The role of action research in the development of socio-emotional skills in students

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Abstract The paper presents socio-emotional skills in more detail, both through theoretical determination and through practical application in the form of action research with students in the third and fourth grade of primary school. The main goal of the research is to see how emotionally and socially literate students are, how much they know and how much they have developed certain characteristics (more specifically teamwork and creativity). By applying activities that were based on the previously mentioned characteristics, the emphasis was placed on encouraging a warm and pleasant climate in the classroom. The research took place in three phases. The first phase was followed by the design and preparation of both activities and actors. The second phase involved the implementation of activities after each formative evaluation. The third phase involved the final verification of the effects of activities on students, i.e. a summative evaluation, where the opinions of the participants on the work method and the introduced novelties that they had the opportunity to discover were examined. The obtained research results showed positive effects, that the students adopted the necessary and desirable skills in a different and more interesting way, as well as that they liked such applied work.

Key words: action research; evaluation; socio-emotional skills; students; pleasant atmosphere

Uloga akcijskog istraživanja u razvoju
socio-emocionalnih vještina učenika

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Sažetak U radu su prikazane socio-emocionalne vještine, kako kroz teoretsko utvrđivanje tako i kroz praktičnu primjenu u obliku akcijskog istraživanja s učenicima trećih i četvrtih razreda osnovne škole. Glavni cilj provedenog istraživanja je vidjeti koliko su učenici emocionalno i socijalno pismeni, koliko znaju i koliko imaju razvijene određene kvalitete (konkretnije, timski rad i kreativnost). Naglasak je stavljen i na poticanje tople i ugodne klime u učionici. Istraživanje se odvijalo u trima fazama. Prva faza uključivala je osmišljavanje i pripremu aktivnosti i aktera. Druga faza se odnosila na provedbu aktivnosti i provođenje formativna evaluacija nakon svake. Treća faza se odnosila na završnu provjeru učinaka aktivnosti (sumativnu evaluaciju), gdje su ispitana mišljenja sudionika o načinu rada i novinama koje su uvedene, a koje su imali priliku upoznati. Dobiveni rezultati istraživanja pokazali su pozitivne učinke. Učenici su na drugačiji i zanimljiviji način stekli potrebne i poželjne vještine, kao i to da im se sviđa takav primijenjeni rad.

Ključne riječi: akcijsko istraživanje; evaluacija; socio-emocionalne vještine; studenti; ugodna atmosfera

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1   Introduction

Emotional and social competencies have a special place among many others. Each child has certain individual characteristics that represent protective factors, and which together include the "umbrella" of the concept of socio-emotional competence. Social and emotional skills are the ones that help children live a healthy and safe life, so that they can get through life securely. Taking into account that every human cognition begins with feelings, that is, that a person learns including what he feels and that they can experience that knowledge in different ways, thus the processes of cognitive and affective kinds do not go without each other. In accordance with that, the educational and upbringing function are connected in one process. Therefore, the encouragement of social and emotional skills in students, which will be presented in more detail below, largely depends on both parents at home and teachers at school.

2   Socio-emotional skills

Socio-emotional competencies are one of the most important factors that affect the development of a child. They represent the growth of the child's ability to behave adequately in social situations by regulating their own emotions. Thus, socio-emotional skills are important to help a child learn and shape their character, but also to establish and maintain healthy and meaningful relationships (Butvilas et al., 2022).

According to the CASEL organization and Goleman's opinion, through the process of socio-emotional learning adults and children develop social and emotional competencies, i.e. an integrated matrix concept of eighteen emotional competencies, classified into five areas: self-awareness, self-control, social awareness, relationship building skills and responsible decision-making, which have been divided into two large groups: personal competence (self-control) and social competence (taking control over others) (Aygün and Taşkın, 2022).

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognize their emotions, drawbacks, virtues, needs, intentions, values, and weaknesses, and how they affect their behaviour. Self-awareness is the basis of all emotional intelligence. It comprises three characteristics, namely emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. The skill of self-control (controlling oneself)

refers to the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviour in different situations, which includes: stress regulation, impulse control, self-motivation and self-direction towards achieving personal and academic goals. Self-control does not allow people to be distracted by harmful, disturbing emotions, such as sadness, anxiety or anger. People who successfully control themselves and their negative emotions, manage to keep calm, remain in a good mood and stay enthusiastic even in the most difficult situations. Empathy and the ability to take the perspective of others, as well as understanding social and ethical norms of behaviour, are the skills that are included under the competence of social awareness. Building and keeping healthy relationships with different people and groups through good communication and active listening and cooperation, is called the skill of building relationships (Lugonja, Keleman and Marinković Sarić, 2021). The last two ones, personal intelligence, represent the ability to effectively interact with other people by understanding their feelings and motives, as well as the ability to regulate one's own life through a clear understanding of one's emotions and abilities (Letić, 2017).

Both positive or negative educational and life experiences in most children affect their development, behaviour, and social and emotional competencies. Relationships between teachers and students help children achieve success in school, in addition to which they should develop many skills in their early years, including the ability to: communicate with adults and peers in the classroom, build relationships with others, express emotions, exercise self-control, show empathy, be motivated and socially engaged. Socio-emotional skills exert an influence on how a child copes with their emotions and how they react to the events happening around them. Children can learn about their own feelings and identities by socializing with others and sharing their emotional skills. Wu et al. (Wu et al., 2018) defined social and emotional competencies as the use of acceptable behaviour in order to socialize with others and encourage positive interaction. Sutherland points out that behavioural problems in adolescence are related to behaviour challenges in adolescence, and that reactions (such as classroom activities) are very important for changing children's behaviour in early childhood. A positive attitude is necessary to support the development of children, who enjoy interacting with adults who are kind, patient, flexible, creative, dedicated, righteous and honest. It is possible to build a strong relationship

with children over time by listening to them, talking and having eye contact with them during everyday communication. The author Wu points out that early childhood is a critical period, because at this stage children begin to apply emotional control and are sometimes able to find time to deal with their emotions. As indicators of emotional competencies, the author Suzić (2005) states the following: a clear sense of one's own powers and limits; control of disturbing emotions and impulses; empathy and altruism; truthfulness, building standards of honour and integrity; adaptability, flexibility in accepting change; innovation, openness to new ideas, approaches and information. Goleman points out that emotional competencies are learned abilities based on emotional intelligence (Marić Jurišin and Kostović, 2016). Understanding emotions means being able to recognize how another person feels about their expressive behaviour and the ability to connect certain situations to certain feelings, as well as being aware that two feelings can be present at the same time. A person with strong control of emotions is also able to influence them. Emotions and their controlling affect self-esteem, self-perception and the locus of control. When a child realises sees that they can influence the situation in their environment, they strongly believe that they are the one who is effective by themselves (Thümmler, Engel and Bartz, 2022). Self-control of behaviour and emotions is important because it can achieve long-term goals and leave over immediate reward and satisfaction. Students who possess self-control are able to think successfully, are able to concentrate, work effectively under stress and strengthen their inner motivation (Rijavec, Ljubin-Golub and Brebrić, 2020).

Walker et al. point out that social efficiency is one of the forms of social behaviour that has the role of mediator in improving self-determination. Social efficiency means the capacity of a person to apply desirable forms of behaviour, social skills and strategies, in order to make friends, access certain social groups, organize and manage activities in everyday life and improve quality of life (Cvijetić, Kaljača and Glumbić, 2020). For adequate social interaction, the ability to recognize the feelings of others based on their facial expression and other signals is essential. Frydenberg (2008) points out that children who lack social skills may have difficulty in distinguishing between different facial expressions and as a result do not recognize the feelings of others, and cannot adjust their behaviour accordingly. The same author believes that the development of social

skills depends on the efficient practice of communication within and outside the family, and that basic social skills include verbal and non-verbal communication. Argyle (1999) points out that people who are socially incompetent have difficulty in non-verbal communication, and they cannot maintain eye contact when greeting people.

If a child is deprived of the opportunity to develop his/her socio-emotional potentials in a particular period of time and in an adequate manner, he/she may be at higher risk of school failure, juvenile delinquency, as well as various problems during his/her life (Aviles, Anderson and Davila, 2006). The child's self-development, life values and attitudes directly depend on socio-emotional development.

There are many reasons why a child may show socio-emotional difficulties (Aviles, Anderson and Davila, 2006). Barbarin (2002) points to four possible risk factors that impair a child's functioning:

1) early deprivation and trauma in childhood;
2) family dysfunction (conflict);
3) involvement in the child protection system;
4) danger in the environment (limited) resources (Aviles, Anderson and Davila, 2006: 33).

Fichten et al. (Fichten et al., 1992) state that appropriate facial expression, body position and posture, movements, hand gestures, paralinguistic signs and complex non-verbal behaviour are components of social skills (Stanimirović and Mijatović, 2012). The author Suzić includes the following as social competencies: understanding of other individuals and groups; interpretation of emotional changes in groups in assessing how strong the relationship is; agreement, compliance with the goals of the group or organization, collaboration; group management: being a leader and being led, making connections, ability to persuade, organizational skills, team skills, division of labour; communication: listening openly and sending convincing messages, face-to-face communication, non-violent communication; supporting others, being sensitive to the development needs of others and supporting their abilities; respect for being different, tolerance, democracy; a sense of positive belonging to a nation and civilization.

The development of social and emotional skills enables children to learn from adults, to make friends, to express their thoughts and feelings, as well as to successfully deal with frustration. In the first years of life, children suddenly (abruptly) develop social and emotional capacities (abilities) that should prepare them and enable them to be self-confident, to have trust, to be empathetic, intellectually curious, able to master language and communication. An appropriate social development requires knowing and understanding of the norms, rules and values of the community from which the individual comes and from lives in (Marić Jurišin and Kostović, 2016).

Socio-emotional processes include feelings and motivations that are truly directed at another person in trouble or pain. Among the most effective is the human ability to empathize with others, which is known as empathy. An empathic attitude includes caring for others and understanding his or her perspective on an issue, including what causes suffering (Malti, 2020). Empathy has a special importance among the motives of pro-social behaviour (moral attitudes, emotional relationships based on intimacy, friendship and perceived similarity). Pro-social behaviour is a type of behaviour that helps others, but at the same time the person who helps can have benefits, on the other hand, altruistic behaviour is behaviour by which one helps others without expecting some benefit, even with a certain renunciation (deprivation) of the individual (Špelić, Zuliani and Milošević, 2013). Self-esteem is generally viewed as an inseparable dimension of the image of oneself, because a certain value judgement is associated with every descriptive information about oneself (Zlatković, 2012).

In the process of interaction with the environment, each child assumes perspectives other than their own, and therefore the teacher should encourage pro-social behaviour, exchange, help and cooperation and enable pleasant and positive interactions and relationships between a child and their peers, as well as a child and adults (Milošević, 2018).

3 Importance of socio-emotional skills for creating a positive/ stimulating atmosphere in the class

The phenomenon of teaching socio-emotional skills is gaining in importance, therefore the development of these skills was the central goal of school education (Butvilas et al., 2022). In the classroom, communication between peers is just as important as communication with teachers. Teachers can help children communicate with each other using small groups and group activities.

According to Nix, Burman, Domitrovic and Gil (2013), children's language development and literacy skills are related to their social and emotional learning. Children who have a good relationship with peers tend to adopt positive behaviour such as social competence, motivation, attention and persistence (Alzahrani, Alharbi and Alodwani, 2019).

Since the teacher is one of the key factors in the teaching process, the approach to the study of teachers is motivated by the need to discover the factors of effective teaching. Teaching is a complex process based on interaction and communication between a teacher and a student, where the teacher's activity is referred to as teaching and student's (activity) as learning. The basic purpose of teaching is for the student to adopt certain knowledge, skills and habits, to develop abilities and to form a certain value system, and the teacher is the one who mediates between the teaching contents and the student. Teachers are expected to create an atmosphere stimulating for work, to motivate and direct students to certain, predefined outcomes (Stojiljković, Stojković and Dosković, 2012). The development of socio-emotional skills influences the development of emotional literacy in teachers (Butvilas et al., 2022). The author Ryan singles out the following characteristics as key features of a teacher's personality:

a) warmth, understanding and openness towards people as opposed to reserve, egocentrism and restrictiveness;

b) responsibility, business-like manner and organisation versus avoidance of responsibility, negligence and unplanned behaviour;

c) stimulating behaviour, imaginativeness and enthusiasm versus routine in behaviour (Stojiljković, Stojković and Dosković, 2012: 32).

Communication competence is the ability of a person to interact in order to choose appropriate communication behaviour that would lead them to achieve the goal of social relations. The communicatively competent teacher is flexible and adaptable, copes with the social situation and plans their engagement. Their expectations are adjusted to the situation and they are ready to work as a team (part of a team), all of which is made possible by their high empathy. One of the more significant roles of teachers is to help children strengthen their self-confidence, so that they can control their emotions, find solutions to problems and be able to cope with challenges (Butvilas et al., 2022). A democratically oriented teacher makes decisions together with the group, offers help, encourages students to participate, tries to be objective, encourages students' readiness for cooperation and teamwork. Teamwork is an interactive process that allows people of different levels of expertise to reach creative solutions to commonly defined problems. Teamwork also gives opportunities for creating and developing new ideas and efficiency in relation to the work of an individual, as even the most productive individual needs much more time than a coordinated team (Karanac and Papić, 2012).

In the 1960s and 1970s, affective education was discussed, which included a part of the educational process that deals with students' emotions, attitudes and interpersonal relationships, social skills, and also included moral, spiritual and development of values, as well as student personality development in general. Socio-emotional learning affects the positive development of young people, which means that learning takes place in a safe atmosphere, where all students are taken care of and in which there are great expectations in terms of student success. Thus, students can be more engaged in teaching activities and can be better connected with others, and these closer relationships and better communication in the classroom can lead to students being free for seeking help they need it (Tošić Radev and Pešikan, 2017a).

The socio-emotional atmosphere affects the emotional attitude of students towards the teacher and a encourages a better attitude towards the teaching contents, as well as affecting the student's attention and acceptance and understanding of the contents. Students need emotional skills for education and for life after finishing their education, and teachers must have emotional competencies

in order to be able to teach them. With emotional care, schools and homes might become much more pleasant places, and pedagogically more effective ones, both for students and teachers, and for parents as well (Tošić Radev and Pešikan, 2017b).

Steiner points out that emotional literacy is an emotional intelligence based on love. The main goal of learning emotional literacy is to help people co-operate with each other without manipulation and forcing, using emotions and empathy (Marić Jurišin and Kostović, 2016).

The term emotional intelligence was first used and defined by Peter Salloway and John Mayer in 1990. Emotional intelligence implies the ability to perceive emotions, use emotions to improve opinions, understand emotions and control them, in order to more progress in all aspects of life. People with higher emotional intelligence are more empathetic, have better social skills, are more cooperative and have warmer and closer relationships with others (Ljubin Golub and Bohač, 2015).

4 Methodological framework of the research

When doing action research, one should keep in mind what there is to be changed, i.e. which innovations they want to introduce. In this case, the aim was to develop students' communication skills, a sense of empathy, compassion to others, to help them when necessary, to develop the ability to listen to others, to interpret emotional signs, and thus reduce violent behaviours. Every research, like this one, starts with identifying problems, and one of the main reasons is to find out how the development and encouragement of socio-emotional skills in students can contribute to reducing or preventing the manifestation of violent forms of behaviour towards others.The subject of action research involves determining the effects that the development of socio-emotional skills can cause in students' behaviour and their behaviour towards others. Surely, whichever activity or procedure is carried out, a goal must be set that directs further actions more precisely and creates a vision of what one is striving for. The goals set within this research are: a) encouraging the development of socio-emotional skills for student's success; b) nourishing socio-emotional skills in order to reduce the manifestation of aggressive forms of behaviour in

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students; c) introducing participants to a new type of research (action research) and a different approach to teaching; e) for students to be more open, to get to know each other better, as well as to hear different opinions and attitudes; e) for students to develop tolerance towards various actions of other persons; f) to learn to cooperate and work as a team; d) to learn to take responsibility for themselves and to be responsible to others; h) to develop creativity in students, as well as to have the opportunity to present different ideas and suggestions; i) to develop interest and motivation for working and acquiring new knowledge; j) to develop a positive image of oneself and of others; k) to appreciate and show gratitude to others; l) to learn to apply a new way of working in order to improve educational practice. The research was supposed to give answers to the following research questions: a) how to present socio-emotional skills to students in the best possible way (conceptual definition, their significance, i.e. basic characteristics); b) how to bring the term "action research" closer to teachers and students; c) how to develop non-violent communication in students; d) which methods are the most suitable for the development of socio-emotional skills in teaching; e) whether students and teachers liked this way of working and whether they were happy with it; f) whether students and teachers will apply certain methods in their work in the future. The research encompassed a sample of students from two classes, 3rd and 4th grade, of the primary school "Vožd Karađorđe" in Niš, which was carried out in May, school year of 2022. The duration of the research was initially limited to two days, due to the impossibility of receiving a larger number of students on the same day and the organization of extracurricular activities of students. With the consent of the principal, the professional assistant and the class teacher, we returned to the school after ten days to perform the research again. The research took place in three phases. In the first phase, a framework work plan was conceived, activities were designed for a particular time and space and in accordance with the age age of the students, as well with the entire organization of work with students. The second phase comprised the implementation of the planned activities, where after each activity a formative evaluation was performed and the achieved effects on the participants were determined. In the third phase, a final summative evaluation of all activities was performed, where the participants' opinions on the new way

of working were examined, using the assessment scale instruments and a short questionnaire, which consisted of four questions.

5 Initiation of action research

The main goal of action research is the application of theoretical content in practice, i.e.practical problem solving in educational situations in order to improve practice, which implies the involvement of all research participants: researchers, practitioners and research subjects (Banđur and Maksimović, 2015). The initial impulse is always a problem, a reality that is perceived as problematic, unsatisfactory or critical, and the first step in research is to set the goals of research and action, as well as to plan immediate action. Action research is of a qualitative character, and it was discovered in the work of Kurt Levin, in the research of social relations in groups. This type of research can help the teacher in teaching students to explore the key segments of the educational process that have an impact on the quality and level of a student's success in learning. The advantage of action research can be seen in the fact that it is not imposed "from above", that is, participation and contribution is equal for all participants, where all of them are equals and differences in the roles of researchers and subjects are not strict and all participants can be found simultaneously in both roles. (Arsenović Pavlović, Antić and Jolić, 2017). Teachers become more self-confident and an atmosphere of better cooperation is created (Kundačina, 2019). Action research takes place in four phases, which are repeated and thus create a cycle: planning, performing action, data collection and critical reflection. In relation to the classical approach to research, action research differs in three key points: the use of results, participatory (social) and democratic character (Arsenović Pavlović, Antić and Jolić, 2017).

6 Action research reflection and planning phase

In order to be able to plan, and thus do action research, it is first necessary to determine the nature of the problem and the changes that should be made. The principal of the school "Vožd Karađorđe" in Niš was first informed of the execution of the research, as well as two teachers in whose classes the activities were carried out. On the first day, the work was done with the students of the

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4th grade, where the teacher set aside one of her (last) classes for the needs of research. In the regular class, they were supposed to be taught a teaching unit on growing plants from the subject World Around Us, however, during the research, the activity was focused on teamwork. Educational tasks included students learning what the word team means when it is divided into letters, which skills it is connected with, and what socio-emotional skills it refers to. Educational tasks were related to encouraging more engagement and interest of students in work, to learn how to cooperate with others in the group, which are more difficult factors of team work, and which are easier ones. Functional tasks were related to enabling students to behave in a team, to perform their role and to cooperate with others, as well as focusing on spotting the differences in each member's attitude towards others and the ability to adapt to an individual. The method that was used during the implementation of the activity was verbal-textual (dialogue, discussion, reading, writing). From the teaching aids, an interactive whiteboard, markers, notebooks, pencils were used, and the work (research) was done with 23 students and a teacher.

As for the second activity that was carried out with the students of the third grade and their teacher, two classes of (fine) arts were replaced by the planned activities on creativity. Educational tasks were related to a more precise definition of the concept of creativity, the factors that encourage it and those that, on the other hand, distract from it. When it comes to educational tasks, the emphasis is on developing students' awareness of the importance of having creativity in order to make the work more interesting and attractive and thus facilitate learning. Functional tasks include enabling students to assess and show creativity at the right time, which they would benefit from. The same methods were used as in the previous activity (dialogue, discussion, writing and reading), as well as teaching aids, and for the needs of these activities, pieces of white paper were added.

7 Execution of activities and formative evaluation of action research

A more detailed description of the activities carried out in the classes has been presented:

From the above, it can be pointed out that there was an idea to implement a total of two activities, each of which consisted of three parts (introductory, main and closing, or final). At the very beginning, the students were given a pre-examination in the form of a short questionnaire consisting of four questions, which examined the general knowledge of students and their knowledge of basic concepts, as well as the assessment scale (consisting of 30 items) they filled by Likert scale. Since these are socio-emotional skills, which relate both to the individual and to establishing relationships with others, activities related to teamwork and creativity were included.

Activity related to teamwork:

Introductory part of the activity: The word "TIM" ("TEAM") was written on the board, where students were expected to present their ideas that associated them with the previously given word, then the ideas were written down, and after that the true meaning of the word was explained.

Main part of the activity: Students were divided into five groups (by taking out a piece of paper from a notebook). Each of the groups was given certain tasks on the topic "Spring is coming". The task of the first group was to write questions related to spring and to give answers. The second group was supposed to write a short essay about spring (following the guidelines, what happens in nature then, what changes occur). The third group was expected to create a group picture of spring, that is, for the group members to draw and colour how they imagine spring, with various details. The fourth group was supposed to write a funny text in a few sentences about spring (maybe something that will be different, unusual, even imaginary is allowed, that is, a kind of cartoon, but funny). The fifth group was expected to write two to three lines of rhyme on the topic of spring as a season. After explaining what they had to do, the students were given enough time to think over and agree how they would work.

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Then, when all the groups had completed their assignments, representatives of each team came out in turn and presented their group work.

Final part of the activity: In the end, after fulfilling the task, a short conversation with the students was held where they, in a few sentences, discussed the topic that was covered, if they liked everything, whether their group work went well, how they helped each other, and what they did not completely agree on. There were praises given to their work and they themselves also gave positive comments, they said that they would like to do similar activities again and that it was very interesting to them, which proves the achieved effects of the planned activity.

Creativity activity:

Introductory part of the activity: As an introduction to the activity, students were asked to continue the sentence: "For me, originality is ...". After their answers, another question followed, and that was to describe the situation in which they made something, created or conceived something differently and how they felt then. Did they show it to anyone, how did the others react to the same thing? Quite simply, a conversation was held with the students about whether they expressed themselves in a different way and in which situations they differed significantly from the others.

Main part of the activity: Students were asked to write the name of the classmate they sit with in a different way, i.e. with the hand that they do not use when writing and to try to read it in a reverse order, to introduce themselves (in two to three words) in the most interesting way, and then to draw the school as they see it in the future (from their point of view). They needed a certain amount of time for each activity and they were given enough time to perform it.

Final part of the activity: Students were asked questions, such as how they felt while carrying out the assigned activities and what it was like when something was done differently. They could write down the answers in their notebooks, and it was also written briefly on the board. In the end, everyone was praised and based on the whole atmosphere, it could be noticed that the students were satisfied.

8 Summative evaluation of the effect of action research

It is important to emphasize that pre-examination,was conducted in order to determine if the students were familiar with the presented concepts, and what their attitudes and thoughts about it are. This study was composed under formative evaluation. Action research cannot be done without a final, summative evaluation, which is conducted with the intention of determining the effect of the activities that were realized on the students. Emphasis was placed on the differences in students' answers to the questions asked in the questionnaire at the beginning and at the end, as well as on the assessment of the presence of certain claims in them. The students were asked to report how they understood socio-emotional skills, whether they could make a comparison between socio-emotional skills and peer violence, what is reflected in each of them, as well as to state which are the specific characteristics that are positive, desirable and acceptable, i.e. those that are covered by socio-emotional skills. The given results showed: a) that the students, after the activities, were able to more precisely determine the required term (socio-emotional skills); b) that they could remember and list more features than at the very beginning; c) students were able to connect different characteristics, define them and draw similarities and differences between them; e) based on the knowledge of good qualities and the meaning of socio-emotional skills, students were able to see more clearly the structure of peer violence and all other undesirable forms of behaviour. The impact of the completed research can be reflected in the broadening of the students' horizons, acquisition of knowledge and readiness to recognize essential concepts, as well as their application in the future engagement of the students. Concrete activities have contributed to the fact that students at that age become more aware of other people around them, become more compassionate, address their friends with more respect and are able to cooperate with others. Students were also introduced to the assessment scale, where changes could be observed in relation to the assessment of the presence of these claims in them, where for those who were initially characterized as less present (2, 3), later (activities) were strengthened on the scale and highly valued (4 and 5). Despite the fact that it has been shown that all students have successfully mastered the activities and understood the essential elements, it is necessary to constantly

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combine the affective and rational side through teaching, because it is one of the most reliable ways to build a comprehensive adult personality.

9 Discussion

Considering that action research is a type of research that approaches the situation as it is, it seeks to see the difficulties that have arisen and to make certain changes in the form of progress (Kundačina, 2019). In general, situations are characterized as problematic, with students trying to problematize them, that is, to look at them more deeply, analyze, clarify and interpret. Action research implies the participation of all actors, which at the same time leads to stronger cooperation, improved collegiality and greater understanding. As the term itself says, a certain activity is undertaken in order to improve the situation, and in the process of research, theory and practice are inseparable. Action research enables greater independence for participants, does not limit them, but on the contrary they have the freedom to explore, feel the terrain, get acquainted with novelties and expand their experiences. Each individual has the opportunity to assess and see their current status how much they are able to improve, how much they have progressed, what is good and in which direction they could move in order to achieve their goal. What distinguishes action research from other types is that it is dynamic, it implies constant movement and repetition in the form of cyclic circles (planning, action, observation and reflection). The conducted research first included students of younger grades (3rf and 4th grades of primary schools). Different activities were applied in the classroom, and each of them did not last long, but changed. The aim of the activities was to direct the participants' attention, encourage them (they have a motivational character) and help them gain certain knowledge about socio-emotional skills. The activities were followed by an evaluation procedure, where students' perceptions were determined at the beginning, but also after the work, using questionnaires and assessment scales. The research obtained positive results. The students showed interest in the work, and their answers to the questions asked, as well as when evaluating the statements within the evaluation scale, differed during the initial and final check. However, it is certain that they possessed the required socio-emotional skills in themselves and knew how to explain them, but they were less aware of how these skills should be developed through teaching. In accordance

with the above, it is important to point out the importance of maintaining and more frequently applying teaching activities that would encourage traits that can be classified within the socio-emotional skills.

10 Conclusion

Each individual possesses certain potentials, talents and both social and emotional skills. The approach to them and the way in which they will be encouraged and manifested is very important. When it comes to creativity and teamwork, both elements make up one person, and creativity is what facilitates the perception of certain things and acquisition of new knowledge. It refers to introducing changes and searching for new ones again. The importance of teamwork is reflected in the ability to control oneself in front of others and to act in accordance with your own individuality and that of others. Through cooperation, many other characteristics and the personality of the child can be encouraged and expressed in a better way. Group work is a challenge for everyone, because it opens up space for testing patience, tolerance, self-control, self-confidence and other traits that come to light. The completed action research made an impression on the students, where everyone could get to know something new and interesting. It is important for students to have the right for their voice to be heard, and in this situation they achieved that. The obtained research results show that the existing situation and the resulting problem can be solved with appropriately planned work. Action research is more flexible, there is no distance and no deadline, but it is a process that lasts and gives more freedom to participants. The research aimed to find out how further socio-emotional skills were developed in students during classes and how they can be encouraged. Formative and summative evaluation was carried out, as a form of obtaining feedback.

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