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THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION IN EARLY EDUCATION ON CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES

Impactul observării la clasă în educația timpurie asupra rezultatelor copiilor

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THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION IN EARLY EDUCATION ON CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES

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Abstract

Educational practices and all that happens in the classroom are essential to children's learning progress and their development. Despite the importance of teachers' educational practices, in the low- or middle-income countries the practices are hardly ever measured, partly because of a lack of access to classroom observation tools and the high costs of their administration. As a result, the present research undertook the aim to analyze the improvement of educational practices on the dimensions that are comprised in the observation tool we used: classroom climate, instruction and social and emotional skills by means of classroom observation and providing feedback using the Teach observation tool. Thus, we assume that early childhood education teachers who participate in observation and feedback processes based on the Teach observation tool develop educational practices more adapted to the children's social and emotional and cognitive needs.

The study consisted of conducting a quasi-experiment with three repeated applications of the Teach observation tool on a sample of 19 kindergarten teaching staff. The 19 kindergarten teachers were from the same kindergarten in Braşov city, Kindergarten no.11, "House of joy". The study was carried out during the 2020-2021 school year. Following the implementation of the Teach observation tool, we can conclude that its role is to facilitate the measurement of quality in early childhood education. Teaching

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can be a starting point for understanding, measuring and discussing the quality of teaching practices in early childhood education, leading to improved support for teachers and ultimately better learning experiences and higher outcomes for preschoolers. Also, in the future, the Teach observation tool can provide policy makers and stakeholders with the information they need to design and implement policies and programs in early childhood education.

Keywords: classroom culture, classroom observation, development of children at early ages, quality of educational practices, social and emotional skills.

Rezumat

Calitatea practicilor educaționale ale profesorilor și tot ceea ce se întâmplă într-o clasă sunt esențiale pentru progresul în învățarea și dezvoltarea copiilor. În ciuda importanței practicilor educaționale pentru rezultatele învățării, în țările cu venituri mici sau medii aproape niciodată practicile nu sunt măsurate, pe de o parte din cauza lipsei accesului la instrumente de observare în clasă, dar și a costurilor ridicate de administrare a celor existente. În consecință, cercetarea prezintă își propune să analizeze îmbunătățirea practicilor educaționale pe următoarele dimensiuni care sunt analizate în instrumentul de observare folosit: climatul clasei, instruirea și abilitățile socio-emoționale prin observarea în clasă și furnizarea de feedback folosind instrumentul de observare Teach. Astfel, presupunem că profesorii de educație timpurie care participă la procesele de observare și feedback bazate pe instrumentul Teach dezvoltă practici educaționale mai adaptate nevoilor socio-emoționale și cognitive ale copiilor.

Studiul a constatat în efectuarea unui cvasi-experiment cu trei măsurători repetate pe un eșantion de 19 cadre didactice din învățământul preșcolar, prin metoda de observare folosind instrumentul de observare Teach. Cele 19 cadre didactice au fost de la aceeași unitate de învățământ, de la Grădinița nr. 11 „Căsuța bucuriei”, Brașov. Studiul s-a derulat în anul școlar 2020-2021. În urma implementării instrumentului Teach, se poate concluziona că rolul acestuia este de a facilita măsurarea calității în educația timpurie. Predarea poate fi un punct de plecare pentru înțelegerea, măsurarea și discutarea calității practicilor de predare în educația timpurie, ceea ce duce la un sprijin îmbunătățit pentru profesori și, în cele din urmă, la experiențe de învățare și la rezultate mai bune pentru preșcolari. Și, de asemenea, în viitor, instrumentul de observare Teach poate oferi factorilor de decizie și părților interesate informațiile de care au nevoie pentru a concepe și implementa politici și programe în educația timpurie.

Cuvinte-cheie: calitatea practicilor educaționale, climatul clasei, dezvoltarea abilităților socio-emoționale, dezvoltarea copiilor la vârste timpurii, observarea la clasă.

1. Context

The need to measure the quality of educational practices appeared in the context of the learning crisis, which is essentially a teaching crisis, aggravated by the pandemic. What happens in a classroom is essential to children's learning. Teachers are the most important factor influencing learning. Teachers' instructional practices make a major contribution to children's outcomes.

The first step in providing teachers with high-quality professional development opportunities is to track current practices so that professional development can be appropriately tailored to their needs. In most low- or middle-income countries the education systems do not regularly monitor educational practices or the quality of teacher-children interactions. The Teach classroom observation tool can provide a perspective upon the educational practices, and the application of the tool supports the development of differentiated training programs according to the teachers' training needs, the needs of each community and each type of educational unit.

The Teach observation instrument can also be used as a diagnostic tool, supporting the Ministry of Education to monitor the effectiveness of policies that improve teaching practices and to cover the gap between policies and reality in the classroom (Lee et al., 2020).

2. Educational practices in early child development

According to Ionescu et al. (2017), the pedagogical view on the quality of educational practices offered by the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), reflects ISSA's core beliefs about quality pedagogy and identifies ways to aspire to excellence: "interactions between adults and children, as well as peer interactions, are crucial to supporting and influencing children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (...). The teacher's role is to provide opportunities for children to engage in interactions, to participate in processes of co-construction of knowledge based on understanding, and to become self-confident and contributing and caring members of society" (p. 137).

The foundation of the teacher's educational philosophy is the idea that early learning is reliable and lasting. Practitioners approach a curriculum based on the

entirety of learning scenarios provided by the teacher or provided by life, whether they are recognized or not as learning opportunities, and the particular learning experiences that emerge from the child's life during daily existence.

The construction of learning experiences is based on the anticipation of specific goals, and they are expressed through the children's gained skills. The experiences that each child has in educational settings serve as a representation of the learning experience. This shows the outcome is based on each child's character qualities, talents, and skills that they have developed. The components outlined for the intended purposes are learning experiences, which are concretely implemented at the level of various performance descriptors for each kid.

The difference between the impact of a poor teacher and an excellent one on children's test scores at the end of compulsory education has been estimated to be equivalent to more than two years of schooling (Bau & Jishnu, 2020; Buhl-Wiggers et al., 2017).

3. Research methodology

In order to identify certain trends in teaching practices, as well as the needs to improve the tools used in the classroom, we carried out a pilot analysis upon these elements. Classroom observation was chosen to holistically provide a perspective upon the quality of educational practices and the realities in the classrooms. The research from the pilot analysis was carried out in Kindergarten no. 11 "House of joy" in Braşov city. The approach and results are presented in this article.

3.1. Research problem, objectives, hypothesis and variables

The theme of the research is the observation and improvement of educational practices during the preschool period with the aim of ensuring the general progress of children. The research problem is formulated in the form of a question: What are the benefits of using the Teach observation tool and the feedback session offered on teachers' educational practices?

The main objective of the study is identifying strategies to improve teachers' educational practices as a result of observation with the Teach tool.

The two hypotheses of the research are the following:

H1 - Benefiting from observation and feedback based on the Teach observation tool improves instructional practices in early childhood teachers.

H2 - Due to the intervention based on the Teach observation tool, preschool teachers will improve their psycho-pedagogical practices of engaging students in the classroom, compared to the pre-intervention moment.

The independent variable of the research was the intervention carried out on the practices of the teaching staff, consisting of the process of observation and feedback with the help of the Teach observation tool. The dependent variable referred to the educational practices of teachers working with preschoolers.

3.2. Research sample

The sample of the study consists of 19 people, representing the kindergarten teachers from Kindergarten no. 11 “House of joy”, in which the research took place, of which 9 are part of the experimental group and received the feedback process, and 10 from the control group. We chose to include qualified teachers in the experimental group, because the work experience and skills acquired up to this point allowed them to integrate into the research process without complicating the already existing teaching-learning process within the group.

All the teachers included in the study are females. The lack of male participants may be a limitation of the research in terms of the generalization of the results regardless of gender, but in Romania there are extremely few male teaching staff in the preschool education system, so the lack of men representatives is a normality. The kindergarten where the research took place operates in the urban environment, so all the participants carry out their activity in the urban environment.

3.3. Research tool

The pilot research was carried out to adapt the instrument to the Romanian educational context and obtain a clear picture of the current state of teaching practices and the quality of teaching in classrooms. The Teach observation tool brings us closer to ensure that every child has a qualified, supported and motivated teacher, an essential prerequisite for achieving progress in children’s learning and development.

The tool includes 28 main items that are divided into three areas of teaching practices: classroom climate determined by providing a conducive learning environment, positive behavioral expectations; instruction with the components of facilitating learning, checking for understanding, feedback and critical thinking; and social and emotional skills comprising the sub-dimension of autonomy, perseverance, and social and collaborative skills. The evaluation scales used were: 5-step Likert type (from 1 weak to 5 high), and Cronbach's Alpha calculation to identify the instrument's internal consistency index.

In the Teach observation tool, Lee et al. (2020) define "the quality of methods and habits used by the teachers in their daily practices by three domains of educational practices that have 9 corresponding elements indicating 28 behaviors. Each one of them can be marked as low, medium or high, depending on the quality of teacher's practices that are observed. These marks are converted into a five-point scale that check practices as they are observed in two sessions of 15 minutes." (p. 12).

The first domain within the Teach tool that is observed in the classroom is, according to Lee et al. (2020), classroom climate: "the teacher offers a favorable culture to learn. The purpose of this area is not if the teacher is able to correct children's negative behaviors, but rather on how the teacher creates: an encouraging learning environment by treating all children with respect, consistently using positive language, responsiveness to the needs of children and the rejection of stereotypes, as well as the lack of manifestation in the classroom of prejudices related to gender, disabilities, ethnicity, cultural belonging, socio-economic status" (p. 12).

Teachers must clearly explain positive behavioral standards, be able to spot them in children's conduct, and be able to reprimand children when their actions are unsuitable. The field of instruction involves the steps the instructor takes to facilitate learning. It exemplifies the skill of creating a safe setting and giving children tasks and questions that might help them become aware of the response, reflect, and think critically. According to Lee et al. (2020), "the teacher educates in a manner that increase children's understanding and strengthen critical thinking and analysis. The main focus of these behaviors is not on the content or on the instructional methods, but rather on the proportion in which the teacher: facilitates the content by clearly articulating the objectives that are suitable with the learning activity, explicitly explaining the content, and connecting the educational activity

to other content or to children's daily lives and by leading the learning activity through adoption or think-alouds; does not only move from one content to another, but verifying the understanding by questioning or other ways to decide children's level of comprehension, by monitoring children's work during both group and independent activities, and by adapting the teaching to all children's level; teachers are giving feedback that contains specific comments or questions to help children to clarify misunderstandings or to identify successes; and offer activities that requires critical thinking by asking open questions and involve children in situations that require them to analyze the content" (p. 12).

Children's success and wellbeing are directly associated with their social and emotional development, which also acts as a safeguard against dealing with behavioral issues. A fresh perspective on social and emotional skill development is provided by Lee et al. (2020). Teachers can help students develop the social and emotional skills they need to succeed both within and outside of the classroom. "To expand children's social and emotional skills, the teacher builds autonomy by offering children circumstances to make their own choices and assume meaningful roles during the activities. The children demonstrate their autonomy by volunteering during the activity. The teacher encourages perseverance by appreciating children's efforts rather than recognizing their outcome or natural skills and by showing a positive attitude regarding children's challenges, explaining failures and frustrations as a natural part of the learning course and motivating them to establish long-term goals; encourages social and collaborative skills by promoting interactions and developing interpersonal skills (perspective-taking, empathy, managing emotions and social problem-solving). Children demonstrate social and collaborative skills, cooperating and interacting" (p. 12).

To assign a score as objective as possible, the manual of the Teach tool from Lee et al. (2020), describes each behavior in three quality ranges: "low, medium and high. They present detailed descriptions and include examples to help observers decide which quality range best applies to each element. At the end of the first observation segment, the observer assigns a rating of low, medium or high to each behavior. It is very important that observers follow the observer manual as closely as possible, whether they agree with it or not" (p. 17).

The Teach observation tool manual (Lee et al., 2020), describes the scoring process. "They should be described according to the overall quality of every

Table no. 1. Example of granting quality intervals and scoring

B. TRAINING	<i>Scoring</i>					<i>Final scores</i>
3. FACILITATING LEARNING	1	2	3	4	5	3
The teacher explicitly formulates the objectives of the lesson and makes the connection between the classroom activities and the objectives	L		M	H		M
The teacher explains the content and/or learning activities clearly	L		M	H		M
The teacher makes connections during the lesson with other previously acquired knowledge or with everyday life happy children's day	L		M	H		H
The teacher exemplifies or demonstrates through think-alouds or uses multiple forms of representation	L		M	H		L

Source: Lee et al. (2020)

element. Scores range from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 the highest. While the final score is determined based on the ratings given on the behaviors, observers should always return to the manual and re-read the item description and corresponding behaviours to determine if the score fits the overall item description. For example, observers may score an item as a 4 even if it contains the behavior qualifiers High, Medium and Low if what was observed exceeds the general description of the Medium level but does not constitute a description of the level. The final score does not have to be a mathematical calculation, but should reflect the evidence from the entire segment” (p. 18).

3.4. Investigation Procedure

To ensure the equivalence of the groups, the results obtained with the Teach observation tool were compared using specific statistical techniques: the nonparametric technique of the Mann-Whitney test, a technique used because of the lack of normality of distributions and because of the small sample size; the results showed equivalent values between experimental and control group at pre-intervention level. In order to verify the research hypothesis, we collected quantitative data through the observation sheet, we used the statistical mathematical tool SPSS version 23 program. Preliminary analysis of the data by descriptive indicators and Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality

test revealed that the distribution obtained on the research group was not normally distributed. In this regard, non-parametric methods were used in the data analysis using the SPSS program.

Application of the Teach observation tool and inclusion in the experimental process was achieved after providing the informed consent form. Compliance with ethical norms, rights and confidentiality of the participant were ensured. Teachers could withdraw at any time, without any consequences, the withdrawal also marking the end of data collection. No participant withdrew during the study. In the participation agreement, the stages of the research were explained and stated, what the involvement means and what is the purpose of the research and data collection.

The initial moment (T1) took place at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, when all teachers in the research group were observed with the Teach tool. This testing serves to observe the educational practices of the teaching staff at the time of the beginning of the research.

The teaching staff working in the experimental classes benefited from the intervention based on the feedback sheet of the Teach observation tool. These teachers received personalized feedback and explanations on how to code practice for each item in the instrument.

Feedback was given by certified Teach observers. Teach certified observers are those teachers who have completed the training program, developed in the online format by a team of experts. The experts from Romania were previously trained by the authors of the tool. After the observation of the activity segments, the observed teaching staff had an open discussion with the observers with the aim of guiding and jointly identifying some solutions to improve the practices that needed improvement.

During these meetings, the teachers had the opportunity to learn about the Teach tool, about the observed behaviors and recorded results, but also to express their point of view and how they felt during the activity and implicitly during the observation. Elements related to the behavior of both teachers and preschoolers were discussed.

The second moment (T2) took place after the second application of the tool at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, when all teachers were observed and their classroom practices recorded, in several learning activities from different activity categories. These activities were analyzed and coded according to the Teach observation tool by experts.

Six months after the end of the research, the T3 moment was the follow-up of the experimental group of teachers, in order to verify the maintenance of the enhanced teaching practices as an outcome of the intervention. This follow-up was completed during the 2021-2022 school year.

4. Research results

Results of the Teach study at the first observation point (T1)

The time-task associations at T1 point to the fact that most teachers provide activities and engage the children in the task through various strategies: more than half of them are involved at a high level. Thus we could notice that, even before building the intervention, most teachers have the necessary skills to increase and support the children's interest. This fact is rather due to the specifics of the group of teachers who are employed at the kindergarten. Through the first domain of the Teach observation tool the climate of the classroom is being observed. The conducive environment for learning is supported by more than half of the teaching staff by the display of respect, positive language, prompt responses, by addressing the needs of the children and by not exposing prejudices. We need to emphasize that within the observed activities no attempt was made to eliminate prejudices or stereotypes. Also, more than half scored high on the dimensions that observe how the teacher promotes positive behaviors: through behavioral expectations, recognizing and redirecting behaviors.

The training domain includes four items that were included in the representation of the frequency scores. Thus, most didactic frameworks offered during T1 are mechanisms to facilitate learning (through objectives, connections) towards a high level; only regarding the role-playing game there is no homogeneity of values. For the comprehension check, most answers are towards the high value of the scale. Additionally, most of them provide

cues to clarify tasks, but not suggestive comments for preschoolers to achieve. For the last element, critical thinking, no stability or consistency of scores is shown, with close percentages for all three quality ranges in the form (low, medium, high).

The fourth dimension observed concerns socio-emotional skills during T1. If in the other dimensions we observed a homogeneity of the distribution of the percentages (elements that are more related to skills and learned skills and of a typical professional nature), for autonomy these are distributed relatively similarly on all the levels, perseverance is more towards average, and collaborative social skills towards predominantly low level.

Results of the Teach study at the second observation point (T2)

Compared to T1, we can observe in T2 similar frequencies in the involvement and support of preschoolers in the task and a time-task correlation indicating that more than three-quarters of preschoolers are included and supported in activities during observation.

Also, the classroom climate dimension presents a score rather in the high area of the scale (similar results to the T1 time of the pre-intervention). This is only a summary evaluation of the scores, the significance of the values will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Similar to the previous dimension, the results from times T2 and T1 are predominantly oriented towards the medium or high values of the scale for the field that observes the teaching ability of the teaching staff. Only with regard to item 5.2 (“Provides specific comments or suggestions that help identify children’s successes”) and 6.3 (“Children ask open-ended questions and solve reflection tasks”) the scores are more frequently found in the medium and low area.

Finally, we have the dimension of the socio-emotional skills of the responding teachers. At T2 post-intervention we once again observe a lack of consistency of scores on a single response level. Autonomy indicates frequencies towards the low and medium level; the elements perseverance and social and collaborative skills have similar trends as well. So, although there are quality practices in terms of training, providing pedagogical guidance, setting the framework and climate conducive to learning, clear mechanisms for checking the level of

knowledge, providing feedback and adapting the content that is taught, social skills are not as homogeneously represented. The previous skills are fundamental skills, set and practiced throughout the career and professionalization, but socio-emotional skills (promoting collaboration, recognition of efforts, positive attitude in the face of problems, opportunity to assume responsibility and roles) require a series of work strategies atypical to the programs of the national learning systems, adaptation to the specifics of the preschool group and work with rather internal/personal components.

Results of the Teach study at the third observation point (T3) – follow up T3 moment represents the follow-up process: the observation of educational practices after the conducted interview, at a longer period of time to check if the improved practices were internalized and continued to be used in the teaching-learning process of preschoolers. We observe globally that the time-task correlation remains similar (involvement of a large number of preschoolers in activities and maintaining interest). The frequencies also underline that we have similar results as during T2 for all areas of the Teach observation instrument, where most scores are medium and high. Scores are more frequent for the first quality interval (the low one) only in the following behaviors: lack of collaboration between children, lack of promotion of intra/interpersonal skills, collaboration between children is not promoted, efforts are not recognized, children do not ask open-ended questions and no task-specific suggestions are provided.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

To evaluate the hypotheses, we identified the differences between the two research groups, but also the differences at the level of the experimental group following the feedback intervention for teachers.

Assessment of group differences, T1. The evaluation of the differences between the control group and the experimental group at the T1 time level involves a non-parametric technique of the Mann-Whitney test, the previously analyzed indicators underlining a lack of normality for most of the dimensions studied, but especially because the research sample consists of 19 participants.

Table no. 2. *Differences between the two groups at the level of data collection in T1*

	Control group (10)	Experimental group (9)		
	<i>M</i> rank	<i>M</i> rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Classroom climate	10.75	9.17	-.61	.53
Training	10.08	9.11	-.65	.51
Social abilities	8.10	12.11	-1.59	.11
The quality of teaching practices	10.30	9.67	-.24	.84
Involvement of children in the task – at 4 min.	8.50	8.50	.00	1.00
Involvement of children in the task – at 9 min.	9.70	6.50	-1.73	.22
Involvement of children in the task – at 14 min.	10.40	5.33	-2.27	.05

Note: N = 19

Following the evaluation of the differences during the intervention (T1) between the groups, we notice that there are no significant differences in the variables. Thus, we can state that the groups are relatively equivalent. In this way, the differences that emerge are influenced by the independent variable determined by the feedback process based on the Teach observation tool and no other characteristics of the group; their equivalence being essential to the progress of the study.

Assessment of group differences, T2 (post intervention). In Table no. 3, the differences between the control and the experimental group are expressed in terms of the children's involvement in the task and the quality of teaching practices. Thus, there are no significant differences in the degree of children's involvement in the task for the snapshots evaluated at 4 minutes, at 9 and 14 minutes, respectively. Regarding the quality of teaching practices, the differences obtained both at the level of the global score, on the three areas, but also on their behaviors are stated in the following table.

Table no. 3. Differences between the two groups at the level of data collection in T2

	Control group (10)	Experimental group (9)			
	<i>M</i> rank	<i>M</i> rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>
Classroom climate	5.65	14.83	-3.64	<.001	.84
Environment Conducive to learning	6.10	14.53	-3.30	.001	.76
Positive behavioral expectations	5.95	14.50	-3.58	<.001	.82
Training	6.00	14.44	-3.27	<.001	.75
Facilitating learning	6.10	14.33	-3.32	.001	.76
Checking for understanding	8.55	11.61	-1.22	.22	.28
The feedback	6.65	13.72	-2.94	.003	.67
Critical thinking	5.80	14.67	-3.48	<.001	.80
Social-emotional skills	5.50	15.00	-3.69	<.001	.85
Autonomy	5.65	14.83	-3.62	<.001	.83
Perseverance	5.50	15.00	-3.80	<.001	.87
Social and collaborative skills	5.50	15.00	-3.89	<.001	.89
The quality of teaching practices	5.50	15.00	-3.67	<.001	.84
Involvement of children in the task – at 4 min.	8.65	11.50	-1.73	.08	.40
Involvement of children in the task – at 9 min.	9.10	11.00	-1.38	.16	.32
Involvement of children in the task – at 14 min.	9.60	10.44	-.51	.60	.12

Note: $N = 19$

The differences are clearly significant, with a threshold of $p < .001$, indicating that the hypothesis 1 is supported at this level. The effect size (calculated according to the formula $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$) r ranges between .75 and .89, indicating a clear and strong magnitude of differences. It should be noted that the only variable at which no differences were identified is determined by the verification of understanding: both the experimental and the control groups show behaviors of monitoring children, offer suggestions or other verification strategies, this behavior being fundamental to the process of early childhood education training; the kindergarten teachers possessed the necessary skills and expressed the behavior of checking through questions or suggestions, monitoring or adapting the content.

Teachers who took part in observation and feedback processes that were based on the Teach observation tool developed educational teaching practices more adapted to both the classroom climate ($Z = -3.64$, $p < .001$, $r = .84$), instructional process ($Z = -3.27$, $p < .001$, $r = .75$) and socio-emotional skills ($Z = -3.69$, $p < .001$, $r = .84$), other teachers having significantly lower results.

Children feel emotionally protected, supported, and good in a learning environment because the teacher treats everyone with respect ($Z = -3.30$, $p < .001$ and $Z = -3.58$, $p < .001$). The teacher also facilitates the activity to ensure good understanding, explicitly formulating the objectives of the activity, providing clear explanations of the concepts and making the connection between the activity and other knowledge or experiences of the children.

Variables that contribute to the development of socio-emotional skills refer to providing the opportunity to choose and assume important roles within the group (collaborative skills $Z = -3.89$, $p < .001$) and development of personal initiative. Children capitalize on these occasions by volunteering to assuming different roles and revealing their ideas (autonomy $Z = -3.62$, $p < .001$ and perseverance $Z = -3.80$, $p < .001$) and opinions through the learning activity.

H2 - Evaluation of intragroup differences, T1 vs T2. To further study whether the intervention was significant at the level of the experimental group, we analyzed the differences between the post-intervention T2 moment and the pre-intervention T1 moment using the Wilcoxon paired-samples test (nonparametric), and the effect size by using the same formula $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$.

Table no. 4. Differences between pre- and post-intervention at the level of the experimental group

	The Experimental batch				
	T1	T2			
	<i>M</i> rank	<i>M</i> rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>
Classroom climate	3.53	4.75	-2.68	.007	.89
Environment Conducive to learning	3.55	4.50	-2.80	.005	.93
Positive behavioral expectations	3.51	5.00	-2.69	.007	.90
Training	3.04	4.26	-2.66	.008	.89
Facilitating learning	4.00	4.77	-2.38	.01	.79
Checking for understanding	3.66	4.33	-2.03	.04	.68
The feedback	2.33	4.00	-2.71	.007	.90
Critical thinking	2.18	3.96	-2.69	.007	.90
Social-emotional skills	2.35	4.04	-2.66	.008	.89
Autonomy	2.55	4.18	-2.37	.01	.79
Perseverance	2.33	3.88	-2.71	.007	.90
Social and collaborative skills	2.18	4.07	-2.52	.01	.84
The quality of teaching practices	2.98	4.35	-2.66	.008	.89
Involvement of children in the task – at 4 min.	4.75	5.00	-1.00	.31	.33
Involvement of children in task – at 9 min.	4.00	5.00	-1.73	.08	.58
Involvement of children in task – at 14 min.	2.67	4.78	-2.07	.03	.69

Note: *N*=9

The results are statistically significant for all the variables that make up the dimension of teaching practices adapted to the needs of children (both for areas and for behaviors). The magnitude of the differences is strong and positive, r being between .69 and .93. There are no differences in children's involvement in the task for the snapshot from 4 and 9 minutes, respectively (the values are extremely high since pre-intervention, the scoring being represented by an interval of high quality), but only for the one from the 14th minute.

According to Table no. 4, there are no differences in the level of children's involvement in the task during the three times evaluated, because their level of engagement was extremely high even during T1. To observe the differences, a more sensitive evaluation scale is needed, to delineate the more complex changes.

However, the qualitative observations emphasize that, although the preschool teachers from both researched groups were involved in the task, those who were in the group of teachers who benefited from the intervention based on the feedback sheet showed an attitude of interest and curiosity in the teaching-learning process, the emotions were mostly positive and they showed a high motivation to engage in activities both individually and in groups.

Also, the teachers in the experimental group, following the intervention program, managed to build a conducive environment that supports the learning process of preschoolers. They positively perceive the safe space of the group and the kindergarten, but also the support, respect and compassion from the staff who respect and try to satisfy the stated needs directly or indirectly. In the classroom climate, positive behaviors are promoted, supported, and recognized, and inappropriate behaviors are directed toward desirable long-term perspectives.

Following the post-intervention observations and from the moment of the follow-up, the following aspects were highlighted: the teacher is more of a support in learning problem-solving skills through clear and explicit identification strategies of the objectives/goals, the concepts used and the relationships between them; moreover, it creates a real learning experience through associations with real life situations, it refers to pre-existing acquisitions. Individual, but also group or social successes are highlighted in class, the teacher supports curiosity and offers open questions that stimulate

both critical thinking and the confidence to communicate ideas, suggestions or other questions.

In this way, the teacher’s role is not only to provide information or knowledge, but to build the optimal context to form independence and autonomy in assuming roles, building own experiences or solving problematic situations. During the intervention, the preschoolers had the opportunity to volunteer, make choices, were stimulated to show collaboration, positive emotions and develop their intra- and interpersonal skills within the group.

In order to identify the effectiveness of teacher training and instruction over a longer period of time, we carried out a follow-up process. The internalization of effective approaches and practices discovered following the training program implies that the changes between the results obtained at T2 and the follow-up at T3 for the experimental group are at least similar, if not improved.

Table no. 5. Differences between post-intervention and follow-up of the experimental group

	T2	T3			
	<i>M</i> rank	<i>M</i> rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>
Classroom climate	4.75	4.75	.00	1.00	.00
Training	4.27	4.26	.00	1.00	.00
Social-emotional skills	4.04	4.00	-.44	.65	.15
The quality of teaching practices	4.35	4.33	-.44	.65	.15
Involvement of children in task – at 4 min.	5.00	5.00	.00	1.00	.00
Involvement of children in task – at 9 min.	5.00	5.00	.00	1.00	.00
Involvement of children in task – at 14 min.	2.78	5.00	-2.07	.04	.70

Note: *N*=9

The analysis of the significance thresholds, but also of the mean values, highlights the fact that there are minor differences between the results obtained during the evaluation immediately after the intervention and those collected in the follow-up process carried out 6 months apart. The behaviors are being internalized and used by teachers during teaching activities.

6. Conclusions

The application of the Teach observation tool helped to improve interactions and educational practices in the classrooms of the teachers from the Kindergarten no.11 “House of joy” from Braşov. Providing personalized feedback created the optimal framework for teacher training centered on their needs. Teachers also benefited from new perspectives on creating classroom climate and promoting social-emotional development and other teaching elements that are fundamental in the context of early childhood education.

During the initial observations, the teachers showed a formal, official attitude and did not prove authenticity and naturalness during the activities with the preschoolers. Attitudes, reactions, manifestations of the teachers were sometimes, at first sight, unnatural, because the teachers felt supervised and responsible to provide high quality activities. Not knowing the content of the tool, they tried to demonstrate in the supported activities that they and the preschoolers are well prepared, sometimes this attitude leading to demanding activities for preschoolers and lacking curricular and scientific coherence.

After completing and sharing the feedback sheet of the teachers observed, following the discussions, it was concluded that, given the experience of classroom inspections, teachers tended to emphasize the scientific content of the activities, the methodological correctness of the design, the representation and the effective power of the content. They were more concerned about the content, the didactic strategy and the type of interaction, as well as evaluating the children’s performance and the strategies of differentiation and individualization. After giving the feedback and knowing the content of the tool, the teachers realized the importance of the environment conducive to learning, the establishment and recognition of positive behavioral expectations, as well as the teacher-preschooler relationship, the need to promptly respond to the needs expressed by the children, the facilitation of learning and its verification, the granting of a feedback by giving children specific comments or suggestions to clarify misunderstandings, providing tasks that require reflection, offering the possibility to make choices and assume roles within the group.

Implementation of the Teach observation tool on a nationally representative sample could lead to more realistic measurement of quality in early childhood education. Teach observation tool is particularly promising and valuable for improving the support early childhood education teachers receive, both in terms of classroom climate, checking understanding, providing feedback, encouraging critical thinking, and training and professional development.

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