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DOBRIN Mihaela

**THE ATTITUDE OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS
TOWARDS CHANGE IN EDUCATION**

531.02 –Educational Management

Summary of the doctoral thesis in educational management

**SUMMARY
of the Doctoral Thesis in Sciences of Education**

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Members of the Committee for Public Defence of the Doctoral Thesis :

1. SADOVEI Larisa, PhD, associate professor UPSC – **president of the committee**
2. GRIBINCEA Tatiana, PhD Senior Lecturer–USPEE, **scientific coordinator**
3. ŞLEAHTIŢCHI Mihail, han. doctor in Sciences of Education, PhD associate professor, UPSC - **official consultant**
4. BEJAN Angela, PhD, Senior Lecturer in Sciences of Education, Faculty of Sciences– USARB- **official consultant**
5. MARIN Simona, PhD, Senior Lecturer in Sciences of Education, UDJG – **official consultant**

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Building 2, Senate Room, Str. I. Creangă 1, MD-2069

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ANACEC(www.cnaa.md).

The summary was sent on 11th October 2024

Author:

DOBRIN Mihaela

Scientific Coordinator:

GRIBINCEA Tatiana,
PhD in Economics,
Senior Lecturer

President of the Committee:

SADOVEI Larisa,
PhD in Pedagogy,
Senior Lecturer

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCD- Teacher Training Center

CRET- Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

D.P.P.D- Teacher Training Department

I.S.J- County School Inspectorate

M.E- Ministry of Education

UDJG- „Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați

UPSC- „Ion Creangă” State Pedagogical University of Chișinău

USPEE- „Constantin Stere” University of Politics and Economic Studies of Chișinău

USARB- „Alecă Russo” University of State of Bălți

CONCEPTUAL STANDARDS OF THE RESEARCH

The relevance of the topic and the presentation of the situation in the field of research.

For any field of life, change is the only stable variable in the social evolution, as evolution, progress and dynamics inevitably involve change. Many practitioners and specialists in the field of education have issued possible definitions of educational change, including the following:

Lapière [apud 4, p.13] initiates the attempt to define the concept of change, placing it in the wider context of social change. The continuation of the effort to define the notion of change is proposed by G. Rocher (1968), [apud 4, p.14], highlighting the distinction between social change and social evolution.

AM Huberman [apud 4, p.14] describes the concept of change in terms of innovation, defining it as a novelty, a transformation, an improvement, bringing value to it. In this perspective, change can be considered an innovation when it aims to bring added value in achieving the established goals.

Sorin Cristea, in his work "*Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pedagogy*" („*Dicționar enciclopedic de pedagogie*”), states that the term change is associated with the concept of reform in the field of education. He claims that "educational reform represents a form of higher quality change, which justifies extensive changes in the educational system in terms of its orientation, structure and content"[12, p.74].

Another way to define change is through the term "adaptation". Adaptation involves a review and improvement of the existing framework, while change involves a reorganization of the entire framework. We conclude that adaptation can represent both a stage in the change process and a purpose and means by which change becomes possible.

Based on these considerations, the choice of the topic "Teachers' attitude towards educational change" is justified. *The reason why we chose this topic was the desire to clarify the concept of change, intending to highlight the effect of this transformation on the educational system and process and to identify that category of teachers who are resistant to innovation* by introducing in the experimental study two innovative elements: the implementation in preschool educational units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative that innovated the structure of the integrated activity and the implementation of the "*Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach*" training program applied as scientific and methodological support to teachers in experimental preschool units. The conclusion of this thesis will help me fully complete my theoretical and methodological training

necessary for carrying out my future teaching activities as a teacher trainer and mentor within the Galați CCD (Teacher Training Centre). The theoretical part will help me understand the current directions of the changes occurring in preschool education, as well as the actions by which we can encourage teachers who are reluctant to change to form their conviction that "adopting the changes imposed by the educational reform is at present the only chance of the Romanian school to get rid of the ballast of the old narrow and bureaucratic educational ideologies, theories and practices and to take the leap towards the modern school organization, oriented towards performance, competition and quality in the act of teaching"[3, p.10].

The last reason behind the choice of this topic is based on the personal conviction on the essential role of preschool teachers, as they are the first to shape and influence children's early development. The attitude of these teachers towards educational changes contributes essentially to the success of the implementation of new educational paradigms in order to ensure a quality education.

The purpose of the research: In order to materialize the investigative approach, the purpose of this research was *to influence the attitude of preschool teachers towards the educational change configured into two experimental directions: the implementation in preschool educational units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative that innovated the structure of the integrated activity; the implementation of the "The Integrated Activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" training program applied as scientific and methodological support to teachers in the experimental preschool units.* The purpose of the research was materialized in the following operational objectives, acting as pedagogical standards for all stages of the research:

Objectives of the research: analysis of the specialized literature regarding educational changes at the level of the educational system, as well as the main changes brought by the current curriculum in Romania; the development and implementation of the educational alternative in the Reggio Emilia preschool education and of the training program for teachers in the participating kindergartens; determining the effectiveness of the training program by comparing the initial attitude towards change (before the implementation of the program) with the final one (after the implementation of the program); identification of the teachers who are resistant to educational change; highlighting the relationship between the attitude of the teachers who are resistant to educational changes in preschool education and the variables: teaching certification level, seniority in education, professional training;

To this respect we formulated the **general hypothesis:**

The development and implementation of educational changes in preschool education, as a new educational alternative and a related training program, generate effects in the attitude of teachers

towards educational change and in the optimization of the instructional-educational process in kindergarten, depending on variables such as the level of education, seniority and teaching certification level.

The specific correlated hypotheses are the following:

1st specific hypothesis.

The training program has a positive effect on the attitude towards change of the teachers who were initially resistant to change.

2nd specific hypothesis.

The level of education, the seniority and the certification level of the teachers who were initially identified as being resistant to educational changes in preschool education influence their attitude.

The objectives proposed to carry out this study facilitate the investigative approach to achieve the goal and to demonstrate and verify the general hypothesis. Thus, the analysis of specialized literature, as well as the main changes brought by the curriculum in force in Romania compared to those in the Republic of Moldova are stages that define the first part of the research. Another task of the paper includes the initial testing of the subjects, the selection of the subjects who will participate in the experiment and the establishment of the relationship between the attitude of teachers resistant to educational changes in preschool education and the variables: teaching certification level, seniority in education, professional training. The present study also includes the experimental application of: *the implementation in the preschool education units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative that innovated the structure of the integrated activity and the implementation of the "Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" training program applied as scientific and methodological support to teachers in the experimental preschool units, determining the effectiveness of the training program by comparing the initial attitude towards change (before the implementation of the program) to the final one (after the implementation of the program), analyzing and interpreting the results obtained and formulating practical and methodical conclusions and recommendations.*

Synthesis of the research methodology and justification of the chosen research methods:

Scientific research methodology. In this research I used the following **research methods:** the study of the specialized literature and the pedagogical observation employed as data sources in the preliminary stage of the research, the pedagogical experiment, the survey based on a questionnaire, the statistical-mathematical method, the graphical representation.

The pedagogical experiment consisted in the development and implementation of two innovative elements: *the implementation in preschool educational units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative that innovated the structure of the integrated activity and the implementation of the training program named "Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" applied as scientific and methodological support to the teaching staff in the experimental preschool units.*

Scientific novelty and originality: it is highlighted in the development and implementation of the structure of the integrated activity with Reggio Emilia elements in preschool education and the training program for teachers in the participating kindergartens, as a new educational alternative within the preschool education in Romania compared to other alternative methods studied in Denmark, France and Italy.

The theoretical significance of the research: it is based on the promotion and implementation of a new educational approach (the structure of the integrated activity) as an element of novelty specific to the curriculum for preschool education and the teacher training program in the participating kindergartens.

The practical value of the results of the paper: the paper is important for the preschool education, because it proliferates in the structure of the integrated activity innovative elements in an educational alternative and of the training program for teachers identified as resistant to change, compared to other alternatives such as Montessori, Waldorf and Step by Step, programs that are currently being applied at the kindergarten level. The value of the results is also quantified by the national level program accreditation proposal submitted to the M.E, but also by the invitation addressed to the students of D.P.P.D.-Galați (Teacher Training Department) to participate in the Reggio alternative training course. At the same time, it was proposed that the experimental training program be included in the educational offer of the Teacher Training Centre in Galati, for the 2024-2025 school year.

Implementation of the scientific results: in order to apply the results of the research, the following conferences/symposiums/workshops were organized - example – the "The 100 languages of children - the Reggio Emilia method" National Conference which took place on May 17, 2024, at the Tândărică Animation Theatre in Bucharest-Romania, where experts from Italy, people who live daily, the dynamic and continuously changing phenomenon – lectured about the Reggio Emilia approach (after two years of Romanian-Italian collaboration, we invited Cristian Fabbi, the president of Reggio Children, to come to Romania). He and two teacher-practitioners from Reggio nurseries and kindergartens, with the mayor of this famous locality, which offers the whole world an example of effective local administration in the management of nurseries and kindergartens, spoke, for the first time, to the Romanian authorities, Romanian educators about this approach and supported the

need for the child in Romania too, to become the protagonist of his own journey from his first years of life.

At the same time, the scientific results were valuable through applied practices (the exchanges carried out at the level of the County School Inspectorates, partnerships of related institutions in the educational sphere, promotion of the learning results on the YouTube page of the I.S.J.s - inspectorates) in the field of preschool education, in the national scientific research events promoted by the Ministry of Education (the presentation of experimental research results at the national conferences held during September 14-16, 2024 in Bucharest) and last but not least, the organization of scientific events in the Galați Teacher Training Centre.

Likewise, the research methods and the investigative approach were applied to the class by the teaching staff in the following educational institutions: "Motanul Incalțat" Extended Program Kindergarten, "Tedi" Extended Program Kindergarten, no. 64 Extended Program Kindergarten, "Licurici" Extended Program Kindergarten, "Arlechino" Extended Program Kindergarten, no. 36 Extended Program Kindergarten, no. 39 Extended Program Kindergarten, "Mugurel" Extended Program Kindergarten, "Otilia Cazimir" Extended Program Kindergarten, "Prichindel" Extended Program Kindergarten, no. 30 Extended Program Kindergarten, Galati, "Prichindel" Extended Program Kindergarten Tecuci, - Romania.

Structure of the thesis: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, reference list of **206** titles, **5** annexes, **148** full pages, **33** figures, **14** tables, **8** pictures.

Keywords: educational alternative, attitude towards change, professional training, educational change, preschool education.

CONTENT OF THE THESIS

The doctoral thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter I includes the most relevant information from experts in the field related to the **General aspects of educational change**, and more precisely we analyzed various components of the change process, a topic that caught the attention of politicians for educational reforms that involve pedagogical changes, but also of experts in the field over time. This concern manifested in attempts to define the concept of change, starting from the educational reform projects in Romania, the Educated Romania Project, to the presentation of the key elements of this extensive process, justified and supported by educational practitioners and to the conceptualization of the definition of educational change in our opinion.

"Consequently, taking into account both the need to continue and intensify the country's efforts to develop the educational system in Romania, and the European recommendations, it is necessary to put into operation and implement the "Educated Romania" Project by applying the related set of strategic objectives and targets, having the effect of improving the learning outcomes for the preschool education level" [18, p.4].

Thus, the educational policies in Romania promise a deep reform in education that anticipates the major needs for change of the teaching staff, in a society engaged in a transformation process. The change is promoted at the level of the entire educational system starting from government institutions, to the educational reforms promoted by the Ministry of Education through the Pre-University Education Law 2023, of the Associations for values in education-implementation partners and of the experts in education, who have formulated various attempts, like Lapière[apud 4, p.13] who initiates the attempt to define the concept of change, placing it in the wider context of social change. The continuation of the effort to define the notion of change is proposed by G. Rocher, [apud 4, p.14], as he highlights the distinction between social change and social evolution. Social change refers to visible transformations occurring in a short period of time, while social evolution describes longer-term societal transformations. There is an interdependence between these concepts because social change influences social evolution.

AM Huberman [apud 4, p.14] describes the concept of change in terms of innovation, defining it as a novelty, a transformation, an improvement, bringing value to it. In this perspective, change can be considered an innovation when it aims to bring added value in achieving the established objectives.

An additional attempt to define the concept of change is presented by M. Fullan, [apud 4, p.15], who complementarily associates it with school improvement.

" We can emphasize the enumeration made by L. Stoll and D. Fink, [apud 4, p.15] as one of the most important characteristics of school improvement:

- The ability to accept change, regardless of the shock that triggers it;
- Making use of strategies to achieve the set objectives;
- Checking the internal conditions that encourage change;
- helping to improve the results obtained by the students, etc."

Based on this definition, we understand that improvement within the school institution is an integral aspect of the educational transformation process.

We can conceptualize change through the lens of restoration, which is a synonym of improvement within the school context. Restoration involves a transformation, modernization and updating of practices that may be considered outdated.

According to Cristea Sorin, in his work "*Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pedagogy*", the term change is associated with the concept of reform in the field of education. He claims that "educational reform represents a form of higher quality change, which justifies extensive changes in the educational system in terms of its orientation, structure and content"[12, p.74].

"Another crucial principle presented by Gh. Tomşa was the proactive involvement in the process of structural and systemic change, with an emphasis on the substantiation of the reform on psychological, philosophical and sociological bases" [23, p.17].

Educational reforms involving pedagogical changes involve adjustments at the level of objectives, the structure of the educational system (including the levels, stages and cycles of education, contents, resources (material, human, financial, informational) and ways of organizing the learning process, technologies of managerial leadership, as well as administrative management tools at the level of the educational plan, curricula and school textbooks.

Another way to define change is through the term "adaptation". Adaptation involves a review and improvement of the existing framework, while change involves a reorganization of the entire framework. We conclude that adaptation can represent both a stage in the change process and a purpose and means by which change becomes possible.

Educational change can also be defined from the perspective of *social conflict*.

Dahrendorf R. [apud 3, p.17] according to whom change represents the struggle for power and authority, the social trying to change the structure of the forces of production. The social conflict

may also lead to the disruption of codes, the appearance of some disputes, all of which do not lead to an educational change.

According to the definitions presented by the quoted authors, we can identify the following essential characteristics of the change presented by Valerica Anghelache [4, p.17]:

- „Global character – change influences various types of organizations, including both economic entities and educational institutions;
- Imperative character - change is determined by social pressures that impose the need to adopt innovations;
- Collective phenomenon - affects both individuals and organizations as a whole;
- Structural and functional implications - the change generates adjustments at the micro and macrostructural level;
- Extended duration - goes through several distinct stages in its evolution;
- Operational structure - initially generates imbalances and later leads to a different form of balance" [4, p.17].

We can conclude that in most cases, educational changes are based on changes initiated at the level of the social context, although ideally the change would be the result of the internal needs and requirements of the school institution. In order for a school organization to function effectively, it must have the ability to adapt to the changes happening in society.

In our opinion, a clarification of the definition of educational change is required, as follows: in order to achieve an effective educational change within a school organization, we must consider the targeted objectives, the reason for change, what we want to change and the way we want to achieve these changes.

In V. Cojocaru's view, "*Change as a process can be successfully achieved only by integrating the activity of five basic elements: (1) vision; (2) goals, objectives; (3) stimulation; (4) resources; (5) action plan.*"

In the absence of an element/factor, the process of change is impaired. Thus, in the absence of a clear vision, even with the presence of the other elements, no real change can be achieved. This state leads to confusion.

The lack of clear goals and objectives causes restlessness, and the lack of incentives for change intensifies resistance. In the case of a lack of resources, we can only expect frustration, and the lack of an action plan causes real torture, unacceptable within the new guidelines and management directions" [9, p.73].

"We mention, in particular, that the success factors for change, according to the opinions of experts in the field (A. Pettigrew, R. Whipp), are considered to be (70, p.48,49):

- environment assessment;
- change management;
- human resources;
- the correlation of the strategic change with the operational one;
- coherence" [9, p.74].

Educational change infers the existence of agents of change, but also of favorable conditions for development. The absence of a single element in this equation leads to the delay of change.

Chapter II is called "**Preschool education from the perspective of educational change**", which aims to highlight the significant changes brought by the new curriculum in preschool education, at the same time making a comparative analysis with the curriculum in the Republic of Moldova. We also analyzed the factors that support or hinder these changes, emphasizing the crucial role of teachers in the implementation of this process. We noticed that there are educators who show reluctance towards innovation, but also others who are open to change, who make considerable efforts to facilitate this process.

I had as my main **objective** the comparative identification of the initiatives of the Government of Romania and that of the Republic of Moldova, aimed at supporting the development of the educational system, of educational reform policies in pre-university education and the visions of experts and practitioners in the studied field, as well as the analysis of current educational systems (Montessori, Waldorf, Step by Step) applied at the level of preschool education in countries such as Denmark, France, Italy and Romania, presenting their advantages and disadvantages, but also the connection with the newly implemented educational system - the Reggio Emilia alternative.

"The overall perspective is focused on the evolution of the curriculum in other states, takes into account the political dynamics in the field, which is expressed through frequent or rare changes, updates and reforms, based on many variables, such as the educational ideal, the results of studies and experiments, the research, the evolution of the involved societies, as well as the nature and direction of the desired changes. In Romania, both the educational policies and the national curriculum developed and implemented in the last decade reflect a periodicity of changes and adjustments, which contributed to the evolution in the field and the alignment of the country's educational policies with the European ones" [24, p.2].

"Analyzing the Reference Framework of Early Education (CRET), from the Republic of Moldova as an expression of the national educational policy, the document materializes the vision

on the child, accepted and promoted by the normative and policy framework in the educational system" [25, p.5].

"In the Republic of Moldova, both the educational policies and the national curriculum developed and applied during the last decade express a pacing of changes and adjustments, a fact that led to an evolution in the field of early education connected to national and international educational policies" [25, p. 6]. Therefore, a common development direction of the two national curricula arises.

The need for change is present and detailed in the "Curriculum for early education, in Romania, which introduces a systemic approach, in order to ensure:

- "Continuity within the same curricular cycle;
- The interdependence between school subjects (grades 1-2) and the types of learning activities in preschool education;
- Open mindedness to optional training modules" [24, p.11].

On analysing the two "Curriculum for early education" documents from the two countries (Romania and the Republic of Moldova) we find *the arguments in favor of curricular changes*, the need for correlation with the documents promoted at the European level, the changes initiated at the level of pre-university education and the legislation in force. Connections between the two documents stand out, promoting: *the same fundamental values, educational plans that organize the whole teaching-learning-assessment process, but also the pursued objectives, representing standards for the two systems that are similar both in structure and in content.*

The curricular changes promoted in the preschool education through the two regulatory documents from Romania and the Republic of Moldova are focused on the integration into the teaching activity of: encouraging and implementing innovative educational methods, diversifying teaching-learning strategies with an emphasis on the active-participatory methods, family seen as a partner in the teaching act and learning activities (curriculum topics, contents, dimensions of development, specific behaviors), which aim to ensure an instructive-educational process in accordance with the changing trends of the contemporary society.

In other words, the aspects promoted in the educational plan of the two curricula highlight the relationship between the kindergarten and the outside world, the community as a whole, the learning acquired from people outside the institution seen as important as the one that comes from the teacher.

An aspect defined and conceptualized in this chapter refers to *the structure and content of integrated activities*, where the focus is placed more on the group activity and less on the whole class activity. The activity in small groups or even in pairs is much more effective, because the teacher can guide differently, and the children join forces in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

In order to ensure a coherent didactic approach, it was intended that the introduction of new elements from the Reggio Emilia educational alternative should not exceed the design-application framework for both the teaching staff and the preschoolers, compared to the educational approach, but only to complete it with specific elements.

As to the novelties brought by the Romanian curriculum, *the existence of the six major integrative curricular themes, with content suggestions for each theme separately, depending on the dimensions of development and the specific behaviors considered*, ensures the coherence of the European curricula developed in countries such as: Denmark, Italy and France, which allows us to compare the educational models of the alternatives developed at the level of preschool education.

The encouragement and implementation of innovative educational methods, as new elements specific to the early education curriculum, which requires the attention of preschool teachers, ***is the novelty brought to attention by the present paper***. In order to get a general picture of how the curriculum has evolved in other states, as well as the arguments that convince the teachers to accept the piloting and applying of an innovative educational approach to the group, there were presentations of the trends of the educational alternatives used in preschool education in other European states, as well as in Romania, all of which are detailed in the content of the thesis.

Based on the examination of alternative educational models: Montessori, Woldorf, Step by Step and Reggio Emilia, developed in Denmark, France, Italy, Romania and starting from the premise that they promote common aspects that stimulate the child's education as a whole, a comparison was made with a view to highlight similarities and limits in order to apply them as efficiently as possible.

Based on the examination of alternative educational models: Montessori, Waldorf, Step by Step and Reggio Emilia, developed in Denmark, France, Italy, Romania and starting from the premise that they promote common aspects that stimulate the child's education as a whole, a comparison was made in the purpose of highlighting similarities and limits in order to apply them as efficiently as possible.

Referring to these considerations, *we granted a greater openness to the Reggio Emilia approach*, which is scientifically based on the pillars of alternative pedagogies, Montessori, Waldorf and Step by Step, but the Reggio Emilia alternative method had not been known and developed in Romania.

The initiative of this investigative approach comes from the desire to know and implement another alternative method in the kindergartens of Romania, which would valorize the instructive-educational activity for both the educator and the educable (the child). This alternative has at its center the child's activity, the central element around which the entire teaching approach is built.

The child is seen as a complex personality that gives value to the natural space as the most appropriate for natural learning, and learning is built through partnership with the parents and the community.

The Italian model of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative is organized on the structure of principles that are based on the fundamental roles of the educators, the child's learning potential, the role of parents and the community as partners in learning. The relationships that are established in the education process are defined through the interaction of related roles.

The Reggio Emilia approach is known as one of the most effective alternative pedagogies due to its emphasis on a child-centered system. Within this system, the child builds and consolidates his knowledge by exploring the environment and by interacting with those around him. The Reggio Emilia curriculum is emergent, arising naturally from the interests of the child and the educator, fact which makes the learning process enjoyable and natural. Moreover, the educator is not the ultimate authority dictating what the child should think, but a careful observer, a partner in the learning process, and a facilitator of classroom relationships so that children learn from one another.

The need for the emergence of a new curriculum was determined by the novelties that appeared in preschool education: the project method at early ages, *the integrated activity*, early education and *the promotion and implementation of new educational approaches*, all of which represent the ensemble of new accents of viable educational changes in the system of education of Romania.

From this perspective, as a direct and fine observer (the inspector for early education of the County School Inspectorate) participating in the curricular activities in the specialty (inspections for granting teaching levels, inspections for checking teacher's activity in the specialty) to the extracurricular activities with impact at the level of the local community in Galati, we allow ourselves to issue the following conclusion: there are kindergartens that have adapted very well to the educational changes that have taken place over time in the sense of acquiring and applying educational innovations, and kindergartens where teachers remain refractory to everything that is innovation, considering that the system of traditional education is the most effective, this framework offering us the possibility to carry out the research study through which we can act on the attitude of the teaching staff who is resistant to change.

In this chapter, we also conceptualized the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning-evaluation process, as a person who informs, diagnoses the child's difficulties, supports him, guides him without contradicting him and works with him differently, respecting his own pace of development.

In the conclusions of this chapter, we emphasize the fact that in order *to optimize the introduction of the study and group application of the integrated activity with Reggio Emilia innovative elements*, the teaching staff must prove that they are open to knowledge, to assimilate the informational content of this alternative by going through a training session, and then to apply the acquired knowledge in the teaching activity with preschoolers.

In the third chapter "Study on the attitude of preschool teachers towards educational change" we aimed at finding teachers resistant to change and analyzing the effectiveness of the *implementation in preschool education units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative, that innovated the structure of the integrated activity and of the experimental training program with innovative elements in the Reggio Emilia approach*. Moreover, we aimed to ascertain and assess the attitude of the teaching personnel towards educational change, to correlate this attitude with certain variables: seniority in education, studies, teaching levels acquired, organizational factors specific to changes (personalism, efficiency, conservatism) and to attract the teachers resistant to change for the application and implementation of the training program.

These objectives were met by developing and analyzing a questionnaire consisting of five sections. The first section included the characteristics of the 511 respondents, the second section examined teachers' resistance to change and facilitated the creation of two groups (the experimental group- that benefited from the classroom application of the integrated activity structure with Reggio elements and the training course and the control group - who continued their usual activities), and the third was built on the basis of a previously validated standardized questionnaire that investigated the attitude of teachers towards change through three dimensions - personalism, efficiency and conservatism. The fourth section facilitated a better understanding of the training courses attended by teachers resistant to change, and the fifth section assessed the skills that participants found necessary for a teacher to be considered open to change. We also aimed to convince teachers to apply the informational content assimilated after completing the professional training program in educational practice and to demonstrate that those teachers who showed resistance to educational change in the first place changed their attitude and accepted the innovation.

The experimental research was carried out in four stages:

Stages of the experimental research:

Stage I (period 2019 - 2020) which included:

- selection of the research topic and elaboration of the working plan;
- studying and analyzing specialized literature on educational change;
- development of the theoretical-scientific idea of the doctoral thesis;

- establishing and identifying the purpose and the subjects that were to approach the new methods of the educational alternatives;

Stage II (2020 - 2021 period) which included:

- the implementation and use of methods to record the teachers' attitude at the beginning and at the end of the experiment in order to see if there are changes in this sense;

- the elaboration of the questionnaire on the attitude towards change, which was filled in by a number of 511 teachers who provided answers and allowed us to identify the initial sample group. The participants' answers were analyzed to identify the experimental group (112 participants resistant to change) and the control group (399 participants open to change);

- establishing the calendar for *the implementation in preschool education units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative that innovated the structure of the integrated activity*;

- carrying out the experiment, which consisted in the use of the following tests: model integrated activities with Reggio elements performed by the trainer (one activity in each educational unit participating in the experiment) and the 112 teachers in the experimental group carried out integrated activities once a week between December 2020 and May 2021.

Stage III (period 2021 - 2022) which included:

- the application of *initial and final tests* to both experimental and control research groups (the group that continued its usual activity): observation sheets, didactic activity evaluation sheets, descriptive reports of the integrated activity (the standard integrated activity and the integrated activity with Reggio elements).

- *planning the training activities for the program "Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach"* (Appendix 2), the topic and the distribution of hours per course units of the training program (Appendix 3), as well as the course manual (Appendix 4) had been developed before the start of the courses - March 2022.

- *implementation of the "Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" training program applied as scientific and methodological support to teachers in the experimental preschool units*, totalling a number of 50 hours of activity carried out face-to-face and asynchronously.

- performing the training activity for the 112 teachers in the experimental group, which was divided into four groups (28 students in each group), the course taking place during the months of April and May 2022.

The IVth stage (period 2022 - 2023) which included:

- centralization of the data obtained after the application of the questionnaire;

- carrying out the statistical-mathematical analysis, interpreting the data obtained by analyzing the products of the participant students' activity (Annex 5), for the implementation of the activity integrated with Reggio elements;
- the analysis of the attitude towards change and the effectiveness of the training program, the differences in personalism, efficiency and conservatism recorded in the experimental group and the control group both at the initial and at the final testing;
- processing the data obtained by analyzing the variables investigated in the initial and final stage in both groups included in the research, comparing the results obtained by the experimental group to those of the control group and the graphical representation of the evolution of this process;
- formulating conclusions and recommendations.

In order to carry out the research, we used the following **variables**:

The Independent Variable: *the implementation in the preschool educational units of the Reggio Emilia educational alternative that innovated the structure of the integrated activity and the implementation of the "Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" training program applied as scientific and methodological support to teachers in the experimental preschool units.*

The experimental variable: the attitude of teachers towards educational change and the optimization of the instructional-educational process in kindergarten, according to variables such as level of education, seniority and teaching certification level.

The results of *the analysis of the attitude towards change and the effectiveness of the structure of the integrated activity with Reggio elements and also the training program on the differences in personalism, efficiency and conservatism recorded in the experimental group and the control group both at the initial and final testing* will be presented in the following table.

Table 3.3. Results of the analysis of the attitude towards change and the efficiency of the integrated activity with Reggio elements and of the training program.

Subcategory	Control group		Experimental group	
	Initial testing	Final testing	Initial testing	Final testing
Personalism	3.5 ± 0.2	3.5 ± 0.4	2.6 ± 0.3	3.6 ± 0.3
Efficiency	3.2 ± 0.6	3.3 ± 0.2	3.2 ± 0.2	4.0 ± 0.2
Conservatism	3.4 ± 0.2	3.5 ± 0.5	4.0 ± 0.1	3.6 ± 0.3
Average evolution of the attitude towards change	2.0%		24.4%	

The conclusion to this chapter is formulated as follows: as a result of the division of teaching personnel according to their resistance to change (the structure of the activity integrated with Reggio elements and the training program being applied in the group resistant to change), the attitude towards change of the experimental group (as measured by personalism, effectiveness and conservatism) improved significantly from the pretest to the posttest stages. This aspect could be noted by comparing the initial and the final results in the experimental group and it was validated by the contrasting results observed in the control group (where personalism, effectiveness and conservatism did not change during the study). Thus, we can conclude that the training program was successful and its application can be recommended to any other teaching personnel, regardless of the degree of resistance to change.

Teachers resistant to change were assessed to determine if professional training, seniority or their teaching certification level influenced their attitude towards change. The attitude of teachers towards the reform of the educational system and the innovations introduced is influenced by their teaching qualification levels and experience in education, but is not affected by the level of professional training. We find that those that have the rank of teaching qualification level 1 can show resistance to ideas and methods that could bring novelty to the educational process, considering that it is not necessary to adapt to these changes. They prefer to keep traditional approaches and continue to teach in accordance with the methods they learned during their pedagogical training.

The teaching certification level variable is closely related to seniority in education, because a level 1 certification requires many years of teaching activity to be earned. Regarding the second variable, we find that early childhood teachers are resistant to change, they do not want the inclusion

and application of innovative elements in the educational system on the grounds that they are too "old" to be able to align with other changes and that a "lesson already known" is consistently applied.

Last but not least, through sections 4 and 5 we determined that 97% of teachers who are resistant to change carry out individual study in order to train themselves on educational changes. This is gratifying and highlights the desire for continuous training of teachers who are resistant to change, despite their initial attitude. Participation in training courses does not differ depending on professional training, but according to seniority in education and to the teaching certification level. Participation in training courses is directly proportional to seniority in education. We also noted that participants without a teaching certification level participate in a significantly reduced number of training courses compared to participants with first certification level, second certification or permanent teacher degree. Moreover, patience, creative thinking, communication skills and work organization are the characteristics that the respondents considered essential for a teacher who is open to change. These skills are developed through the training program with innovative elements in the Reggio Emilia approach used in this study and may be one of the reasons for its success.

Thus, we showed the validity of the general hypothesis according to which the development and implementation of educational changes in preschool education, such as a new educational alternative and a related training program generates effects in the attitude of teachers towards educational change and in the optimization of the instructional-educational process in kindergarten, in accordance with variables such as education level, seniority and teaching certification level.

All the results obtained by the experimental and control group for each test (initial and final) are detailed in the doctoral thesis.

The chapter **general conclusions and recommendations** reveals the main scientific results identified, based on which certain recommendations were issued.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research provided answers to the main lines of investigation performed in the experimental approach. As a result, we can formulate conclusions and recommendations related to the pursued objectives:

O1: Analysis of the specialized literature on educational changes at the level of the educational system, as well as the main changes brought by the current curriculum in Romania:

- After analyzing the specialized literature, we have found that experts in the field argue and support the importance of educational change, as a topic that has captured the attention of politicians regarding educational reforms involving pedagogical changes, as well as that of experts in the field throughout time.
- The concept of defining educational change materialized in attempts that started from the educational reform projects in Romania, the Educated Romania Project, to disclosing the key elements of this extensive process.

O2: Development and implementation of the educational alternative in the Reggio Emilia preschool education and the teacher training program in the participating kindergartens:

- As a result of the investigative approach, it has been found that the attitude towards change of the experimental group (assessed according to personalism, efficiency and conservatism) improved significantly from the initial testing to the final testing with an increase of 24,4%.
- The subjects of the experimental group within our investigation were analyzed to determine if their professional training, seniority or teaching certification level influenced their attitude towards change and it was certified that the professional training of teachers resistant to educational changes in preschool education did not influence their attitude. On the other hand, seniority in education (33%) and teaching certification level (41%) are factors that influence the attitude of teachers resistant to change.
- The comparative analysis against the level of personalism, efficiency and conservatism related to professional training, seniority and teaching certification level, shows an increase of 57%.

O3: Determining the effectiveness of the training program by comparing the initial attitude towards change (before the implementation of the program) with the final one (after the implementation of the program):

- The initial ascertainment stage (before the implementation of the program) was based on the premise that the role of teachers in carrying out the change process generated the need for continuous training, thus it was found that their reluctance to change could be eliminated.

- The "Integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" experimental training program was a success and its application can be recommended to any other preschool teachers, as this aspect can be noted by comparing the initial and final results in the experimental group and it is validated by the contrasting results noted in the control group (where personalism, effectiveness and conservatism changed over the course of the research) by 41%.

O4: Identifying teachers resistant to educational change:

- After the implementation of the integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia educational approach and the experimental Reggio training program, it was found that the resistance to change of the teachers in the experimental group decreased significantly, by 24,4%.
- The statistical results demonstrate the effectiveness of the training program by comparing the initial attitude towards change (before the implementation of the program) with the final one (after the implementation of the program).

O5: Highlighting the relationship between the attitude of teachers resistant to educational changes in preschool education and the variables: teaching certification level, seniority in education, professional training:

- After a quality analysis on the variables that influence the attitude of teachers resistant to change, it was found that the variables of seniority and teaching certification level produce attitudinal changes of teachers, but the variable of professional training, does not influence their attitude.

Analyzing the mentioned aspects, we allow ourselves to conclude that the general hypothesis of the development and implementation of educational changes in preschool education, such as a new educational alternative and a related training program, generates effects in the attitude of teachers towards educational change and in the optimization of the instructional -educational process in kindergarten, depending on variables such as the level of education, seniority and teaching certification level, confirmed by the qualitative and quantitative data presented. In relation to them, we also formulate a series of **recommendations structured on categories of interested beneficiaries:**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

a) Suggestions for institutions providing continuous training:

1. Extend the training activity (theoretical and practical) of teachers in the field of educational approaches through courses, training studies in the National Training Centers, by organizing seminars with permanent status in the preschool education units in order to professionalize the staff in the targeted issue.

2. Organize training courses with topics in educational approaches, only based on the identification of the training needs and the post-training activity in order to continuously improve the quality of the services provided, develop training programs at the request of the staff and avoid enforcement by the organizers.

b) Suggestions for teachers:

1. Responsible involvement in attitude change studies requires a careful self-assessment of one's professional activity, skills, and personal attitudes that may ask for changes, adaptations, or development.

2. Involvement in Reggio Emilia-style educational approaches can be improved by suggestions of development and suggestions for multimedia activities in various experiential domains. It is also important to disseminate the results obtained as a result of completion of a Reggio training program in order to share the knowledge and experience gained with colleagues and other teaching staff.

c) Suggestions for the educational authorities at the system level:

1. Develop and implement a national mentoring program, which can be used by learners after completing training courses in the Reggio approach, to help teachers (with the support of trainers or other categories of qualified staff) to apply the skills they have -they acquired in the group.

2. Build a database of candidates for the training programs in the Reggio Emilia approach, with the help of the results of the selection process confirming individual interest.

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ANNOTATION

Dobrin Mihaela

„The attitude of preschool educators towards educational change”

PhD Thesis in Educational Management, Chişinău, 2024

The thesis structure: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, reference list comprising **206** titles, **5** appendices, **148** main pages, **33** figures, **14** tables, **8** pictures.

The achieved results: have been published in 14 scientific papers.

Keywords: educational alternative, attitude towards change, vocational training, educational change, preschool education.

Field of study: it is focused on general pedagogy and it addresses educational change at the level of preschool education.

The purpose of the research: in order to materialize the investigative approach, the purpose of this research is *to determine the attitude of preschool teachers towards educational change designed into two experimental directions: implement in the preschool educational units the Reggio Emilia alternative, which innovated the structure of the integrated activity; implement the continuous training program named "The integrated activity in the Reggio Emilia approach" applied as scientific and methodological support for educators in the experimental preschool units.* The purpose of the research materialized in the following operational objectives, used as pedagogical benchmarks for all the stages of the research:

The aims of the research: analysis of specialized literature regarding educational changes at the level of the educational system, as well as the main changes brought by the curriculum in force in Romania; development and implementation the Reggio Emilia alternative in the preschool education and the continuous training program of the educators in the participating kindergartens; determining the effectiveness of the training program by comparing the initial attitude towards change (before the implementation of the program) with the final one (after the implementation of the program); identifying teachers resistant to educational change; highlighting the relationship between the attitude of teachers resistant to educational changes in preschool education and the variables: teaching certification level, seniority in education, professional training.

Scientific novelty and originality: stands out in the implementation of the professional training program model of the Reggio Emilia alternative pedagogy in the preschool education and the continuous training program of the educators in the participating kindergartens, as a new

educational alternative in the preschool education in Romania compared to other alternative methods studied in Denmark, France and Italy.

The solved scientific problem: changing the attitude of educators who are resistant to the innovations in the preschool education system after the empirical experiment carried out with these educators and its results.

Theoretical meaning of the research: It is based on the promotion and implementation of a new educational approach (the structure of the integrated activity) as an element of novelty specific to the preschool curriculum, and of the training program of the educators in the participating kindergartens.

The practical value of the research: the paper is important for preschool education, because it disseminates the structure of the integrated activity with innovative elements in an educational alternative and a training program for educators identified as resistant to change, compared to other alternatives like Montessori, Waldorf and Step by Step, applied at present in kindergartens. The value of the results is also quantified by the proposal to accredit the program at the national level through the ME, but also through the invitation to the students of the D.P.P.D.(Teaching Staff Training Department)-Galați to take part in the continuous training course for the Reggio alternative. At the same time, the experimental training program was proposed to be included in the educational offer of the Teaching Staff Resource Centre-Galați, for the 2024-2025 school year.

Implementing the scientific results: in order to apply the results of the research events were organized: conferences/symposiums/workshops – for instance - the national conference "The 100 languages of children - the Reggio Emilia method" which took place on May 17, 2024 at the Theater of Animation in Bucharest-Romania, during which specialists from Italy, people who live daily, the dynamic phenomenon and in permanent transformation – presented the Reggio Emilia approach (after two years of Romanian-Italian collaboration, we invited Cristian Fabbi, the president of Reggio Children, to come to Romania). He and two teacher-practitioners from Reggio nurseries and kindergartens, together with the mayor of this famous locality, who offers the whole world an example of effective local administration in the management of nurseries and kindergartens, spoke, for the first time, to the Romanian authorities, Romanian educators about this approach and supported the need for the child to become the protagonist of his own journey from the first years of life, as in Romania.

At the same time, the scientific results were valuable through applied practices (exchange of expertise of County School Boards, partnerships of related institutions in the educational field, promotion of learning results on the YouTube page of the I.S.J.-County School Boards) in the field of preschool education, within the national scientific research promoted by the Ministry of Education

(presentation of the experimental research results during the national teacher's meetings 14th-16th September 2024 in Bucharest) and last but not least, the organization of scientific events by the Teaching Staff Resource Centre-Galați.

Furthermore, the research methods and the investigative approach were applied to the group by the teaching staff from the following educational institutions: "Motanul Incalțat" Extended Program Kindergarten, "Tedi" Extended Program Kindergarten, no. 64 Extended Program Kindergarten, "Licurici" Kindergarten with extended program, "Arlechino" Kindergarten with extended program, no. 36 Kindergarten with extended program, no. 39 Kindergarten with extended program, "Mugurel" Kindergarten with extended program, "Otilia Cazimir" Kindergarten with extended program, "Prichindel" Kindergarten with extended program, no. 30 Kindergarten with extended program, Galați, "Prichindel" Kindergarten with extended program Tecuci, - Romania.

DOBRIN Mihaela

**THE ATTITUDE OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS
TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL CHANGE**

531.02. Educational Management

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