

## Emotional Education within Romanian School: Teachers and Parents Perceptions

Aurora Adina IGNAT

[iadina@usv.ro](mailto:iadina@usv.ro)

Otilia CLIPA

[otiliac@usv.ro](mailto:otiliac@usv.ro)

*This paper intends to present the outcomes of a research done in order to make a diagnosis of the level of response provided by Romanian school for the students emotional and social development needs. The investigation was carried on through a survey and it tried to figure out the answer of the following question: What are the teachers and parents' perceptions regarding the development of the social and emotional skills within school setting and within family? The perception identification will serve as a basis for the development of the programs in order to enhance the school offer for the students' emotional and social needs and also for optimize the in-service- training for teachers. The survey had 641 subjects, teachers and parents from six counties from Romania. The results showed differences of perceptions between teachers and parents regarding the contribution of the school and the family to the children social-emotional development and also could be a background for new development initiatives both for students and for the teachers.*

Lately, beginning with the end of the century, it is obvious a more and more intense preoccupation for the successful academic learning and for the active citizen integration. The researches show that the emotional wellbeing is more predictive than the academic tests results for the school achievement and for the later professional and personal life satisfaction (Goleman, 1995, apud Cohen, 1999). Jonathan Cohen (1999) presents the social-emotional learning as a new concept which denominates a tradition „started 3000 years ago”, because he found that the teachers from all times had understood that they could not separate the emotional life and the academic achievement regardless the field. Last years, the social-emotional learning requires to be recognized as a learning form. The outcome of the social-emotional learning is the development of the emotional and social competences which take the form of „the self-reflective capacities and the ability to recognize what others are thinking and feeling provide the foundation for children to understand, manage, and express the emotional and social aspects of life”(Cohen, 1999, p.11). The author agrees that social and emotional competences define the human capacity to solve social and emotional problems and/or to make something useful that is valued in one or more cultures. „These competencies allow us to modulate emotions, to solve social problems creatively, to be effective leaders or collaborators, to be assertive and responsible, or to be able to ask evocative emotional and/or social questions that lead to new learning.”(J. Cohen, 1999)

In the simplest presentation the social-emotional learning is the capacity to recognize and control emotions, to solve problems efficiently, and to establish positive relationships with others - so that the objective of the social-emotional learning represents a mixture of behaviors, cognitions and emotions. The CASEL (Centre for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning) (apud Zins&Elias, 2006) considers this type of learning as a process of acquisition and efficient applying of the knowledge, attitudes and abilities useful for recognizing and controlling the emotions; useful for developing the caring and compassion for others; for responsible decision making; for building positive relationships; for coping the difficult, challenging situation. From CASEL point of view the key components of the social-emotional learning are the five competencies that are developed, trained, and enhanced through SEL programs: self awareness (identification and recognizing of personal emotions, recognizing personal strengths and others, self-efficacy, self-confidence); social awareness (empathy, respect for others); responsible decisions making(evaluation and reflection, personal and ethical responsibility); self-management

(impulse control, stress management, establishing goals, motivation, perseverance); relation abilities (cooperation, asking and giving help, communication)

It is well known now in the world that the social and emotional competences bring out more productivity and efficiency in personal and professional life, it contributes to a better and full of sense life. There are numberless voices which sustain these ideas (Goleman, 2001, 2008, Elias, M. J, Tobias, Friedlander 2002, 2003, Elias and Weissberg, 2000, Graczyk, Weissberg, Payton, Elias, Greenberg and Zins, 2003, Bisquerra, 2000, 2002, CASEL, Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1994); the world has lots of educational programs focused on the social-emotional development needs.

UNESCO in cooperation with The International Bureau for Education and International Academy of Education sustain the programs of social and emotional learning, considering it as basis for getting success in school and life, regardless of geographic area or the social and cultural characteristics. This kind of program enhances the academic learning results and helps the youngsters to get the sense of responsibility and caring for the personal and the other's wellbeing. Nowadays it is obvious a rejecting attitude towards the school from the students point of view, and this pessimistic orientation toward the schooling could be over passed through an educational offer focused on the emotional dimension, emotional sensitivity of the child. This kind of offer could enable the child to face self-confidently the challenges from school life. This offer could be the emotional education, which could be done implicitly, through a warm and supportive relationship within the classroom, or explicitly, through an educational program for social and emotional development.

The social and emotional competence could be described by: the oneself emotions identification capacity, personal emotional management, personal responsibility, acknowledge the personal strengths, empathy, tolerance with diversity, self respect and respect for others, responsible decision making, problem solving ability, assertive communication ability, positive interrelation capacity.

The emotional education encompasses the teaching and learning processes of the abilities and values which stands for the developing the emotional competences (it is about not only the learning within the classroom, but also the more secure, participative and responsive environment, including the parents' education). The emotional education sustains the professional development need of the teachers in order to provide a healthy environment for children social and emotional development and to facilitate the social-emotional learning. The Emotional Education (EE) is an educative, continuous and permanent process, focused on the enhancing the emotional competences as essential elements for holistic development of the person in order to enable him for the life.

In European literature it appears as being a non-specific prevention form with positive effects for violence, drug abuse, stress or depressive disorders prevention (Bisquerra, 2005). The final goal of the EE is personal and social wellbeing growth. The emotional education give a response to a social need which is not enough satisfied through the formal education and intends to enhance the human development. This education helps to overtake the emotional barriers (that would interfere with inner life and could cause academic failure); it creates a secure environment (that would stimulate the students to choose the school); it stimulates the active participation of every child within the school activities.

The Romanian framework for professional development of teachers through in-service training proposes as one of the curricula dimensions the Rationale Emotive Education, so we could say that there is an educational setting regarding this issue of pointing out the emotional needs of the learners. But this course is optional and it is not widely available. On the other hand

the Romanian National Curriculum has a curricular area *Counseling and Guidance* and this provides a framework for students' emotional development. This dimension is comprised into the general objectives as the development of the self-knowing capacity and the positive attitude towards themselves and the development of the capacity of managing good relationships within different contexts. This is the only explicit educational offer that addresses the emotional and social needs of the students. And, we dare to say, that is not enough!

Our investigation was done through the survey and tried to figure out some answers for the following *questions*: In what extent the emotional and social needs of the students are addressed in our school settings and in family? What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the emotional and social skills development in school and family?

The hypothesis tested were that *there are differences between teachers and parents regarding their perception about the extent of social/emotional skills development in school and family*; and also that *there is a difference between teachers' perceptions regarding the extent of social-emotional skills development in school and family in terms of their teaching experience, the area of specialization*.

The sample comprised 641 subjects, 556 out of them were teachers and 85 were parents. The teachers are from five different regions of Romania and the parents are from the same region. In terms of gender 469 teachers were females and 78 were male; in terms of specialization 265 were humanistic teachers, 103 were sciences teachers, 127 were primary teachers and 52 were school counselors. The parents sample comprises 17 men and 68 women.

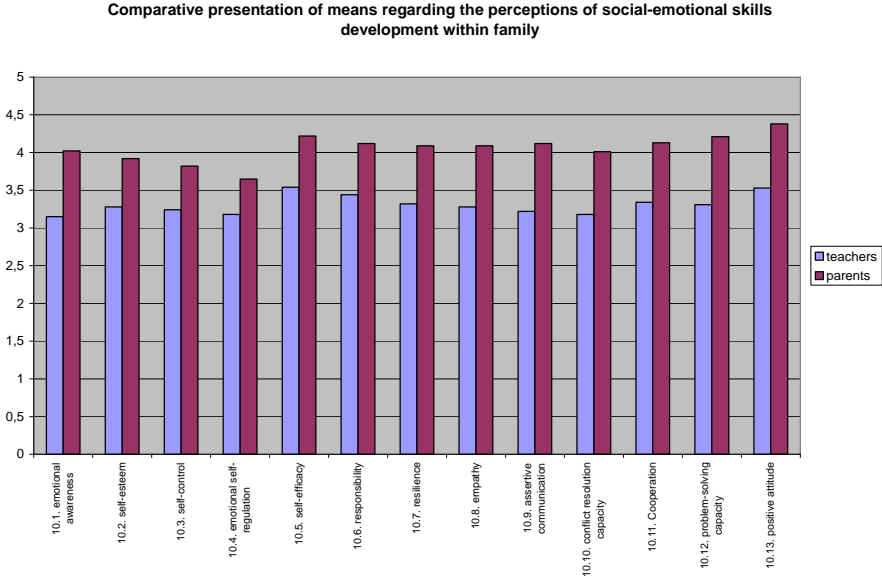
The variables of the study were: the dependent variables are the social-emotional skills indicated by the following: *emotional conscience, self-esteem, self-control, emotional self-regulation, self-efficacy, responsibility, resilience, empathy, assertive communication, conflict-resolution capacity, cooperation, problem-solving capacity, positive attitude toward life*; the teachers' perception regarding the social-emotional skills development in school/family; parents' perceptions regarding the social-emotional skills development in school/family;

The independent variables are: *the group* (teachers and parents); *the gender* (male, female); *specialization* (humanistic, sciences, counseling, primary education); *the teaching experience* (beginner, definitive, II level, I level).

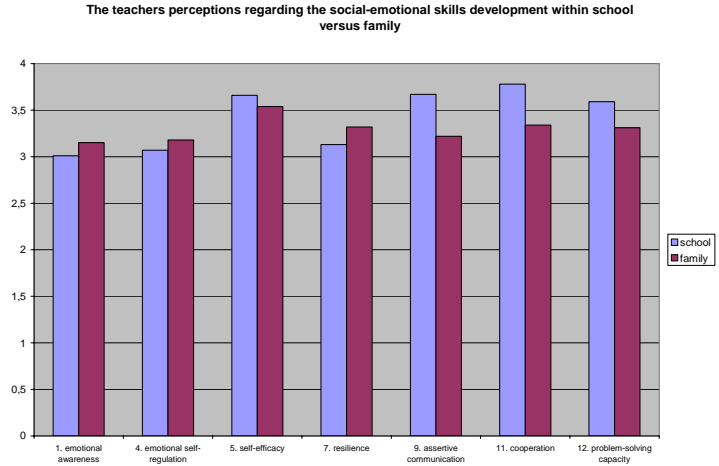
The questionnaire is developed through a Likert scale in five dimensions and the respondents should have chosen the extent in which they consider one ability is developed through school and family (scale from 1- *very low* to 5 - *very much*). The analysis and the data interpretation were done by SPSS 15.0 for Windows.

In order to verify the hypothesis about the differences between teachers and parents regarding their perception of social-emotional skills development within school and family we used Independent-Samples T test with independent variable *group* (teachers versus parents) and as dependent variables *the indicators of the social and emotional skills* which were evaluated first within school and second within family. The results based on the statistical analysis show no significance between the two samples regarding their perception about social-emotional development within school, but, regarding the perception about social-emotional development within family we obtained some statistically significant differences between teachers and parents ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) such as: 1. *emotional awareness* [ $t(636) = 8.437, p < 0.05$ ], 2. *self-esteem* [ $t(636) = 6.836, p < 0.05$ ], 3. *self-control* [ $t(636) = 5.010, p < 0.05$ ], 4. *emotional self-regulation* [ $t(636) = 4.039, p < 0.05$ ], 5. *self-efficacy* [ $t(636) = 7.039, p < 0.05$ ], 6. *responsibility* [ $t(636) = 5.903, p < 0.05$ ], 7. *resilience* [ $t(636) = 3.745, p < 0.05$ ], 8. *empathy* [ $t(636) = 7.869, p < 0.05$ ], 9. *assertive*

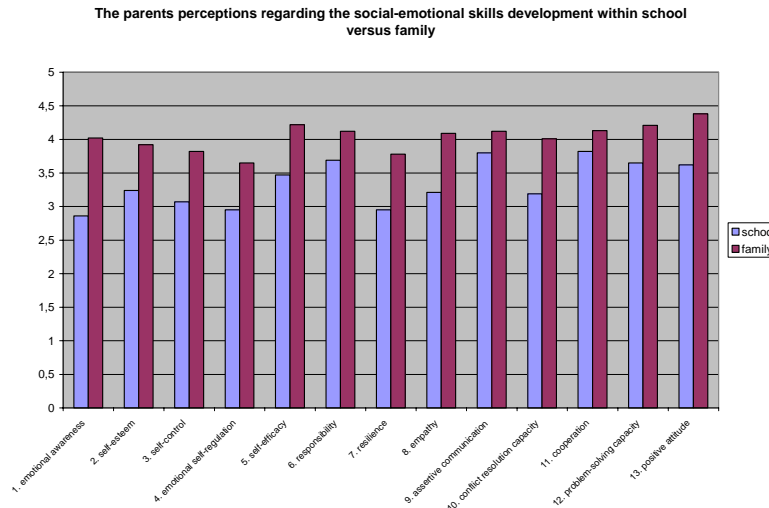
communication [t (636) = 8.694, p < 0.05], 10. conflict-resolution capacity [t (636) = 8.003, p < 0.05], 11. cooperation [t (636) = 7.226, p < 0.05], 12. problem-solving capacity [t (636) = 9.500, p < 0.05] and 13. positive attitude [t (636) = 8.960, p < 0.05] (graphic 1). So, the parents appreciate more positive the development of these skills within family rather than the teachers do.



We were interested in finding out if both teachers and parents appreciate differently the socio-emotional skills development within school versus family. In order to do that, we applied Paired-Samples T Test, comparing for each group (teachers and parents) their perception regarding the skills development within school and within family. Based on the statistical analysis, the results show for the teachers group some significant differences of perceptions regarding the social-emotional skills development in school versus family (p < 0.05). The teachers consider that the *emotional awareness*, *emotional self-regulation* and *resilience* are developed more within family rather than within school, whereas the abilities such as *self-efficacy*, *assertive communication*, *cooperation* and *problem-solving capacity* are developed in a greater extent within school rather within family.(graphic 2)



For the parents group the results indicate that all the skills considered are developed in a greater extent within family than within the school (graphic 3):



We were interested in getting information about the perceptions differences in terms of other variable such as teaching experience or specialization. In order to verify this hypothesis we applied One- Way ANOVA method.

Regarding the perceptions of skills development within school in terms of teaching experience we obtained some significant results ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) shown in the Table 1:

**Table 1. The One- Way ANOVA results regarding the effect of the teaching experience variable on the perceptions of social-emotional skills development within school.**

Variable	F	p
9.1. emotional awareness	F (3, 544) = 3.533	p = 0.015
9.3. self-control	F (3, 544) = 4.671	p = 0.003
9.4. emotional self-regulation	F (3, 544) = 6.108	p = 0.000
9.7. resilience	F (3, 544) = 3.530	p = 0.015
9.11. cooperation	F (3, 544) = 3.686	p = 0.012
9.12. problem-solving capacity	F (3, 544) = 2.956	p = 0.032

For a more sensitive analyze we applied Bonferroni t test to find out the differences between specific groups. The results indicate that the more experienced are the teachers the more skeptical they are regarding the social-emotional skills development. The beginners consider that school addresses to the emotional needs of the students while the teachers more experienced appreciate less positive the school offer for the students' social and emotional development.

In terms of specializations the results show that there are significant perceptions differences between humanistic, sciences, primary teachers on the one hand, and the counselors on the other hand. So, the counselors less appreciate the development of some skills within school (*self-esteem, self-efficacy, assertive communication, cooperation, positive attitude*) and within family (*emotional awareness, positive attitude*) comparing with other teachers categories. We could figure out that it would be possible that the teachers hardly involve in promoting educational framework for sustaining the social and emotional development. The counselors, more aware about the students' developmental needs see the school as an institution less involved in emotional development of the children.

After studying the results we could draw some conclusions and based on that we could infer some implication for teachers and parents' education. We found out that there are significant perceptions differences between teachers and parents and also between different categories of

teachers. We found out that the family, comparing with the school, is seen as having the most important role in providing emotional education. We consider as very necessary to strengthen the school mission as an institution capable to assure the social-emotional development. The counselors and the experienced teachers could be useful agents in providing the emotional education opportunities. The parents do not trust school as an institution responsible for their children emotional and social development. Hence the school needs developing new educational approach to satisfy both the children developmental needs and the parents' expectations. This educational approach could be the emotional education as an explicit framework which sustains the child personal development as a whole.

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