

ERD 2021**9th International Conference Education, Reflection, Development****PEDAGOGICAL CAUSES OF SCHOOL FAILURE**

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Abstract

During school years, students succeed to face, in a higher or lower extent, the school requirements. School results influence the student's position in the class he/she is part of, in the circle of friends, in the family etc. In its turn, school is appreciated in the community according to the results of the students who are attending it. The unsatisfactory learning results obtained by certain students, reported to their real potential and to the school exigencies represent forms of school failure. The causes of school failure are manifold. There is a series of objective or subjective factors which favour school failure. School has the responsibility to identify these factors and to frame effective prevention and control strategies of school failure. The present paper highlights the pedagogical causes of school failure, analysed from three perspectives: the teachers, the parents of students who face learning difficulties and that of the students who register low school performance, reported to their potential. In this research, there were 135 interviewed people out of which: 45 teachers, 45 parents and 45 students. The paper has tried to identify the main pedagogical causes which determine the school failure and to present effective solutions for the prevention and control of school failure based on the proposals stated by the participants in the research.

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1. Introduction

School and family are the main institutions involved in the formation-development of the human personality from early ages. The specific way in which each individual reacts to the educational influences depends on one side to the hereditary dower and on the other side the environment in which he/she lives and develops. The genetic factors are transmitted inter-generational and the influences bechanced from the environment determine the measure in which these factors are valued during the human existence.

Once with the entrance in the educational system, the child comes in contact with a series of pedagogical requirements and conditioning. The way in which he/she reports to these is reflected in the pupil's school performances. The degree of knowing and understanding of some phenomena, the pupil's ability to solve some more or less complex tasks is found in the pupil's results in learning. These results can be appreciated through the lens of school succes or unsuccess.

The definition of school success or unsuccess supposes to report the results obtained by the pupil to the instructional educational objectives. More often than not in order to give the definition of school success or unsuccess we should have in view the objectives of intellectual education, neglecting the other types of education which are extremely important for the formation-development of the human personality.

The term of school unsuccess expresses generally the lack of positive results obtained in the framework of the educational system, respectively in the teaching-learning process; it is represented by all those cases in which the students do not find formation opportunities in order to express their talents (Formisano, 2015).

Both success and unsuccess include in their sphere factors which belong to the person, the student's possibilities and expectations in relation to school and contextual factors. What for a student can be defined as school unsuccess (for instance, to obtain the mark 7 in an exam – in the situation when his/her previous performances are much higher than this mark) for another student the respective result can be considered as school success (especially in the case when most of his/her previous school performances are under the mark 7).

The way in which the pupil is involved in his/her own formation depends in a great extent on the way the teacher succeeds to create a favourable educational climate, meant to stimulate the interest and active participation of the students in the didactic act. "In the classes with a viable educational climate, the students have a stronger sense of community, they prove openness and they are more interested in pro-social interactions. As a rule, they are better at solving social problems and conflicts, they like everything connected to school, they are more motivated and empathical and they have a higher trust in their own forces (Boncu, 2013).

2. Problem Statement

The forms of manifestation of school unsuccess can lead to hang behind learning and to obtain some unsatisfactory temporary results in relation to the student's capacities until severe forms such as condition, repeating class or school dropout. Even if the practice of promoting the student in all the school

subjects (in order to secure the didactic position in a school, for example) despite the large number of unmotivated absences and the insufficient acquisitions also represents a severe form of school unsuccess. Rarely the school unsuccess appears *overnight*. In fact it is a process which develops during the time and which emits numerous signals that things are not going as they should. Unfortunately most times those who should observe these signals (school, family), either do not see, or ignore, waiting for the things to solve by themselves, which usually does not happen.

The efficient collaboration between school-family-community brings in the forefront the needs and interests of the student's formation, corroborated with the educational offer and the school exigencies, with the educational opportunities offered also by other educational agents, in the framework of some personalised educational interventions, meant to prevent the school unsuccess by multiplying the positive experiences, strongly formative, that the student lives during the period of school years.

The prevention of the school unsuccess phenomenon has certain **limits**. No matter how well thought and scientifically substantiated would be, its limits appear due to the multitude of phenomena which condition by their interaction the school unsuccess. Making the analogy between school unsuccess and pre-delinquency, the effectiveness of the preventing action is undermined by the internal and/or external limits (Bocancea & Neamțu, 1999).

Among the *external limits* we can mention:

- School unsuccess existed and exists in any type of society, so it can't be eliminated. In other words nor even prevention can propose itself the suppression of such a phenomenon but only its diminishing as much as possible.
- the elimination of all causes which determines the school unsuccess is practically impossible. The prevention measures can't propose but interventions on the factors responsible for the school unsuccess having in view the limitation of their harmful action;
- Often the prevention measures are not well coordinated and they do not reach their goal.

The internal limits refer to:

- the decrease of efficiency of the prevention actions due to the uninvolved in the preventive action of all the social forces interested;
- not all the social actors react to the prevention methods, especially due to the characteristics of personality;
- the prevention can't surpass certain conceptions and behaviours which the society builds by the promotion of certain values and social practices;
- The prevention activities appeal to different techniques but not all the used ones are pertinent. Some solicit too high costs which make them difficult to be applied.

The qualitative evaluations of the people in the situation of school unsuccess suppose the achievement of the following steps:

- *The diagnosis of the situation* – it must be correct and carefully placed in the context of the determining factors which made possible the evolution/state of things;
- *Surpassing the sensitive, the emotional side* when the situation is on the way to influence negatively the process of controlled and guided education;

- *Examination should be based on results*, on concrete data and not on the representations or images gathered/offered by hostile mediums, unfavourable or evil or subjective;
- *The complementarity of the action of the internal and external evaluating agents* of the existing situations as objectives of analysis;
- *The identification and promotion of the types of projects/educational programs* which pursue to prevent and combat the school unsuccess;
- *Highlighting the progress* in the clarity, coherence, relevancy and economicity of the objectives oriented towards the prevention and combating of school unsuccess.

The specialised literature (Gottfredson et al., 2005) highlights the effects of some environment factors which influence the young people's behaviour such as the school characteristics and the class of students, the experiences at the level of inter-relationing, group experiences, personal values, attitudes and faiths. Likewise, certain aspects which are connected to the teachers' attitude towards the pupils, the didactic strategies used in teaching, the inappropriate didactic contents under quantitative and qualitative aspect can generate the student's disinterest towards the school and his/her low attachment towards school. The disengagement of school and its poor involvement has harmful effects on the whole didactic act and implicitly on the school performances of the students (Gottfredson et al., 2005; Hawkins 1995).

The school unsuccess lets very often some deep marks not only on the present time but also very often its negative effects are transferred on the evolution of the respective person on long term. This is why at international level there is a real preoccupation to identify efficient strategies of prevention and combating the school unsuccess. A possible solution is to give a special attention to the students which are in a risky situation, offering personalised support in order to surpass the difficulties to which they are confronted, so that their situation in learning improves. Another solution has in view the dissemination of the experiences of good practices in the prevention and combat of school unsuccess.

The activity of removing the school unsuccess is more difficult than the prevention, mainly supposing, taking some measures and the elaboration of some strategies of treating differently and individualised the students which are in a situation of unsuccess. Among the measures to prevent the occurrence of school unsuccess we mention (Ispas, 2004):

- *The identification and careful monitoring of the children with risk of school unsuccess* in order to watch their situation during the school year and evaluate the (positive or negative) effects and generate the measures taken by the school with the aim to improve and prevent school unsuccess.
- *Increasing the role of the pre-school education*. The pedagogic statistics show that approximately half of the school waste observed in the primary and secondary cycle have the origin in the differences presented by the children at the debut of their school days, regarding the verbal capacity, the degree of sociability and the minimal skills necessary for the acquirement of writing-reading, to familiarize with the rigours of an organised school program.
- *establishing some close relations of partnership between school and family* because for many students the factors which generate the school unsuccess are placed in the family and not in the framework of school context. In this sense school must do activities regarding the awareness of the education importance destined for parents-children. (It is the case of the family with

cultural precariousness, with a negative attitude towards school). Likewise in the framework of this relation of partnership, it must and there were achieved activities of material support for the families, for children with a precarious financial situation: activities organised with the support of the other parents, of economic agents, of local authorities, of the church etc.

- *the collaboration of the school with local community*, their awareness regarding its role in the development of the educational units, starting from the consideration that school belongs to community and the unit is in the same time the beneficiary of the school activities. This collaboration between school and local community must lead to *the concrete involvement of the institutions of the community in actions such as:*
 - *Attracting qualified staff towards the rural localities* by the creation of some decent life conditions and facilities for the qualified staff who commute from other localities.
 - *concrete support, under the form of material help for the poor families* with many children
 - *The development of sanitary and social assistance at the level of localities.*
 - *Supporting the school* which must ensure material resources, qualified and motivated teachers in their activity, qualitative curricula, which should be periodically revised and improved, a vigorous, stimulating school climate (schools can represent a company in this direction by the reduction of the number of unqualified didactic staff). The teacher represents the basic part in the action of ensuring school success. For this he/she must dispose not only of a good specialised preparation but also of a psycho-pedagogic competence in establishing the most appropriate factors and methods to achieve school development.

“Policies should look at the design of the educational system that is practised both in and out of school in order to generate fairness of opportunity and help avoid the social costs of marginalized adults with few basic skills” (Saraiva et al., 2011, p. 433).

3. Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were stated:

Question 1 : How is school failure perceived by the teachers?

Question 2: What is the teachers' perception concerning the main pedagogical causes of school failure?

Question 3: What is the teachers' perception concerning the preventing and combating solutions against school failure?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was *to identify the pedagogic causes of school unsuccess*. The purpose was reached by the following objectives:

- OS1: understanding the perspective of the interviewed people on the school unsuccess;

- OS2: the identification of the main pedagogical causes which determine the school
unsuccess;
- OS3: The identification of some prevention and combative solutions for school
unsuccess.

5. Research Methods

Period of research development

The research was achieved during the period October 2019- March 2020.

The investigated population – the sample structure

In the research, 135 people participated from which:

- 45 teachers,
- 45 people who have children in the national educational system and
- 45 students (with the ages from 14 to 22 years).

Research methodology

The research was achieved with the help of the method sociologic inquiry, based on a questionnaire with 12 items (4 closed questions, 4 half-open and 4 open questions). The items of the questionnaire explored: the perception of the interviewed people about the significance of the concept of school unsuccess, the pedagogical causes of school unsuccess, the concrete measures which can lead to the prevention and combating of school unsuccess.

The present research was focalised especially on the qualitative and less on the quantitative aspects. This is the reason why we were interested in the way the interviewed people understand the school unsuccess, with suggestive examples in this direction, and the causes responsible for the occurrence and maintenance of this. The identification of difficulties with which the students are confronted, the causes which determine the school unsuccess, the solutions meant to diminish the school unsuccess, it can constitute a starting point in the elaboration and implementation of some efficient strategies of prevention and combating school unsuccess by the schools.

6. Findings

In the presentation and interpretation of data we have opted for their structuring according to the research objectives:

- ***OS1: Understanding the perspective of the interviewed people on school unsuccess***

Understanding the phenomenon of school unsuccess contains the following traits, it is both lived as an individual process (which affects especially the respective person) but also as a social process (its effects can be reflected on family, school, community). For the open question *What do you understand by school unsuccess? Give examples of concrete situations in which children who are confronted with school unsuccess-* the interviewed subjects have indicated one-two forms of school unsuccess. The data obtained from the participants in the research are found in the Table 1 below:

Table 1. The teachers' perception of school failure

Answer variant	No. of answers	%
a) staying behind learning	35	25.93%
b) low marks	48	35.56%
c) condition, repeating class	67	49.63%
d) school dropout	59	43.70%

Regarding the examples provided by the respondents, these have discovered a large range such as: the students' disinterest for learning, the conflicts with teachers (or antipathy towards them) which have as effect the student's refusal to learn, unpromotion of capacity exams, of baccalaureate etc.

For the most of the respondents the school unsuccess is associated with condition (on one or more subjects) and repeating class. Staying behind in learning has as consequence to obtain small marks for the subjects in which the student has difficulties. In the absence of some measures meant to remedy the situation, the lacunae in the student's education become deeper and the perspective of his/her subsequent evolution is not hopeful. According to his/her personality, the student develops different strategies to be able to face the situation of school unsuccess which he/she is confronted to.

Asked if they know personally situations of school unsuccess, the answers of all the participants in the research were affirmative which strengthens our hypothesis that the phenomenon of school unsuccess is relatively spread and implicitly known by all the people around.

For the question *How well do you know the case of some students which are found in the situation of school unsuccess?*. The quantitative results obtained for this item (Table 2) indicates a good degree of knowing the pupils' situation who are confronted to school unsuccess, either from the teacher's perspective or from the parents' perspective (their own child or a classmate or neighbour, their child's friend) either from the student's position.

Table 2. The knowledge degree of some students who are in the situation of school failure

Very well	Well	Average	Little	Not at all	TOTAL
39	64	18	12	2	135
28.89%	47.41%	13.33%	8.89%	1.48%	100.00%

➤ ***OS2: The identification of the main pedagogical causes which determine school unsuccess;***

Each case of school unsuccess has its own „history” which supposes a complex analysis, a psycho-genetic interpretation, dynamic and functional of the particular situation of each subject. Thus, a part of those who register school unsuccess come from:

- disorganised families with unstable residence;
- families disinterested in school or who want to let their children to attend only 4 classes;
- from families with poor financial situation and who do not have the possibility to support school costs;

- from families resulted from divorced parents in which case the children have left the domicile and leave to their older brothers then they leave the locality they live in cohabitation or they get married;
- from monoparental families – by divorce, separation or decease
- alcoholic mother or father
- difficult commutation – children who have not succeeded physically to commute and they have abandoned school.

School must be conscious of the huge responsibility which it has for the formation-development of school personality. The pedagogic demarche must be oriented in the sense of the child's support and of ignoring or neglecting the needs of the students' formation. „Providing a holistic curriculum is an important component of quality support for learners, especially those at risk of failure”. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019, p. 73)

The phenomenon of the school unsuccess cannot be read from the simple perspective cause-effect, being given the multitude of the contextual values which are interconnected and they have effects on the school performance of the student.

The main pedagogic causes highlighted by the participants in the research refer to (see Table 3):

Table 3. The main pedagogic causes

Answer Variant	No. of answers	%
Teachers	84	62.22%
Curricula	63	46.67%
Abstract content of learning	31	22.96%
School endowment	29	21.48%
Absence of support programs destined for pupils with learning difficulties	45	33.33%
Daily busy timetable	27	20.00%

According to the obtained results at school level the teachers are the main responsible for school unsuccess. Without generalizing the study highlights the incompetent attitude of some teachers regarding the administration of the pupils' situation confronted with school unsuccess. Among the aspects the participants in the research reamed out to the teachers, we mention:

- inadequate attitude of the didactic staff towards the students (according to the case: arrogant, indifferent, rigid, hostile, despising, irascible etc.)
- disinterest for the students' motivation for study
- the insufficient use of interactive methods (prefer expositive strategies, frontal which transform the child more in a spectator than in an actor of his own formation)
- Tendency to work in the class only with the good students, the others being systematically ignored;
- insufficient knowledge of the subject they teach;
- absence of the supplementary preparation in the school of the poor students;

- Teaching a high volume of knowledge, thus, the students do not have time to reflect on the learnt things in order to understand the subject and the parents are forced to appeal to teachers for meditations at home on pay, payment which is not negligible.
- teaching knowledge mostly theoretical and the students do not understand its practical use;
- Absences of the pedagogic aptitudes etc.

Unfortunately the aspects signalled by the participants in the research are part of the sad reality of Romanian school. By antithesis there are also teachers who inspire, who awaken in the mind and soul of the child the desire to learn, to self-surpass, to live in equilibrium with himself and the others.

The teacher is the soul of the didactic act. He is the one who guides the didactic act developed with the students and who puts his imprint on their development. School programs are essential curricular documents which precise the pedagogic finalities. The unfolding of the curriculum is not optional, but it depends on the teacher, the way in which this knows to make accessible the content of the curriculum for all the students. Often, the teachers hide after the excuse connected to the provisions of the curriculum when in reality the main difficulties of learning are felt by the students and they have the origin in the deficient design and development of classes. „Because it is too theoretical, with very abstract contents and few linked to practice, and it produces the disengagement of the students by not checking the functionality of the learning” (Martínez-Valdivia & Burgos-García, 2020, p. 7).

➤ ***OS3: The identification of some prevention and combating solutions for school unsuccess***

The prevention of school unsuccess has a natural base, previous to the situation of the school unsuccess which makes possible the preventive activity, base which comes out from the following observations (Ispas, 2004):

- *human personality* can be modified by the action of the exterior environment; it is necessary that these modifications to be desirable, according to social norms; school is one of the educational agents which can influence majorly the development of the human personality;
- *The situations in which* the human action is achieved can be also changed; no situation is irremovable; it depends in a great measure on the school how it organises and guides the change pursued to be produced by the means of the educational process.
- *The act itself* of school unsuccess has a resumed dynamic for the interaction subject-situations which can be influenced by a random or voluntary situation at the level of one or both poles of interaction.

Combating the phenomenon of school unsuccess is much more difficult than its prevention because it supposes the existence and action of some factors which already have led to the installation of an undesirable fact.

Among the concrete measures of prevention of school unsuccess highlighted by the participants in the research we can mention:

- promotion of the education system of the competent teachers with vocation for didactic career;

- development of some concrete activities of supporting the children with a slower rhythm of learning during the school years;
- sensitising the teachers to the negative effects of school unsuccess on a short, medium or long term;
- reduction of the number of students in classes, thus the teachers can deal correspondingly with all the students;
- counselling the parents and children having in view the interest for school success;
- supporting the integration in the public school of the children with special educative needs; allotting some human, material, financial, informational resources with this purpose;
- developing some didactic activities in an educational climate based on mutual trust and respect;
- valuing the formative valences of interactive, attractive didactic strategies for students.
- strengthening the communication and collaboration school-family-community.
- the elaboration of some strategies of treating differently and individualised the students who have learning difficulties.

Regarding the measures of combating the school unsuccess, the solutions identified by the interviewed people have highlighted:

- the need for a good knowing of the psychological traits of the students;
- importance and diversity of recuperation and fixation activities of ultimate knowledge;
- avoiding students' marginalization and their depreciating labelling;
- tight collaboration between school-family-students for the surpassing of difficulties which they are confronted to;
- motivating the student for learning, encouraging and permanent support;
- the elaboration of some intervention plans with clear objectives, negotiated together with the student and his/her family, detailed on stages, with achievement deadlines; implementation and monitoring of intervention plans; the evaluation of the measures achieved and establishing the future directions for actions;
- Applying some active-participative strategies which should stimulate the students' interest for school.

7. Conclusion

Knowing each case is essential for combating school unsuccess. Big variations of intellectual rhythm and work style, resistance to long effort, communicational abilities and cognitive needs, which generally exist between students, impose some differential organisational actions of the teaching – learning process on groups of students in which the individual learning tasks should be on the first place.

Another important aspect of the activity of removing school unsuccess is represented by the creation of some successful special situations for children with school difficulties because success and rewards develop the students' initiatives and increase their trust in their own possibilities.

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