

**“ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY IAȘI
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DOCTORATE SCHOOL**

- DOCTORATE THESIS-

**EDUCATIONAL FAMILY FUNCTIONS
DELEGATION WITHIN *AFTER SCHOOL* PROGRAMS**

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Abstract

The research theme of child socialization within the present Romanian family is determined by the progressive rise in its interest in order to accomplish or maintain a certain quality of life, financially speaking, which can be achieved through long hours of work. This issue has an impact on the amount of time one spends with his own children, leading to the reduction of some responsibilities as a parent. The sternness of this reality lies in the fact that the parents, in some families, are not there for their children, and therefore the child is lacking the much needed support for his development.

Along with adherence to European Union, this, among others, meant opening the borders and work regulations regarding Romanian citizens. Also, Romania was confronted with massive migration of an increasing number of people towards the more economical developed countries, where there are better working conditions. This kind of institution, known as *After school* program, is one of the structures that satisfy the requirements of the purpose we have already mentioned.

This phenomenon dynamics (I would mention here that, 4-5 years ago, the *After school* concept in the Romanian system was unknown) led me to wonder if such programs, born so rapidly, replacing most of the family responsibilities, have as primordial objective shaping the individual according to social, scientific and moral¹ values, adjusted and integrated in the contemporary society.

Therefore, the present paper can be defined as a research on this *vulnerable population*, who, being subject to such an institutional program, generates a series of social processes and changes within the society as a whole.

The doctorate thesis *Delegation of educational functions within „After school” programs* is related to the education sociology field.

¹ Johann Amos Comenius, in his work, *Didactica magna*, thought that, at birth, nature gives the child only with *the seeds of science, morality and religiosity*, thus becoming everyone's asset only through education. As a result, in his opinion, education is an *activity of stimulating these seeds* and, implicit, of leading the humanization process, *the individual cannot become an individual unless he is educated*.

The research strategy is based on the fundamental method of investigating the empiric universe, **sociological investigation**.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in present research, and the interview guide (within the qualitative study) and the questionnaire (within the quantitative study) are the work instruments.

The sampling in *qualitative approach* was a non probabilistic type (non inferential) for which I have used *direct field observation* and *the snowball technique* (in taking interviews). I decided on a number of *25 interviews* cu teachers involved in After School programs.

In order to have an increased efficiency of the theory in field research, we have opted for structuring the thesis on three theory chapters and four investigations, underlying the tight correlation between the theoretical chapters and practical studies. The theoretical information within the thesis led to the conception of a complex conceptual system, which guided me through out the research and shaped the conclusions and structure of studies.

*The first chapter of the thesis, **Conceptual frame***, showcases key concepts to be followed through out the doctorate thesis. The role of conceptual plan is to identify with precision that part of the social dimension exposed to the research. Among various instruments which society uses for an optimal functioning, *institutions* play a very important role. Institutions are considered components of common symbolic systems, respective of cognitive and cultural processes within the social life they produce.

Institutionalization is defined by the action and process through which a formal, institutional character is given, based on well defined norms, regarding social status-roles meant to promote and protect a segment of common values. **Institutionalization** can be defined as a symbolic activity through which the individual builds his membership to a community or society, at the same time with the process of self knowing.

Socialization refers to the conveying- assimilating of attitudes, values, beliefs or behavior models specific to a certain group or community in order to form, adjust and socially integrate a person; it is an interactive process of communication, assuming the double consideration of individual development and social influences, respective the personal manner of receiving and interpreting social messages and the mobile dynamic of

social influences intensity and content. Socialization is a process stretched through the duration of entire life, preparing the individual for the roles he is required to fulfill. So, it begins in childhood, continues strongly to the adult stage and less afterwards (continual socialization).

*The second chapter, **History of socio-educational institutions***, deals in the beginning with family from an institutional perspective, with respect to the evolution of civilization. The changes that have occurred within the family derive from values promoted by society and from practices as a result of these values. The social roles assumed by the family members have been modified as time went by as a result of the society influences on social organization forms.

*The third chapter, **Family and child's education*** refers to aspects of education and parental practices. Parental practices create a necessary space for the development of relationship with family, specifically a definition of what it means to be a parent. Maintaining favorable conditions for child's personal and intellectual growth is achieved by some families through a transfer of educational responsibility towards educational institutions. Practically, parents delegate a part of their educational functions in order to be able to spend time for climbing the social ladder.

*The fourth chapter, entitled **Educational programs organized outside of school***, presents the organization forms of the educational act within programs that have been established in order to organize children's spare time.

The present paper unites four studies in which population categories in Iasi area are explored, subject to an analysis that intends to study the phenomenon of family role delegation towards educational structures. Subjects for this research are the main social actors involved in After School programs: students who attend this type of education, as direct beneficiaries' of programs, their parents, as indirect beneficiaries and educators involved in the educational act.

First study is an investigation on parents' opinion towards After School programs. Within the investigation, a number of 63 questionnaires have been applied to research subjects, in March-May 2011. The purpose for the study was to attain a field exploration in order to identify parents perception on After School programs, given that this category,

in my opinion, was the one which generated the creation of such educational structures as a result of busy work schedule, with the consequence of the diminishing the amount of time for educating and supervising their own children. The data of this survey make up for a preliminary study with a pre investigation role, which determined the investigation itself, that was accomplished between November 2001 and March 2012. Results reflect the reality of After School programs and of children who benefit from this type of education.

The second study is intended to assess the social characteristics of families who opt for inscribing the child in After School programs. The documentation effectuated for the research shows that, at the beginning of the investigation in Iasi County, from 9688 pupils in primary school in public system, 883 are included in After School programs. Alongside these, another 377 children attend the program in private centers. The research subjects are 173 parents of children who attend the program (95 of feminine gender and 78 of masculine gender). The educator extends his range and many times includes, alongside teacher, actors, painters, sportsmen, socio-educational animators. All these have been oriented through After School program in order to satisfy demands of the permanent education gradually imposed in Romanian society. Parents that have decided the child's enlisting in an after school type of program desire, first of all, the ensuring of those necessities that can satisfy educational and cultural aspirations, thus being facilitated the fructification of abilities every child will use through out life.

The third study intends to identify the *After school* program influences on children. The examined population is constituted of children in primary school (7 –11 years old) who come from families with parents that do not have the possibility to supervise homework and neither the rest of the time, because the busy work schedule does not allow it.

The work instrument is applied questionnaire. Students who participated are from first grade (41,3%), second grade (15,1%), third grade (23%) and fourth grade (20,6%), a more reduced number being represented by second grade subjects. The experience of participation to the After-School program is manifold, from a minimum of one semester to maximum 8 semesters.

Results conclude that *After school* program help children to relate to one another, to make friends through playing and educational activities, to develop their personality. The existence of a prescheduled program which the child respects daily leads to forming of positive behavior, developing aptitudes and independency for the child. Education achieved through After School programs participate to life's society alongside other agents of change, contributing both the maintaining and transformation of society in its whole.

The fourth study subjects were specialists involved in After School programs. The study was attained in two stages:

First stage consisted in applying and interpreting questionnaires to a number of 45 teachers involved in After School programs. The study purpose was identifying advantages and disadvantages presented by the After School program, from teachers' perspective concerning involved participants.

Sampling procedure was chosen in such manner as, through this study, to obtain generally valid conclusions. Thus, we considered the characteristics of the entire universe of individuals who constitute the investigated population in the present research, respective the total number of teacher who participate to prolonged education within *After school* programs in Iasi. In the first stage of the stuffy, 45 subjects answered the questionnaires (44 of feminine gender and 1 of masculine gender).

The second stage involves applying and interpreting of 25 interviews with the other teachers that activate within the program. The population we have contacted at this stage refers to specialists directly involved in students' educational act, respective educators, teachers, tutors and specialized personnel. I had found easy to access this category, being in the same competence area and knowing the great majority of teachers.

The *sampling* technique is *random sampling*, and the utilized technique is *the snowflake*. The method used in this study is semi structured interview. The framework is my working place and other schools in Iasi County.

The work instrument id the interview guide, which underlies a pre established set of questions, questions that have been detailed and completed with supplementary ones, subsequently, in the field, according to the data obtained to that moment. The work instrument is the interview guide which contains themes related to: professional

experience of teachers in After School programs, activities unrolled within the program, relationship between teachers and children's families, the way children adjust to the program, school's attitude towards the After school programs establishment and development and parents attitude towards this program, according to specialists.

The efficient time management provided through After school programs contribute significantly, in educators opinion, to an improvement in learning and attention, leading to the development of positive behavioral, both in school and at home and, implicit, contributing to the development of their personality positive aspects. Specialists, subjects within the study, consider the After school program, as it is at the time of research, to be optimal in terms of duration, and that it should not be changed. Teachers have expressed a high degree of satisfaction regarding the results of the After-School program.

Final conclusions

Thesis conclusions contain the synthesis of results obtained through out the research that show After school program to be *a strong catalyst for the complex development* of the children who are its beneficiaries. Thus, it completes not only the educational role, but also the socio-educational role, and it is a successful response to socialization and emotional maturation. The basic principle in the program functioning is individual work, which, correlated with supplementary work, can lead to school performance. Children's ability of integration in After school program is influenced by the socialization and sociability phenomenon, seen as a central point in the functioning of the program. Students adjustment is favored by modern educational ways, focused on blending playing with learning.

The impact of After School program is analyzed through different points of view, a global image thus being shaped, regarding immediate and later effects on involved actors. Managing the After School program is influenced, to a great extent, by the parents with children registered there, because these play an important role in children's motivation to attend the program. As a result, one of the after school program objectives

is to maintain a permanent and direct connection not just with children's families, but also with the community, given the fact that these structures have appeared and developed so fast which means that they are here as solutions to certain problems, community difficulties, the most important being delegation of parents educational functions when they are at work. A large part of the identified aspects in the present doctorate thesis shows parents' interest for child's learning progresses on one hand and, the way they are trying to accomplish this goal when the long working hours do not allow a complete fulfillment of parenting, on the other.

The program's advantages refer to children's learning and social evolution, teachers' satisfaction and improving family relationships for direct and indirect beneficiaries, respective, children and parents. All these are brought to our attention by the degree of satisfaction of every social actor involved (students, parents, teachers).

One of the most important factors to contribute to after school programs success is the way children and the other social actors who are involved relate to each other. The present research shows that students enlisted in after school programs socialize easier with other children and adults. Every one of them can express their own personality, and, at the same time, respect others. Both parents and educators noticed that students, beneficiaries in the program, developed social skills to a greater extent and learned to be empathic and broadminded. Study results in which subjects were educators involved in the program demonstrate that the degree of children socialization increases the more groups in educational centers are made of other children than the ones in school. Also, the feeling of safety and stability ensure creativity and focus abilities. Blending playing with homework and learning are essential objectives that must be reached during child's evolution within after school programs.

Program's disadvantages refer first of all to the high expenses that lead to inequities regarding children, only children from well endowed families being able to benefit from After school programs. This makes us conclude that programs outside of school are not able to ensure equality of chances for all the children in primary school, from learning progress and skill development perspective

Another disadvantage refers to reducing, in parents' case, responsibilities related to education which leads to a detachment from child's activity in school and, implicit, a decrease in parents interest in educational process.

The study is completed with a presentation of some measures destined to prevent negative effects that have been identified during research, effects reflected upon the research subjects and, as consequence, upon the society from Iasi. Thus, we have identified measures concerning organizational aspects, relationships between involved actors and measures that contribute to the optimization of the results obtained as a result of attending the program.

I believe the present research results provide useful information about content, putting into practice and After school programs effects, information that can be necessary for those who wish to utilize them for interventions in social life, at least for the time being. The reason is a simple one, in social field, changes happen with great speed and research results are at risk of losing their topicality until they gain the attention of most of the ones concerned.

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