 14 (66.7%), online - 19 (90.5%), taken from various teaching aids - 6 (28.6%), created by my colleagues and taken over - 3 (14.3%), all of the above - 1 (4.8%).

Regarding the appreciation of the involvement of preschoolers in the online activity, the teachers answer as follows: most were involved - 14 (66.7%), half of them were involved - 4 (19%), few were involved - 3 (14.3%).

Teachers rated with a grade from 1 to 5 (1- lowest, 5- highest), the efficiency of online activity at preschool level, as follows: 1 - 3 (14.3%), 2 - 0, 3 - 12 (57.1%), 4 - 5 (23.8%), 5 - 1 (4.8%).

To the question “What do you like about your online activity?”, The following answers were recorded: online meetings with children - 2 (9.5%), freedom to choose and use teaching resources - 9 (42.9%), maintaining contact with preschoolers - 19 (90.5%), I did not like this type of activity - 2 (9.5%).

The main difficulties encountered in online activity by teachers were the following: children depend on parents for this type of activity - 20 (95.2%), children do not have the necessary materials to perform the tasks submitted - 12 (57.1%), children are not motivated to perform the activity - 6 (28.6%), planning - 1 (4.8%), providing daily feedback from teachers for children - 4 (19%), lack of preparation for this type of activity - 8 (38.1%).

To the open question, regarding the offer of suggestions for improving the way of carrying out the online activity, the teachers offer very diverse answers, among which we mention the most relevant:

- Training teachers for this type of activity;
- Closed educational platform, to which access should be personalized;
- Transposing the contents online;
- Equipping with equipment specific to the development of this type of activity;
- Creating certified educational resources for preschool level.

7. Conclusion

We can conclude the following:

- Both teachers and parents of preschoolers consider online teaching an alternative form of training, during the suspension of courses, which is necessary;

- Both categories of respondents consider that it is mandatory for this type of activity to be legally regulated, by creating an appropriate legislative framework;
- The teachers who took part in the analysis state the lack of preparation for this type of training, hence the need to organize courses / training programs on this component;
- Lack of approved educational resources, which would determine a rethinking of the education system, including the curricular component that would allow its transposition into the online system;
- The need to endow with digital technology equipment, as well as with specific materials necessary for the development of the didactic activity, for each didactic and preschool teacher involved, through a governmental program;
- At preschool level, online activity is difficult, due to the age of the children, which forces the parent to be all the time one side with the child throughout the activity;
- Most parents invoke “lack of time”, given that they carry out the activity “from home”;
- The online teaching activity does not respect the specifics of the preschooler's activity - the game, because children at this age need direct contacts, face-to-face interactions;
- The need to identify various forms of activity, more attractive, to ensure the maintenance of children's interest throughout the teaching act;
- Shortening the time spent in the activity that involves direct contact with digital technology equipment, devices;
- Identifying ways to stimulate children's interest in this type of activity.

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