



PSIWORLD 2013

A new beginning: improving the school start for preparatory class children

Laura Ciolan, Cristian Bucur, Camelia Rădulescu, Anca Petrescu*

The University of Bucharest, The Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, The Department for Teacher Education, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

This study discusses what the school organization and all parties involved need in order to be prepared for a dramatic structural change such as the transfer of the preparatory class to primary education level. A survey applied to 265 teachers for primary and preschool education and school counselors about the organization and the functionality of the new school start format signaled three categories of necessary actions related to: family and child, school organization and policies influencing primary school education. Data was complimented by an evaluation of the organizational and individual readiness for preparatory class implementation which revealed that teachers managed to overcome insufficient preparation.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).
Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Romanian Society of Applied Experimental Psychology.

Keywords: good quality school start, preparatory class, teacher preparation, community involvement

1. Overview

School start is an extremely important moment, both for teachers and for children and their parents. The quality of this moment has the potential to significantly influence the children performance throughout their education. The amendments to the National Education Law No. 1/2011, which introduced the preparatory class to primary school education, brought numerous managerial, psychological and pedagogical challenges to all parties involved.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000 ; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .
E-mail address: ancapetrescu78@gmail.com

There are debates in the literature on how ready or prepared are the children to enter school and adapt to the different challenges in this new and complex environment. The extent to which children are prepared could be found in many studies and research under the label of school readiness of the children. But very few analyses refer to the extent to which schools themselves are ready to receive such young pupils. Another important issue here should be not only school readiness for the future pupils, but also student readiness for school. And it often happens that the tensions and problems are situated not so much with the children, but with the school organization.

The literature review on transition undertaken for this paper identified a growing concern with the issues of differences in culture and curricula in pre-schools and schools, and the issue of school readiness (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Boethel, 2004). The literature also supports the idea that achieving a successful transition may be contingent on a degree of continuity between pre-schools and primary schools. It was also noted that the inter-relatedness of the individual systems within which the child exists are important at the time of transition, and the impact of social, cultural and transitions capital are important. With this in mind, the importance of communication between stakeholders was noted (Davis, 2000).

This paper discusses what the school organization and the parties involved (teachers, pupils, parents) need in order to be prepared for this dramatic structural change. The main objective of the investigation was to identify ways of improving the capacity of the educational institutions and of the people directly involved to create the conditions for a quality school start for preparatory class children. For this purpose data from primary and secondary sources were employed. A survey was applied to 265 teachers for primary and preschool education and school counselors, who were solicited structured feedback by means of questionnaires regarding the organization and the functionality of the new school start format. This data was complimented by an evaluation of the organizational and individual readiness for preparatory class implementation. At the same time, a discussion on parents' readiness for school was considered important in this context.

2. Methodology

In trying to investigate issues related to school readiness in the particular context of the new preparatory class at primary education level, we considered two POSDRU projects, Together with children for a successful school start and Key Competences through Virtual Games in Kindergarten in June 2013. We conducted a survey with 265 participants – teachers from preschool and primary school education and school counselors from all over the country. The main purpose of the research was to investigate the needs of teachers and schools in lower secondary education in Romania for properly integrating 6-year olds in formal learning activities specific to school. Participants were solicited structured feedback by means of questionnaires regarding the organization and the functionality of the new school start format. This data was complimented by a qualitative investigation of the organizational and individual readiness for preparatory class implementation. Data from both primary and secondary sources were employed.

3. Findings and psycho-pedagogical standpoints

For the purpose of this article we introduce only some of the most relevant data from the study.

A specific item of the survey explored the opinion of the involved actors related to their capacity and readiness to conduct learning with students aged 6-7, in order to ensure an easy and smooth entry of the child into school environment, immediately after kindergarten. We were investigating to what extent this specific category of teachers were exposed to specialized training in order to get them ready for the new situation: implementation, according to the law, of the preparatory class / year.

Data showed that most of the teachers participated in continuing training courses in order to get ready for the introduction of the preparatory year. Qualitative data revealed that the training had a blended learning approach, combining the face-to-face meeting with professional trainers, the individual online activity on a dedicated platform and peer learning both online and in classroom. The analyzed data show that changing the school start format, despite insufficient and proper preparation, did not produce dramatic sideslips, as the teachers involved showed the flexibility and the capacity of adapting to the new requirements within a reasonable time limit. **The teachers**

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1116065>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1116065>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)