

COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE FINALITIES OF PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: *The Romanian educational system and process works according to certain finalities of education (ideal, purpose, objective) that are explicitly established and play a major role in guiding the general development of the beneficiaries' personalities. Given the many connections between the finalities of the formative process in kindergarten and primary education, and also the particularities of the decisive impact of these institutions upon the further development of children's personalities, it becomes highly important to analyze the way in which the instructive-educational process is directed.*

The study proposes a comparative analysis of the finalities on the long and medium term (frame and reference objectives) that are mentioned in basic curricular documents, school curricula and syllabi with a view to ensuring improved compatibility and continuity for them.

Keywords: *finalities, frame objectives, reference objectives, operational objectives.*

Conceptual delimitations

The teleological nature of the didactic process generates the need for accurate delimitations in terms of specific finalities so as to orient the didactic activity in a desirable direction.

The term finalities designate the assembly of formative expectations that will materialize by the end of the instructive-educational process. These are established on the level of system and process by the Law of National Education 1/2011 and by school documents on a macro-systemic level (usually, school curricula and syllabi). At this level, they are called the ideal of education, aims and (frame and reference) objectives. On the level of micro-system, when elaborated by the teacher, they are called operational objectives.

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Frame objectives are objectives established on the level of each learning subject and have a high degree of generality and complexity, being achievable during several years of study.

Reference objectives, elaborated on the level of each learning subject, have a high degree of generality and state the expected outcomes of learning for each year of study, aiming at the evolution of children's cognitive, action and attitudinal acquisitions from one study year to another. They are derived from and simultaneously integrated into the frame objectives, according to the study years.

Operational objectives are defined, according to many theoretical references, as *objectives expressed in observable conducts that are measurable on a limited term* (Cojocariu, 2007).

Methodology

We propose a *comparative analysis of the finalities of education for preschool and primary education*. This type of approach allows the highlighting of both the specificity of finalities in relation to the beneficiaries' age and of the elements of continuity and convergence of finalities from the two periods of educational intervention. On this basis, one may substantiate proposals and decisions for improving the orientation and carrying out of the didactic process.

Regarding the elements of *continuity and convergence* of finalities, these are identified, valorized and developed. When *elements of rupture and inaccuracies* occur on the level of finalities, a set of measures is required to overcome them and to improve the process of continuous and unitary development of children.

To this end we have comparatively analyzed and valorized the *Curriculum for preschool education*, the section describing *the frame objectives for the 5 experiential domains* and the *Syllabi of the learning subjects for grades 1st-4th*, also the section dealing with the *frame objectives*.

Domain/Curricular area Language and communication	
	a. Romanian language and literature , b. Foreign language 1 (E, F)
1. Building skills in oral expression, comprehension and the correct use of the significations of oral verbal structures	1. Building oral reception of the message (a, b - E, F)

2. Educating a phonetically, lexically and syntactically correct verbal expression	2. Building speaking skills (a, b - E, F)
3. Building creativity and expressivity of oral language	<i>*Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i>
4. Building the skill to understand and communicate intentions, thoughts, significations by means of written language	<i>* Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i>
<i>* Identified as independent frame objective only in primary education!</i>	3. Building reception of the written message (reading) (a, b - E, F)
<i>* Identified as independent frame objective only in primary education!</i>	4. Building writing skills (a, b - E, F)
<i>* Identified as independent frame objective only in primary education!</i>	5. Developing cultural representations and the interest in the study of the English/French language and of the civilization of the Anglophone/Francophone space (b - E, F)
Domain Sciences/Curricular area Mathematics and Sciences	
	a. Mathematics, b. Environmental education (I-II), c. Sciences (III-IV)
1. Building pre-mathematical intellectual operations	1.a. Knowledge and use of specific mathematical concepts
2. Developing the ability to understand and use numbers, figures, measure units by using a proper vocabulary	3.a. Forming and developing the capacity to communicate using mathematical language
3. Developing the ability to recognize, name, build and use geometrical shapes	<i>* Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i>
4. Stimulating curiosity for explaining and understanding the surrounding world	4.a. Developing interest and motivation for the study and application of mathematics in various contexts
5. Developing the ability to solve problematic situations by the acquisition of appropriate strategies	2.a. Developing skills in exploring/investigating and solving problems

***Observations:**

**The name of the domain is not identical to the name of the curricular area (as in the case of the domain/area Language and communication!).*

*The name of the domain is more general than that of the area. The latter is more precise by the explicit delimitation of two distinct areas of scientific knowledge and three independent educational subjects.

	<p>b. Environmental education, c. Natural sciences</p>
6. Developing knowledge and understanding of the environment, and also stimulating curiosity to investigate it	2.c. Forming and developing skills and abilities in experimenting and exploring/investigating reality by using specific tools and procedures
7. Developing the capacity to observe and establish causal, spatial, temporal relations	1.b. Developing skills in observing, exploring and understanding the environment
8. Using proper language in presenting certain natural and environmental phenomena	<p>2.b. Knowing, understanding and communicating certain specific terms in order to describe phenomena observed in the surrounding environment</p> <p>1.c. Understanding and communicating terms and concepts characteristic of natural sciences</p>

*Observations:

* With few exceptions (one frame objective for preschool education), the frame objectives of the two stages of pre-academic education analyzed are characterized by *convergence* and *continuity*.

* The frame objectives of primary education are formulated *in more detail* (for a single frame objective in preschool education we have identified two objectives integrated in primary education!).

* The frame objectives of primary education are formulated *more precisely* and *more specifically*, in agreement with the content of the school subjects studied within the respective curricular area.

9. Forming and practicing certain skills in protecting and taking care of the environment with a view to educating a positive attitude towards it	<p>3.b. Forming a positive attitude towards the environment by stimulating the interest in maintaining a balanced environment and practicing skills in protecting and taking care of it</p> <p>3.c. Developing the interest and the responsibility for maintaining a balanced natural environment, suitable for life</p>
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*Observations:

* With one exception (one frame objective for preschool education), *all the frame objectives (FO) of preschool and primary education mutually include each other, even according to another order and logic, and continue each other, in a more complex manner, in passing from one age level to another.*

* *Conducting an analysis that is both separate and comparative of the finalities for preschool and primary education leads to conclusions regarding the agreement between these and the particularities of the children's bio-psycho-social development.* For example, FO 9 for preschool education (concerning the forming and practicing of ecological skills, a basis for forming positive attitude towards the environment) and FO 3.b. and 3.c. for primary education (concerning the building of a positive attitude towards the environment, the interest and responsibility for protecting it) illustrate this aspect.

*The horizontal reading of the finalities allows findings concerning the *increase in the complexity degree of the formative impact* of studying the respective contents. For example, FO 2 for preschool education (concerning the development of the skill to understand and use numbers, figures, and measure units by using a proper vocabulary) and FO 3.a. for primary education (referring to forming and developing the skill to communicate through mathematical language) reflect this characteristic.

Domain/Curricular area Man and society	
	a. History (IV), b. Geography (IV), c. Religion (I-IV)
5. Knowledge of history, geography, religion elements that are defining for the spiritual portrait of the Romanian people	1.a. Representation of time and space in history 1.b. Representation of geographical space (from town to planet) 2.a. Knowledge and use of historical sources 1.c. Knowledge and love of God as a basis for man's salvation and perfection 3.a. Knowledge and use of historical terms 3.b. Proper use of the language specific to geography 2.c. Knowledge and proper use of the language from the sphere of religious values 4.a. Knowledge and interpretation of historical facts 3.c. Knowledge of the teachings of the Holy

	<p>Scriptures, of religious traditions and Church history</p> <p>2.b. Relating geographical elements relying on different sources</p> <p>5.a. Developing a positive attitude towards oneself and the others</p> <p>4.b. Manifesting behavior favorable to improving the relationships between man and environment</p>
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*Observations:

* The relationship between FO 5 of preschool education and the corresponding frame objectives of primary education is very interesting in terms of the relationship *from simple to complex*.

Domain: Man and society	Curricular area: Technologies
	<p>a. Practical skills (I-II),</p> <p>b. Technological education (III-IV)</p>
6. Formation and consolidation of practical skills specific to the level of motor development	<p>1.a. Knowledge and use of certain techniques for working with various materials and tools</p> <p>1.b. Use of techniques for working with various materials and tools</p> <p>2.a., b. Design, production and evaluation of simple products</p>
7. Enriching knowledge about materials and their characteristics, and also about the working techniques required by them in order to obtain simple products	<p><i>* Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i></p>
8. Formation of practical do-it-yourself skills and use of the appropriate vocabulary	<p>4.a. Development of practical - do-it-yourself and aesthetic sense</p> <p>4.b. Development of the practical, aesthetic sense and of the responsibility for changing the natural environment as a response to human needs</p>
	<p>3.a., b. Development of the skill to cooperate in the making of a product</p>

*Observations:

* Some of the frame objectives of the *domain Man and society* from preschool education correspond to the frame objectives of the curricular area

Technologies in primary education, represented by two learning subjects with different complexity according to the students' age.

Domain Aesthetic and creative / Curricular area Arts	
	a. Plastic education (I-II), b. Plastic education (III-IV), c. Musical education (I-II), d. Musical education (III-IV)
1. Formation of working skills in drawing, painting, modeling compositions	4.a Making compositions 4.b. Expressing through and about plastic compositions
2. Establishing correspondences between various elements of plastic language and shapes, objects from the environment (nature, art and social life)	2.a. Recognizing types of colors, non-colors and shapes in the environment and in pictures 2.b. Analysis of shapes, colors and combinations of these in the environment and in pictures
3. Stimulating expressivity and creativity through drawing, painting, modeling	* <i>Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i>

*Observations:

**The name of the domain is not identical to the name of the curricular area (as in the case of the domain/area Language and communication!).*

**The name of the domain is more general and more complex than that of the area. The latter is more precise by the explicit delimitation of two distinct areas of art and education and four school programs, two for plastic education and two for musical education, in relation to the age evolution of small pupils.*

* The existence of the four programs illustrates *the effort to adjust the finalities* of the subjects according to at least *three significant factors*:

1. *the particularities and difficulty* of the fields of art invoked
2. *the particularities of the small pupil* in terms of his bio-psycho-socio-cultural profile, a profile that is rapidly and constantly changing and restructuring
3. *the didactic difficulties of the specialty* in carrying out the didactic processes proper to these school subjects.

Domain Aesthetic and creative / Curricular area Arts	
	a. Plastic education (I-II), b. Plastic education (III-IV), c. Musical education (I-III), d. Musical education (IV)
4. Formation of reception skill for sounds and music	* <i>Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i>
5. Formation of skills to express oneself through music	1.c., d. Making use of the received elements of musical language in the practice of vocal and instrumental music 2.c., d. Expression through music
6. Knowledge of great values of musical national and world creation	* <i>Identified as independent frame objective only in preschool education!</i>
* <i>Identified as independent general objective only in primary education!</i>	1.a.,b Knowledge and use of materials, tools and techniques characteristic of plastic arts
* <i>Identified as independent general objective only in preschool education!</i>	3.a., b Knowledge and use of plastic language elements

***Observations:**

* We regard as a *significant loss* the fact that *FO 6* from *preschool education* is *no further included* as an explicit finality in any frame objective from primary education, although, in this respect, the opportunities and successful educational practices are multiple on this level, too, and these have been confirmed in time as having maximum formative relevance.

* The constitution of the *frame objectives 1.a., b. and 3.a., b* is an illustration of the way in which the finalities of primary education do not just continue those of preschool education but also shape their own *uniqueness and specificity*, essentially based on the particularities of the beneficiary of education.

Domain Psychomotor / Curricular area Physical education and sports	
1. Formation and training of basic motor and utility application skills	3. Extension of one's background of basic motor skills, elementary applicative-utility and sports skills, and developing the related motor qualities 4. The independent practice of physical exercises, games and various sports

2. Stimulating intellectual qualities, will and affection with a view to the independent application of the acquired skills	5. Manifesting team and competition spirit according to a system of accepted rules
3. Knowledge of hygienic-sanitary habits to maintain health	1. Maintaining optimal health status of students and increasing their adaptability to environmental factors 2. Harmonization of their physical development and prevention of possible deviations from installing

*Observations:

* *The name of the domain is not identical to the name of the curricular area (as in the case of the domain/area Language and communication!).*

* *There is complete qualitative correspondence between the frame objectives of the domain and those of the curricular area, even if there is a quantitative difference (3 in preschool education and 5 in primary education) between these, fully justified by the children's psychomotor and psychosomatic evolution.*

Curricular area Counseling and guidance	
	1. Developing self-knowledge skills and positive attitude towards the self
	2. Developing networking skills in various contexts
	3. Developing skills to use information for learning
	4. Acquiring skills in career exploration and planning
	5. Practicing skills in managing a quality life style

*Observations:

* *Counseling and guidance is an element of specificity only starting with primary education.*

* *There are, however, certain similarities among certain frame objectives of this area and certain reference objectives of the domain Man and society in preschool education, as we may see below:*

Domain: Man and society	Curricular area: Counseling and guidance
1. Knowledge and compliance to the rules of conduct in society; educating the ability to enter relationships with others.	2. Developing networking skills in various contexts

2. Educating the positive traits of will and character, and forming a positive attitude towards oneself and others	1. Developing self-knowledge skills and a positive attitude towards oneself
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*Observations:

* *Frame objectives 3, 4, 5 give full specificity to this category of finalities.*

* We regard FO 4 as *partially realistic*, therefore we suggest a reformulation by giving up the aspect of career planning that may occur later.

* We consider that FO 5 *exceeds the students' age possibilities, as it is very complex even for younger ages*, therefore it may occur later.

Conclusions and suggestions:

1. The comparative analysis applied to categories of objectives reveals the fact that most of them have been elaborated by ensuring *agreement with the children's bio-psycho-social development*;

2. There are *elements of specificity and uniqueness* naturally and properly constituting the frame and reference objectives of both preschool and primary education (Domain/Curricular area Language and communication; Domain Sciences; Domain Man and society; Domain Aesthetic and creative /Curricular area Arts; Curricular area Counseling and orientation);

3. There are psychologically and pedagogically proper elements of *continuity and convergence* among the frame and reference objectives of preschool and primary education at the level of all domains and curricular areas (Domain/Curricular area Language and communication; Domain Sciences /Curricular area Mathematics and Sciences; Domain/Curricular area Man and society; Domain Main and society/ Curricular Area Technologies; Domain Aesthetic and creative /Curricular area Arts; Domain Psychomotor/ Curricular area Physical education and sports);

4. Certain frame objectives of primary education that are in a relation of continuity and convergence are formulated *in more detail* than those corresponding to preschool education (For one frame objective from preschool education we have identified two, three and even several objectives integrated in primary education: Domain Sciences/ Curricular area Mathematics and Sciences; Domain Man and society/ Curricular area Technologies; Domain/Curricular area Man and society);

5. With the exception of objectives that are absolutely specific only to preschool education or only to primary education, *all the other objectives mutually include each other*, even if following another order and logic, and continue one another, in a more elaborate, gradual manner, from simple to complex, in the transition from one age level to another. Moreover, their realization ensures *the increase in the complexity degree of the formative impact* of studying the learning contents. This correspondence is usually ensured within the same domain, the same curricular area respectively. A special situation is represented by *two exceptions*: 1. the correspondence between certain frame objectives for the domain Man and society from preschool education and the frame objectives of the curricular area Technology from primary education; 2. the correspondence between certain frame objectives of the curricular area Counseling and guidance from primary education and certain objectives of the domain Man and society from preschool education;

6. There is, naturally, a series of *unfulfillments or partial successes on the level of the elaboration of objectives*, particularly in terms of ensuring a unitary and continuous trajectory for the development of a child's personality. Among these, the most obvious are:

a. *losing certain objectives with a significant formative impact* during the transition from preschool to primary education (ex.: Domain/Curricular area Language and communication - Developing creativity and expressivity of oral language; Domain Sciences/Curricular area Mathematics and Sciences - Developing the skill to recognize, name, build and use geometrical shapes; Domain Aesthetic and Creative /Curricular area Arts - Stimulating expressivity and creativity through drawing, painting, modeling compositions). As one may easily see, two of them refer to creativity and stimulating/ developing it, an essential formative aspect often *lost* by school during the gradual passage from one educational level to the next;

b. *the relative inadequacy of formulating certain objectives* in relation to the students' particularities and possibilities (Curricular area Counseling and guidance - acquiring career exploration and planning skills). In this situation, the objective may be reformulated by giving up the aspect of career planning which may be relocated, with real chances of success, to a later period from the students' evolution;

c. *the complete inadequacy of formulating certain objectives* in relation to the students' particularities and possibilities (Curricular area Counseling and guidance - Practicing the management skills required by a quality life

style). In this situation, we would suggest either to completely give up this objective that is compatible with older ages of students (high school!) or to replace it with one that is more accessible to the students' age (for example: forming certain basic skills in organizing a quality life).

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