

Portraits and Emotions Developing Emotional Intelligence Through Art *School Intervention**

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Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a relatively new concept in psychology. The theory of multiple intelligences created by Howard Gardner (1993) has been enriched by adding a new and complex concept: Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995; 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Wood & Tolley, 2003). This concept puts into question the emotional level of personality (feelings, affections, emotions, passions, dispositions, along with motivation, self-control, and the ideal of life) and represents an important basis for structuring and developing the personality of the children. Our paper proposes an *art intervention* within the school, having as a working hypothesis the *positive effect of art in the development of emotional intelligence at school age*. Expression through art contributes to the harmonious development of personality, to the refinement of emotional meanings, and to a better communication and interaction with others. It can also contribute to shaping the ideal of life, to a better integration into the community. The correlation between portraits and emotions provides educators with an opportunity to better understand the children's personality, a precious means of educational intervention. This work proposes an experimental model that can be approached by any educator at different levels of education.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, education, personality, art, portraiture, emotions

Introduction

The development of personality is a complex process, mainly influenced by the first stages of life (infancy, puberty, and adolescence). Each of us gets during these stages of development an emotional heritage, which will be the basis of our later personality. In this emotional heritage, we include also the psychological trauma, the aggression, the inferiority feelings, the vulnerability or, by contrast, the arrogance or the possessiveness of others. Many times this kind of emotions fuel life crises or inexplicable failures. The personal evolution is not only a physical or an intellectual one. We can speak also about an "emotional evolution" and this is what emotional intelligence refers to (Rusu, 2015; 2017b; 2017c).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a relatively recent behavioral model, rising to prominence with Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). The early Emotional Intelligence theory was originally developed during the 1970s and 1980s by the work and writings of the psychologists Howard Gardner (1993), Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990), et al. Emotional Intelligence is increasingly relevant to organizational

* **Acknowledgments:** The authors address warm thanks to the artists teachers and other collaborators from the Primary Schools of Athens, Greece, for making possible this experimental school intervention.

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and human development, because the EI principles provide a new way of understanding and assessing people's behaviors, their management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential. Emotional Intelligence is an important factor in human resources planning, job profiling, recruitment, interviewing and selection, management development, customer relations and customer service, and more.

Conventional intelligence was presented as being too narrow. By comparison, Emotional Intelligence is a much larger concept, which includes our development directions and our success. To be successful needs more than IQ (Intelligence Quotient). IQ tended to be the traditional measure of intelligence, ignoring the behavioral and the character components together with the intensity of our feelings. We have all met people who are academically brilliant and yet are socially and interpersonally inept, unable of empathy, of understanding other's feelings. A high IQ rating does not always automatically influence success. There are always people who succeed in overcoming difficult situations, only through a balanced way reporting to that situation: They seem to be really good listeners; they know what and how to say some things that will not make us feel offended or upset. They inspire us, through their caring and considerate attitude, so we feel more hopeful and optimistic, even if we don't have yet a solution to our problem. A special category of our friends has the ability of managing their emotional states, and does not get angry in a difficult situation. They only try to understand what is all about and calmly to find a solution.

They are excellent, decision makers, mentions D. Goleman (1995), and they know when to trust their intuition. Regardless of their strengths, however, they are usually willing to look at themselves honestly. They take criticism well, and they know when to use it to improve their performance. People like this have a high degree of emotional intelligence (EI). They know themselves very well, and they are able to sense the emotional needs of others. As more and more people accept that EI is just as important to professional success as technical ability, organizations are increasingly using EI when they hire and promote. For example, one large cosmetics company recently revised their hiring process for sales people to choose candidates based on emotional intelligence. The result? Sales people hired with the new system have sold, on average, \$91,000 more than sales under the old system. There has also been significantly lower staff turnover among the group chosen for their emotional intelligence. (Goleman, 1995, p. 87)

Considering all these positive aspects of EI, it is natural to seek and identify ways that will help us to develop and improve it. Our personality is always a complex of emotional experiences. Knowing and managing them according to a stressing situation, in order to achieve self-fulfillment and overall success, requires a high rate of EI. Tact and cleverness, patience and caution make it less difficult to overcome emotional blockages, trauma, or personal frustrations. In this way, EI becomes important. We can define EI as *the ability to recognize our own emotions, understand what they are telling, and realize how they affect people around us*. To be emotionally intelligent involves also understanding the feelings of others. This fact will help us to manage relationships more efficiently. It is understandable why individuals with high EI are usually successful in most of their activities.

Because they are the ones that others want on their team. When people with high EI send an email, it is answered. When they need help, they get it. Because they make others feel good, they go through life much more easily than people who are easily angered or upset. (Goleman, 1995, p. 43)

Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman (1995, p. 56) developed a framework of five elements that define EI:

- *Self-Awareness*—for peoples with a high EI self-awareness refers to understanding emotions, and not letting their feelings to rule their reactions. Their decisions have a lot of intuition and they don't put the emotions in the first place. They analyze with honesty their own feelings and emotional reactions. Strengths

and weaknesses, they work all together and anytime they can be improved in their performing. Many individuals consider that the component *self-awareness* is the most important element of EI.

- *Self-Regulation*—refers to the ability to control emotions and impulses. This means that the people who self-regulate typically *do not allow themselves* to become too angry or jealous, and they do not make impulsive decisions. Their action is preceded by thinking and analyzing. An efficient self-regulation contains, a diversity of perspectives, comfort with change, integrity, and the ability to say *no*.

- *Motivation*—is a key element of human development. A high degree of EI is usually accompanied by a high motivation. People with a high motivation are more productive, they don't avoid challenge, and are very efficient in whatever they do (Fiske, 1999).

- *Empathy*—considered the second-most important element of EI, is the ability to identify with and understand the wants, needs, and viewpoints of those around us. Being empathetic means to be able to recognize the feelings of others, even when those feelings may not be obvious. A direct consequence of empathy is a better way of managing relationships, listening, and relating to others. They avoid stereotyping and judging too quickly, and they live their lives in a very open, honest way.

- *Social Skills*—easily integrating into groups, teamwork, the willingness to participate in common social actions, show high social skills. People with high social skills are typically *team players*. Rather than focusing on their own success first, they *help others develop* and shine. They can *manage disputes*, are *excellent communicators*, and are masters at *building and maintaining relationships*.

The success in life is directly determined by an active EI—especially in career (Rusu, 2015; 2017a). The ability to manage people and relationships is very important for all leaders, so developing and using our EI can be a good way to show others the leader inside of us. The good news is that *EI can be taught and developed*. The process and outcomes of EI development also contain many elements known to *reduce stress* for individuals and organizations, by decreasing conflict, improving relationships and understanding, and increasing stability, continuity and harmony (Faison, 2000). We can learn how to express and control our own emotions, but we also need to develop our ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. Without empathy, human relationships could not be able to flourish. The psychologists consider this complex ability as emotional intelligence, and some experts even suggest that it can be more important than IQ. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), the four branches of their model are,

arranged from more basic psychological processes to higher, more psychologically integrated processes. For example, the lowest level branch concerns the (relatively) simple abilities of perceiving and expressing emotion. In contrast, the highest level branch concerns the conscious, reflective regulation of emotion. (p. 192)

The basic components of the human mind refer to three basic functions: cognition, feelings, and volition. *The cognitive component* of the mind includes actions, which need reasoning, comparing, assuming, inferring, evaluating. The main process of the cognitive function is concerned with conceptualizing, reasoning, and figuring things out. *The feeling (or emotional) function* is that part of the mind which is our internal monitor, which informs us of how we are doing in any given situation or set of circumstances.

Because we are emotionally complex, humans experience a broad array of emotions from happiness to sadness, from enthusiasm to depression, from joy to sorrow, from satisfaction to frustration, and so on. The third function of the mind, our ultimate driving force, is the formation of *volition or will*. Within this function lie our agendas, purposes, goals, values, desires, drives, motivations and commitments. This is the mind's engine, which revs us up and moves us forward toward some action, slows us down, or leads us to back away from some action. All these driving force, desires, volition, play a

key role in determining our behavior. (Wood & Tolley, 2003, p. 153)

Thus, although they serve different roles, these *three mind functions are simultaneous*. They function so intimately in our experience that it is only theoretically that we can regard them distinctively. *Wherever there is thinking, some related drive and feeling, exist. Wherever there is feeling, some related thinking and drive can be found. Wherever there is drive, thinking and feeling are present in some form* (Meyer, Gayle, Meeham, & Harman, 1990).

EI and School Education

Young school children can be trained in a process of modeling and educating emotional intelligence. Continuous contact with the classroom educator, interactions with colleagues and school friends offer the opportunity of developing specific emotional traits, behavioral and reactional tendencies. The teacher can intervene, through artistic tasks, in expressing these tendencies and shaping them positively, in order to correct some tendencies of aggression, negativity, or marginalization (Eisner, 1987; Chapman, 1998; Jensen, 2001; Rusu, 2015; Rusu & Chandrinou, 2013). Affective life in school-aged children is a fragile field, as emotional responses are extremely easy to influence, and any failure, offense, or obstacle encountered by the child can deviate his/her behavior, influencing the self-image and the perspective over their own future, or the position within the school group (Chapman, 1998).

Experimental Art Intervention: *Portraits and Emotions*

Working Hypothesis

Our experiment has started, given the following practical and theoretical hypotheses: (I) *Artistic creation of portraits gives students the possibility of self-knowledge (the detection of positive or negative emotions/feelings)*; (II) *The results of artistic student work provide the educator with a concrete means of knowing pupils, their personality, and the emotional problems that may arise*; (III) *Art has positive effects on group integration of children and the results of learning. Art contributes to behavioral optimization and is a tool to help combat marginalization and school failure.*

Presentation of Art Intervention in School

The idea of this experiment started within the international project Erasmus in Athens (2014-2015), which continued in Romania (2016 and 2017), entitled *Portraits and Emotions*¹, and consisted in addressing psychological knowledge (self-knowledge) themes through drawing in extra-curricular activities. A total of 150 pupils aged between 10 and 12 participated in the experiment, with a total of 380 works. The children's drawings were centered on portrait-task (self-portrait), through which various positive emotions (happiness, enthusiasm, joy, surprise, etc.) were expressed, emotional feelings generated by family or school but also some negative emotions/feelings (anger, dissatisfaction, isolation, aggression, sadness, crying).

Analysis and Interpretation of Results. Emotions

The human figure is the mirror of our own feelings, of our psychic state, of the degree of contentment to ourselves and to others. Artistic portraiture is a challenge in self-knowledge but also in the knowledge of others.

¹ It is an integrated application of the project Erasmus, *Intervention through art in school*—to which I participated with the psychological interpretation of the results, and took place in the schools of Athens. The project was awarded by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (2015).

At young school age (10-12 years), affective feelings are generally characterized by greater plasticity, vivacity, with the tendency to express them spontaneously and honestly. It is the age at which the process of self-knowledge begins, in direct correlation with a better knowledge and understanding of the world in which the child lives. Of great importance is the development of students' ability to define their own emotions and feelings and to recognize them in the behavior of other children (Rusu, 2017b). The purpose of our intervention was precisely this expression of the children's emotional experiences, the development of their abilities to understand and identify the various affective-emotional manifestations. The portraits made by the children gave us a surprising variety of expressions of their own feelings as well as of those who are next to them day by day (parents, brothers, educators, colleagues, and friends).

Portraits and Emotions—Artistic Expressions

For an easier analysis of the results of our investigation, we will detect *positive emotions* (smile, joy, feeling happy, enthusiasm, passion) and *negative emotions* (sadness and fear, feelings of anger, sadness and loneliness) reflected in portraits made by students. Positive affective experiences capture not only the joy of the game, but also the joy of empathic relationship with the educator (who offers love, protection, care, gentleness), with family members (sisters, brothers, cousins) and last but not least with the friends they meet every day at school (Figure 1). *Portraits* made by the children provide a wide range of human typologies as perceived by children of this age. We find among them portraits of the significant people in their lives, of the adults who give value and security to their everyday life: mother, father, teachers, and friends. We find serene faces (the educator), loving faces (the mother), tender faces (friends) or more serious portraits (the father), joking looks, interrogating expressions or preoccupied with child's education. Shared positive feelings also refer to dance or game manifestations (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Portraits.

The portraits express a variety of *positive emotions*, reflecting the affective availability, the positive tone of the majority of the children who participated in the test (65%). The smile and the joy (Figure 2) appear in simple, playful forms (Figure 2.1), as an endeavor to respond politely to others (Figure 2.3), reflecting *the sun* as a portrait/symbol capable of transmitting energy and joy (Figure 2.5). We observe they chose *the heart* as a symbol associated with expressing the joy of these children (Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.6). Also, religious smile and inspiration are considered as a reason for safety, and self-confidence (Figure 2.2). Other portraits with a positive emotional tone point to the idea of *feeling happy* (Figure 3), with its various playful, spontaneous, childish expressions, with a natural tendency to innocent and sincere manifestation of one's own personality. The associated *colors* are warm, radiant, with open, optimistic tones. Among the *positive emotions*, we find intensive experiences related to different cultural feasts or events of interest, passions for different games or activities (Figure 4). The expression of the faces (with a wide open mouth, emitting sounds of joy, with increased eyes as a result of increased interest) are accentuated by intelligence and even artistic talent. Such portraits appear, however, in a proportion of 5%, which shows us their special characters, associated with the special preoccupations of the children.

Regarding the category of *hypotonic feelings and emotions*, with a negative affective connotation, they are present in a considerable proportion (35%) (Figures 5, 6, and 7). Sadness, with its external manifestations of crying, without necessarily explaining its causes, appears in various situations, like drops of rain (Figures 5.6, 5.7), as tears on the cheeks of children or parents (Figures 5.2, 5.4, 5.6), as falling leaves or tears of clouds, as a communion with the "sadness of nature" itself (Figures 5.5). Sadness is also reflected by the gray, dull tones chosen by the children (black, dark green, dark purple). Interesting is the sense of sadness associated with feelings of shame, fears or feelings of inferiority (2%) (5.4). In a small proportion, expressions of fear, related to loneliness, may reflect family problems or marginalization in the school group (3%) (5.1).

Extremely expressive and ingenuous portraits are found regarding the *feelings of anger, nervousness and aggression* (Figure 6). Bold, excessively colored reds or blacks, as coloristic and energy-emotional extremes, are clear expressions of awareness of the negative, destructive nature of these types of manifestations. As a symbol of anger, children used lightning and storms, frowning faces, flames, red arrows, facial expressions of rage in their drawings (20%). Exaggerated egoism or infatuation is also identified and irritability is "denounced" as a negative aspect of personality. We also found negative emotions expressed in relation to death or illness of one of the parents or grandparents. Having a fundamental impact on the affective life of children, the health of parents and grandparents is often reflected in their drawings (5%).

It is interesting to find *the feeling of self-culpability* (5%) for children of this age, indicating some educational mistakes made in the family or in school. Child mistakes must not lead to guilt, marginalization, and sadness (Figure 7), but to their correction and assimilation of the information (data or conduct) to be used in different situations. The sadness and loneliness identified in some of the portraits put the question of the necessity of educational intervention from the teacher or psychological counseling for the student and his/her family. We can say that through these drawings, children have revealed a complex image of their emotional affective universe and at the same time contributed to the development of their own emotional intelligence abilities. They have given us also, access to a world in which they live and have indirectly referred to the quality of relationships with their parents and colleagues/playwrights. All this information is extremely valuable to educators who can intervene in trauma, loss or ill-treatment of children, helping to solve them, both psychologically and socially.



Figure 2. Smile/Joy.

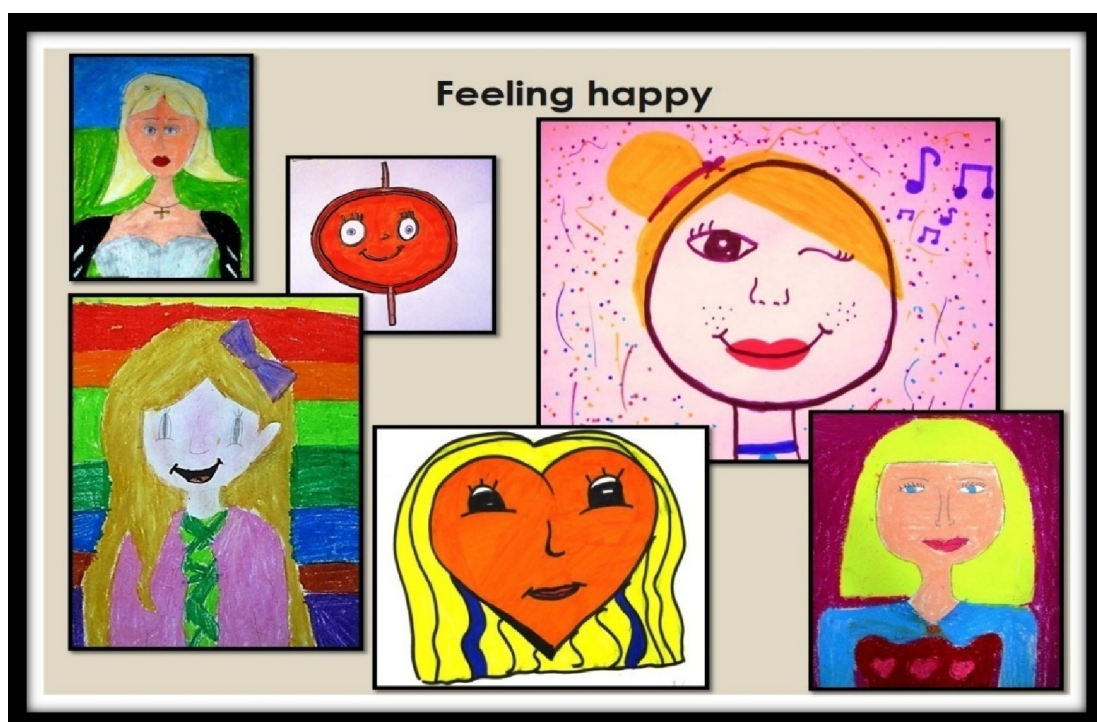


Figure 3. Feeling happy.

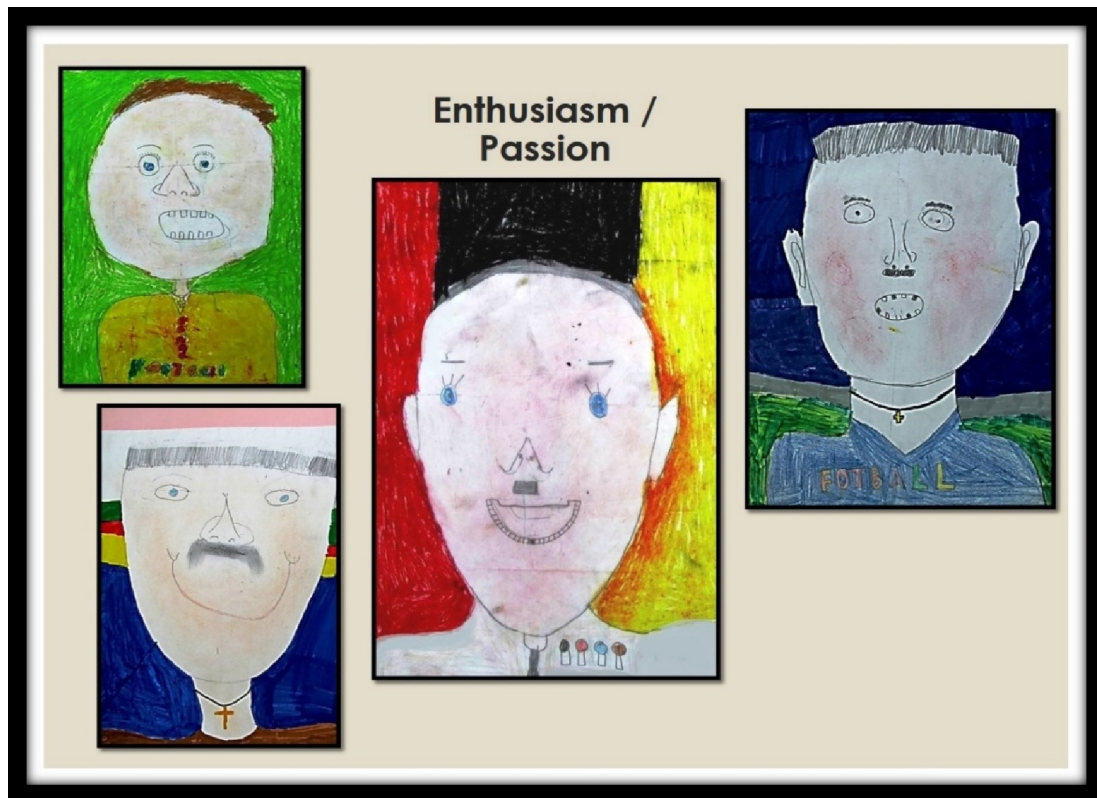


Figure 4. Enthusiasm/Passion.

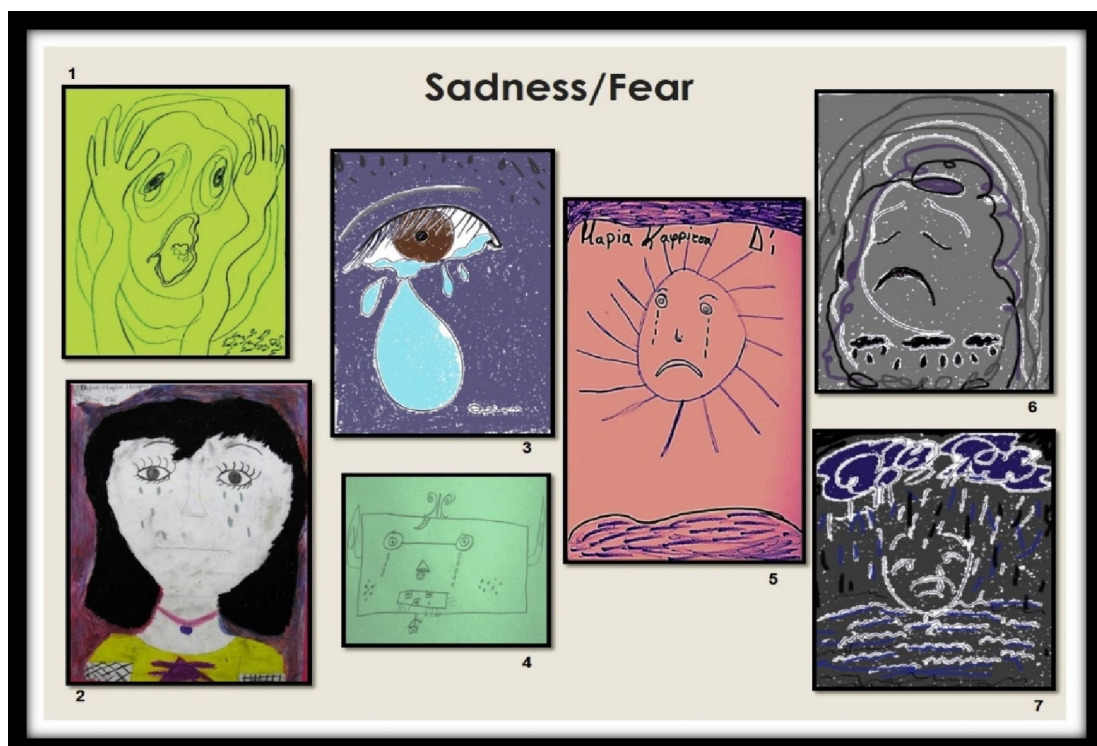


Figure 5. Sadness/Fear.



Figure 6. Feelings of anger.



Figure 7. Sadness/Loneliness.

Contributions to Developing Emotional Intelligence Through Art

The development of EI is a process that begins with the early years of life, when the child's interactive and emotional modeling is influenced by those around him. All the more, we talk about *the need to develop EI* at the age of puberty (10-12 years), when there is a necessity for success in communicating and interacting with others (Rusu & Chandrinou, 2013). The changes observed following the implementation of this project through art in school call into question some of the core components of EI. Even if we cannot talk at the age of puberty about high social skills or deep, intrinsic motivation, we can still talk about the existence and the need to develop empathy, self-awareness, and behavioral self-regulation.

(a) *Self-knowledge*. Portraits made by the children contribute to a significant extent to the development of self-knowledge, of the ability to understand their own affectional universe, their own emotional responses in different contexts. This aspect offers the inner power to live and at the same time to detach itself from a particular emotion; by drawing portraits the children contributed to the diversification of their own emotional experiences, which Lisa Feldman Barrett called "emotional granularity", which states that people with greater granularity and plasticity of the *ego* will have more emotional reactions and will adapt more easily in adult ages (2006, p. 34).

(b) *Empathy*. The development of empathy, an essential component of emotional intelligence, includes the ability to recognize and understand and even feel the emotions of others; we also recognize an *affective and emotional maturity* by understanding some difficult aspects of life.

(c) *Behavioral self-regulation* refers to the child's ability to control emotions and emotional responses in frustrating or stressful situations. The field of conduct is complex and, at this age, it has a special role to play in the process of adapting and integrating into a group and society. Behaviorally, intervention through art has an important and often observable impact: The cathartic effect is soothing, relaxing and offers a source of positive thoughts about oneself and others, helping to eliminate potential psychological stresses or accumulated frustrations (Rusu, 2017a). The following effects are noticeable: redefining self-image, increasing self-confidence in interaction with the educator and other colleagues; knowing and understanding emotions, influences our need to find ways of emotional self-control (e.g.: realizing that aggression and revenge are negative behaviors, we will search for modalities to controlle them); sharing experiences and personal impressions with other colleagues, developing a sense of integration (belonging to a same age group, with the same concerns, tendencies, and ideals).

(d) *Motivation*. The realization of these portraits questioned the *creative abilities* of each of the participating children. It is possible, as many of them, to be aware, with the help of the art teacher, of his own talent and the desire to become an artist himself.

(e) *The social skills* developed by children within this project refer to the relations of collaboration, cooperation in the activity, positioning within the creative group, but also to the leaders of the activity, the teachers of the art. Interaction with other colleagues has undoubtedly led to closer, cordial, understanding, helpful, and socialized relationships.

The intervention through art has directly contributed to the development of the *general creativity* of pupils as it favored processes such as: the development of imagination, ingeniousness, spontaneity in expression, the search for original forms of expression, the amplification of the new spirit, the discovery of talented children, who later can choose artistic creation as a professional career (Munteanu, 1994; Neacșu, 1998; Schiopu, 1999).

The children who participated in this experiment became more cooperative, more active, and at the same time, aggressive conduct or irritation reactions were noticeably improved, showing a more temperate behavior. Interpersonal relationships have greatly benefited, as children's responses to a brief interview show.

The remarkable achievement of this experiment (related both to the teachers involved and the parents) is that of *opening and communicating parent-child and student-educator*, where we are dealing with a better understanding of the wishes or dissatisfaction of children in the educational process or even in their family life. The desire to draw up the various proposed themes again shows us this constant need for communication, solving conflicts and defining tensions that inevitably accumulate over time. Only where these tensions exceed the intensity of a normal life, there are significant trauma and frustrations that require the intervention of the school psychologist or school counselor. Otherwise, good communication, empathy, condescension and unconditionally positive attitude towards children can help overcome the everyday relational difficulties that they encounter. We can say that the intervention through art had a profound effect overall personality of the children. They found themselves in a center of interest offered by the educator, which made them more alert, more cooperative and more efficient in relation to himself and with others. Intervention through art in school has provided beneficial results, and therefore experiences of this kind must be repeated periodically in groups of children.

Confirming Hypothesis

The first of our hypotheses is fully confirmed by the results, as the intervention provided a great deal of information on the personality of the students participating in the experiment, which had immediate effects on the knowledge and self-knowledge of the students. We can even say that approaching emotions in children's drawings can become an expressive means of knowing them, of their emotional experiences as an effect of the relational environment. The variety of feelings and emotions, the emotional nuances captured by children in images and colors show that at the age of 10 to 12, children experience very diverse and intense emotional experiences that later mark their emotional profile, personality in general, but their subsequent conduct also. We see emotions in front of us, through children's drawings, which will help an educator (or psychologist, school counselor) to understand where to work with that child, which elements of his/her personality are affected or not, and certain educational measures can be taken for optimization. As far as the second hypothesis is concerned, it seems to be confirmed by the children's enthusiasm and willingness to draw the proposed themes, and this exteriorization has made an observable contribution to an exhaustion and a better integration of the pupils into the group. In the case of children who reflect in their drawings parental aggression, these aspects can be contacted and discussed with the family, which impressed and traumatized the child. The benefit of expressing emotions through the drawing is that it provides the educator with a means of higher knowledge of his pupils (which is also part of his/her teaching tasks) and can adapt his behavior according to a personal profile marked by emotional delicacy, shyness, or on the contrary, a low emotionality, lacking too much diversity in manifestation. In accordance with the research on emotions, conducted by American researcher Lisa Feldman Barrett (2006), the emotional register of people who are acceded to a good adaptation is varied and very diversified. She uses the concept of "emotional granularity" (Barrett, 2006, p. 29), which reflects, as we already mentioned before, the sensitive, empathetic emotional capacity of an individual to feel as many emotions as his/her and of others. The more we have the ability to understand and approach things from multiple perspectives, the greater the capacity to adapt to new situations is, to overcome difficult times in life or

psychic trauma. With regard to the third proposed hypothesis, we mention that the duration of the experiment, but also the reduced number of dropouts or school failures did not allow us to draw edifying conclusions.

However, art intervention in school can become an affective-emotional objective in the educator-student relationship and may have, in the end, important evolutionary consequences, referring to the attainment of personal ideals and success in activity (Rusu, 2014).

Children should therefore be stimulated: to have various emotional experiences (the role of art is precisely this: theater, play, painting offer the opportunity to experience, experimentally and completely safely, all the human emotions); being able to interpret their own emotions, and understand their origin (embarrassment, annoyance—which have as cause, small personal selfishness); to be able to interpret and understand (to justify) the feelings and feelings of others around; to become capable, at some point, of controlling certain negative feelings or emotional instability, nervousness, dislike, or aggression towards entourage, class/playmates, or family.

Conclusion

The results of this experiment are especially addressed to the school counselor/psychologist, but also to the educators, who have at their disposal an exceptional means, as a content and as a value, that they can use in their work. A careful analysis and correct interpretation of these drawings provides an enrichment of pupils' knowledge, relationships with them and, ultimately, makes the teaching process more effective and the learning process itself more attractive.

Synthetically, we can say that intervention through art in school has particularly interesting effects on children as it can lead to: improving the emotional state by modeling self-image and self-confidence; development of intercommunication (with colleagues and other people in general); overcoming anxiety; ensuring a sense of comfort through these activities; getting the ability to react adequately in various daily living situations; development of work skills; education and development of cognitive abilities; development and training of general and fine motor skills; preventing/alleviating speech and speech disorders; developing and engaging the sense of forms, colors, and artistic expressiveness. Intervention through art in school is a way in which the artistic, spontaneous creation of children is used as a *cathartic means of self-expression*. Such expression and release of emotions improves the sense of well-being and contributes to *redefining self-image* in more optimistic tones. Art, as a therapeutic means, is increasingly becoming a support in optimizing the modern human being, developing its ability to self-knowledge, emotional and behavioral self-regulation. In the near future, we will not be pursuing the education of intelligent people in the sense of Gardner's (1993) intelligence coefficient, but above all, the formation of self-knowledge and self-control, emotionally and interrelated developed personality.

Emotional Intelligence and self-awareness becomes the cornerstone of personality development and success: *the ability to get rid of a bad mood* (emotional self-regulation). Old Greeks would call this *sophrosyni*, and Romans *temperare*, which means the abstention from the emotional excess, reaching the emotional balance. On the other hand, with no psychological supervision, suppression of emotions can lead to addiction. As we mature, we learn to control emotions such as anger, grief, fear, focusing on activities that can become true obsession: eating, studying, and dreaming. Instead, emotional active awareness in different types of relationships is really the key to growing and maintaining meaningful and strong interpersonal ties. Knowing the others always begins with getting to know ourselves.

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