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## **CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SEVERAL PRESCHOOL PROGRAM SYSTEMS IN THE DOMAIN OF EMOTIONS – THE CASE OF BULGARIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Nowadays the emotional intelligence has an important place in education from early age as it is viewed as a key to future academic success and social achievements. Currently there is no existent and approved social and emotional learning curriculum in Bulgaria and the emotional education is integrated within the curriculums of the main subjects (maths, music, art, literature etc.). In this report several preschool curriculums have been investigated. The Ekman's model of basic emotions (joy, sadness, disgust, fear, anger, surprise) is adopted in the current study and content analysis reveals the exact occurrence of words for emotions with their synonyms and derivatives. An analysis on the student's workbooks reveals the occurrence of emotional images (human faces, faces of impersonated animals or objects, emoji's). The results obtained are a baseline for evaluating to what extend the idea of emotions is being integrated. They suggest the need of a separate curriculum on emotions.*

### **Keywords**

**Emotions, Program System, Preschool, Emotional Image, Emotional Education, Emotional Stimuli, Curriculum**

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## **1. Introduction**

Emotional education is becoming an important concept in the development of Bulgarian education system. It is integrated within the annual curriculum for each grade. The current study examines the exact way emotional education is integrated within the first year of compulsory education – 5-6 years old kids.

### **1.1 Preschool Education System in Bulgaria**

Being a member of the European Union since January 1st of 2007 ("Bulgaria - European Union - European Commission", 2018), Bulgaria follows the European agenda for growth, described in the European strategy – Europe 2020. The Bulgarian national qualifications' framework (NQF) for lifelong learning, which was adopted in 2012, includes qualifications for all the eight levels of formal education and training and their learning outcomes. The NQF is a leading guidance for any reform in the national law. ("Overview of National Qualification Framework developments in Europe. Anniversary edition", 2015)

Along with all the other amendments, the last national reform performed by the Ministry for Education and Science includes the guidelines of the NQF and links it with the competencies the kids and students shall acquire throughout their whole education process. This was missing in the prior model of educational system (MON.bg, 2016).

In this report the educational system and the legislation changes will be reviewed in the context of the first year of compulsory preschool education only as this is the area of interest of the author.

The last legislation change in the Pre-school and School Education Act is effective since 1.08.2016. In summary, the “pre-school education shall lay the foundations for lifelong learning, providing for the physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and creative development of children, taking into consideration the importance of games in the pedagogical interaction process.” ("Pre-school and School Education Act", 2015).

The principles of the educational system are oriented towards equal rights for receiving education, they are child centered and supporting the ability of children to use the competencies they have mastered. (Article 3). Preschool education is compulsory from the age of 5. The knowledge books and teaching aids should comply with the state education standards, which represent the mandatory requirements for the results in the education system (Article 21, 22). In addition, those requirements are strictly coordinated with the competences as a result of the learning process adopted in the NQF in its section, concerning education (Article 23). A knowledge book is a didactic tool to support the child's overall education in one or more educational field. A teaching aid elaborates or strengthens the competencies

mastered in the education process (Article 151) Both knowledge books and teaching aids are assessed and approved by the Minister of Education for each new school year (Article 153, 162).

The preschool education is organized in school years and includes curricular and extracurricular time. The curriculum time shall start from the 15th of September to the 31st of May each school year (Article 63). Pedagogical situations are the basic for of interaction (Article 65) and are carried out in any type of organization of the school day (Article 66). They are part of the program system that represents a comprehensive concept for the child's development. Copyrighted and innovative program systems can be used in accordance with the state education standard (Article 70). The program system is separated in educational fields (Article 71) ("Pre-school and School Education Act", 2015).

Texts in the Pre-school and school education act are supported by additional ordinances, defining certain specific fields. Ordinance №5 describes ("Ordinance № 5 ", 2016)

Ordinance № 5 from 01.08.2016 adds on the existing law and describes the state standards for pre-school education, which include organisation of the school time, requirements towards the program systems, interaction with the kids during the process of education (Article 1). Children are separated in four age groups (3-4, 4-5, 5-6 and 6-7 years old) and stay in an age group for one school year and compulsory preschool education starts from age group 3 – 5-6 years olds (Article 8). Pedagogic situations are arranged in weekly curriculum plans. The minimum number of situations per week is 15 for the 5-6 years old and the maximum number of interactions cannot be more than 5 in addition to the minimum. Additional 2 situations can be added to the maximum number in case the kindergarden is using a kind of innovative or copywrited program system (Article 23) The last ones assure acquiring of additiona knowledge, skills and competencies in areas outside the educational fields (Article 31). Age appropriate pedagogic situations are expected to assure specific learning milestones and child development outcome and are divided in seven educational fields: Bulgarian language and literature; Mathematics; World Around; Fine Arts; Music; Design and Technology; Physical Culture ("Ordinance № 5 ", 2016). The distribution of the pedagogical situations for each educational field is shown in Table 1. Each pedagogical situation has a duration of 30-40 minutes for this age group.

**Table 1:** *Weekly Number of Pedagogic Situations for III Group*

<b>Educational fields</b>	<b>Minimum number of pedagogic situation</b>
Bulgarian language and literature	2
Mathematics	2
World Around	2
Fine Arts	2
Music	2
Design and Technology	2
Physical Culture	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15*</b>

\*There is a possibility of 5(+2) additional pedagogical situations to be performed, which is described in Ordinance №5

Ordinance № 6 ("Ordinance № 6") regulates the state standards for knowledge books, textbooks and teaching aids, including requirements for the content, graphic design, the assessment, and approval procedures. Knowledge books are didactic tools in aid of the education process in one or multiple education fields, providing the competencies described in the state standards (Article 3). Teaching aids facilitates the teaching/learning process by specifying, extending or deepening the learning content in its entirety or providing reinforcement or practical application of the acquired competencies (Article 6). Knowledge books and teaching aids are approved by the Minister of education.

### **1.2 Emotions**

Ekman's theory of basic emotions (Paul Ekman, 1992) – happiness, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, was adopted for this research as it is assumed that those will be the emotions close to the understanding of preschoolers 5-6 years of age, even if there was no prior emotional education.

### **1.3 The Present Study**

Based on the above literature overview a purpose, objective, and hypothesis of the current study can be formulated.

**Purpose:** To assess the extent to which emotions are integrated within several program systems in Bulgaria that children are following throughout their first year of compulsory preschool education.

The following research objectives can facilitate the achievement of the purpose:

**Objectives:**

- Preparing an emotional thesaurus for the six basic emotions including synonyms and derivatives.
- Analysing the existing thematic curriculum plan for occurrence of emotional stimuli in the form of words from the thesaurus.
- Analysing the teacher's manuals for each program system for occurrence of emotional stimuli in the form of words from the thesaurus.
- Analysing the knowledge books and teaching aids used in the first year of compulsory preschool education for occurrence of emotional stimuli in the form of face expressions.
- Formulating suggestions for future improvement of the content of program systems.

The total number of pedagogic situations (PS) per school year is 480 giving an average of 2.14 PS per day. Based on the guidelines for frequency of emotional stimuli provided by The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning from Vanderbilt University (The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations) it can be suggested that having one emotional stimuli per day in pedagogical situations will be a baseline for emotional education.

The **hypothesis** of the research could be formulated as follows: there exists one or more than one emotion stimuli per day within the program system.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1 Materials Used**

The whole sets of materials for six program systems approved for school year 2018/2019 were used in the current study, which represented 50% of all the approved program systems for this time frame ("Lists of knowledge books", 2018). The sets include thematic curriculum plans, teacher's manuals, knowledge books and teaching aids.

### **2.2 Procedure**

A Thesaurus, containing synonyms and derivatives of words for the six basic emotions was built using an online synonyms' dictionary of Bulgarian language (Slovored.com). A total of 174 words were used (57 nouns, 61 adjectives and 56 verbs). The total wordcount for the different emotions was as follows: happiness – 39, sadness – 25, anger – 33, fear - 29, surprise – 29, disgust – 19. The list is language specific and a translation is not included in this paper.

Data was divided in tree groups:

- a. Thematic curriculum plans – one set of plans for each educational field ("MOLIVCO - PLAY AND KNOW", n.d.; Pre-school education, 2018; Sample Yearly Allocation, 2018)
- b. Teacher's manuals (Galabova et al. 2018; Koleva, et al., 2018; Koleva, et al., 2018; Stoyanova, et al., 2018; Zdravkova, et al., 2009; Zdravkova & Pavlova, 2018; Zdravkova, et al. 2015)
- c. Knowledge books and teaching aids – 32 books in total (Baeva & Pekarev, 2018; Baeva & Yanakieva, 2017; Bourdeva & Shoselova, 2018; Christova Zankova & Zlateva, 2018; Dancheva, 2005; Gabrova, 2018; Gaidova, 2005; Galabova, 2018; Galcheva & Galcheva-Stoicova, 2018; Genkov & Zankov, 2016; Gyurova et al., 2012; Gyurova, et al., 2017; Kaleva et al., 2018; Kaleva et al., 2018; Kaleva et al., 2018; Kaleva et al., 2018; Koleva & Nathana, 2017; Konakchieva, 2018; Konakchieva, 2018; Nedelcheva & Hristova, 2017; Petrova, 2018; Spiridonova et al., 2018; Spiridonova et al., 2018; Spiridonova et al., 2018; Spiridonova et al., 2018; Vaneva & Velinova, 2017; Velinova, 2017; Vitanov & Ivanov, 2012; Vitanova & Semizorova, 2015; Yancheva & Bogdanova, 2018; Zdravkova & Ilieva, 2018; Zdravkova et al., 2017)

Group A and B were indexed and reviewed using dtSearch 7.92 (Build 8572). Boolean phrases and fuzzy search were used for the quantitative content analysis.

Group C was analysed manually, using the facial expressions for Ekman's basic emotions.

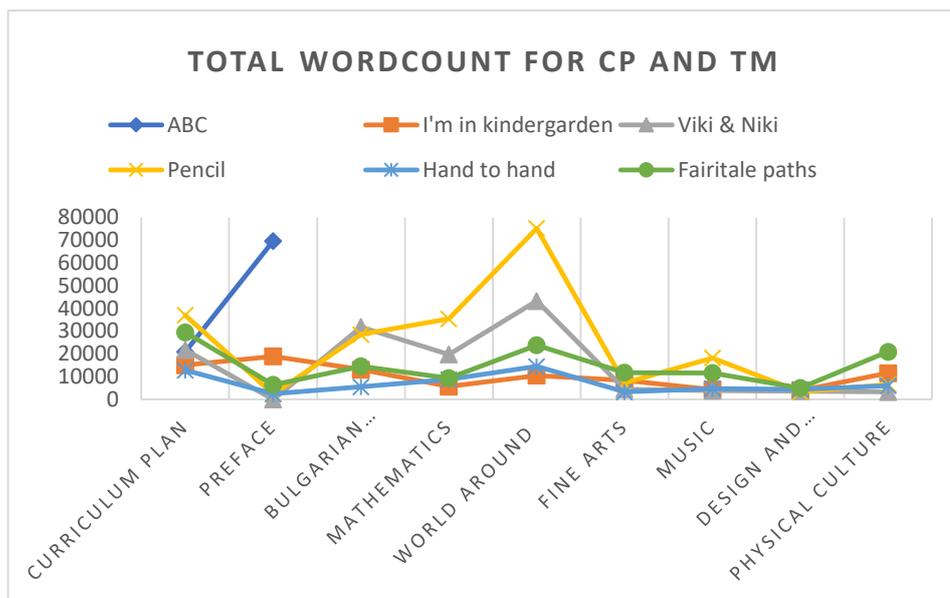
### **2.3 Statistical Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were calculated including means, standard deviations, and Frequency distribution using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 19 (IBM SPSS Statistics 19; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, United States).

## **3. Results**

### **3.1 Thematic Curriculum Plans and Teacher's Manuals**

Thematic curriculum plans (CP) and teachers' manuals (TM) were examined first and separately from the knowledge books (KB). The results for the wordcount are shown in Fig.1. The pack for program system (PS) Hand to hand showed as the one containing the least number of words (n=62850), and the set for PS Pencil gave the highest wordcount (n=214320). The wordcount is not evenly distributed, showing maximum in the Worlds around education field (EF), followed by Bulgarian language and literature. Fine arts and design and technology education fields are showing the lowest wordcount.



**Figure 1:** Total Wordcount for Thematic Curriculum Plans and Teachers’ Manuals for the Six Program Systems

One of the program systems – ABC, has a specific organization of the teachers’ manual – the pedagogic situations are combined, including a primary educational field and a secondary one and the worksheets in the knowledge books also covers the two fields at a time. As a result, the text in the teacher manual is not separated in sections for each field, but is counted as a whole. The wordcount is included in the Preface section for this specific program system, as can be seen in Figure 1.

The quantitative content analysis of the thematic curriculum plans yielded a mean score of 39.5 (StD=42.99, min=4, max=132) with PS Pencil showing the highest count of emotional words. Examining the number of occurrences of different parts of speech, the results (Table 2) show quite close numbers for nouns and adjectives: noun yields mean score of 15.67 (StD=16.66, mn=3, max=45), adjective gives mean of 15.33 (StD=17.96, min=0, max=50) and verb shows the lowest in occurrence with mean score of 8.5 (StD=14.24, min=0, max=37). All results show big standard deviation values. Distribution of emotion words within the six different emotions examined (Table 2) gives a mean of 34 (StD=41.76, min=3, max=116) for the emotion happiness. All the rest of the emotions have means of 3 or less, with no results for disgust.

**Table 2:** *Wordcount per Type of Speech and Type of Emotion in CP*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Words per type of speech in CP</b>				
<b>noun</b>	15,6667	16,65733	3,00	45,00
<b>adjective</b>	15,3333	17,96292	,00	50,00
<b>verb</b>	8,5000	14,23728	,00	37,00
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Word per type of emotion in CP</b>				
<b>happiness</b>	34,0000	41,76123	3,00	116,00
<b>sadness</b>	1,3333	1,96638	,00	5,00
<b>anger</b>	,5000	1,22474	,00	3,00
<b>fear</b>	3,0000	3,40588	,00	9,00
<b>surprise</b>	,6667	1,21106	,00	3,00
<b>disgust</b>	<b>.00</b>	.00	.00	.00

Teachers manuals showed the same pattern as the curriculum plans. PS Pencil emerges as the teachers' manual with highest occurrence of words for emotions within the different educational fields (mean=59.25, StD=96.25, min=3, max=282) and Hand to hand gives the lowest scores (mean=8.38, StD=9.24, min=0, max=26). As per types of speech and types of emotions the mean values in the teachers' manuals are shown in Table 3. Happiness is present with a mean of 120.33 (StD=102.85, min=39, max=313). All the rest of the emotions (anger, sadness, surprise, disgust, fear) are showing a mean of 33.50 or less. Disgust is present in the Teachers' manuals with a mean of .50 (StD=.84, min=.00, max=2.00).

**Table 3:** *Wordcount per Type of Speech and Type of Emotion in TM*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Words per type of speech in CP</b>				
<b>noun</b>	68,3333	47,47912	35,00	156,00
<b>adjective</b>	77,8333	64,44972	21,00	189,00
<b>verb</b>	40,0000	45,18407	9,00	127,00
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Word per type of emotion in CP</b>				
<b>happiness</b>	120,3333	102,84681	39,00	313,00
<b>sadness</b>	12,8333	10,26483	1,00	26,00

<b>anger</b>	8,0000	8,14862	3,00	23,00
<b>fear</b>	33,5000	30,93703	3,00	90,00
<b>surprise</b>	9,1667	8,47152	1,00	24,00
<b>disgust</b>	,5000	,83666	,00	2,00

When examined together the total wordcount for emotional words in both the thematic curriculum plans and teachers' manuals yield the expected results of great mean values for happiness (mean=154.33, StD=143.32) and low for the rest of the emotions with a maximum mean value of 38.33 for fear and lowest for disgust - .50. All the data can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4:** *Emotions per Type in CP+TM*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Word per type of emotion in CP+TM</b>				
<b>happiness</b>	154,3333	143,32295	58,00	429,00
<b>sadness</b>	14,1667	11,82230	1,00	28,00
<b>anger</b>	8,5000	9,26823	3,00	26,00
<b>fear</b>	38,3333	31,33475	3,00	95,00
<b>surprise</b>	9,8333	9,49561	1,00	27,00
<b>disgust</b>	,5000	,83666	,00	2,00

### 3.2 Knowledge Books and Teaching Aids

Knowledge books and teaching aids altogether were examined manually and the results were proportional to the ones in the thematic curriculum plans and the teachers' manuals. A mean score of 492.00 (StD=279.62, min=238, max=994) is highest for EF World around (Table 5). The EF with lowest mean score on emotional stimuli is Fine Arts with mean=75.67 (StD=81.85, min=19, max=240). Examining the number of occurrences of different types of emotional stimuli (face expression, impersonated animal expression, impersonated object expression, emoji), the results (Table 5) yield mean score of 941.83 (StD=293.52, min=616, max=1419) for the person face expression. The lowest result is for the emojis with mean of 97.00 (StD=134.88, min=4, max=340). All results show big standard deviation values. Distribution of emotion words within the six different emotions examined (Table 5) gives a mean of 1215.00 (StD=528.81, min=792, max=2052) for the emotion happiness. All the rest of the emotions have means of 59.5 or less, with disgust holding the lowest result again.

**Table 5: Mean Values in Knowledge Books**

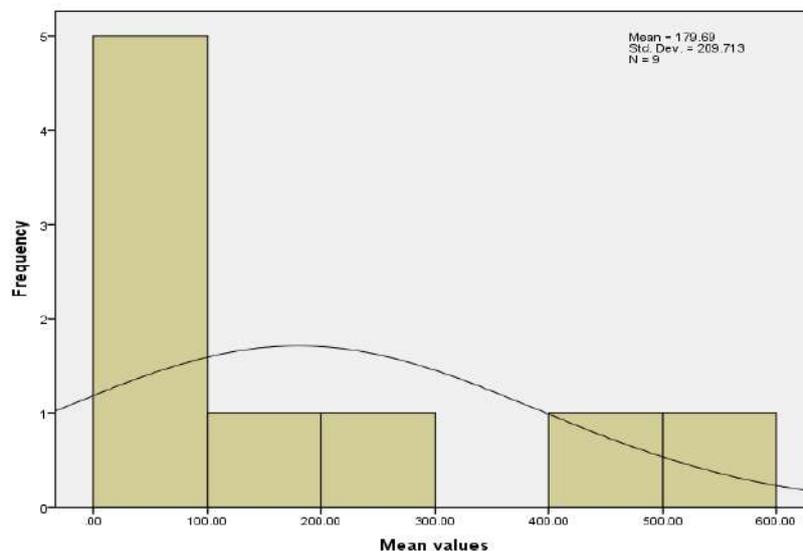
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Words for emotions per EF in KB</b>				
Bulgarian	429,8333	139,54987	327,00	694,00
Mathematics	223,6667	83,95634	114,00	336,00
World around	492,0000	279,61974	283,00	994,00
Fine Arts	75,6667	81,85271	19,00	240,00
Music	91,0000	110,49525	27,00	315,00
Design and technologies	79,3333	57,67380	22,00	176,00
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Faces per type in KB</b>				
PFE	941,8333	293,52030	616,00	1419,00
AFE	430,0000	193,75035	225,00	724,00
OFE	164,3333	180,77020	61,00	530,00
EFE	97,0000	134,88365	4,00	340,00
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Emotions per type in KB</b>				
<b>happiness</b>	1215,0000	528,80809	792,00	2052,00
<b>sadness</b>	59,5000	59,39276	27,00	178,00
<b>anger</b>	26,6667	18,51126	13,00	56,00
<b>fear</b>	36,6667	27,99762	16,00	81,00
<b>surprise</b>	21,3333	18,57597	4,00	50,00
<b>disguist</b>	,6667	1,63299	,00	4,00

	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Words for emotions per EF in KB</b>				
Bulgarian	429,8333	139,54987	327,00	694,00
Mathematics	223,6667	83,95634	114,00	336,00
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<b>anger</b>	26,6667	18,51126	13,00	56,00
<b>fear</b>	36,6667	27,99762	16,00	81,00
<b>surprise</b>	21,3333	18,57597	4,00	50,00
<b>disguist</b>	,6667	1,63299	,00	4,00

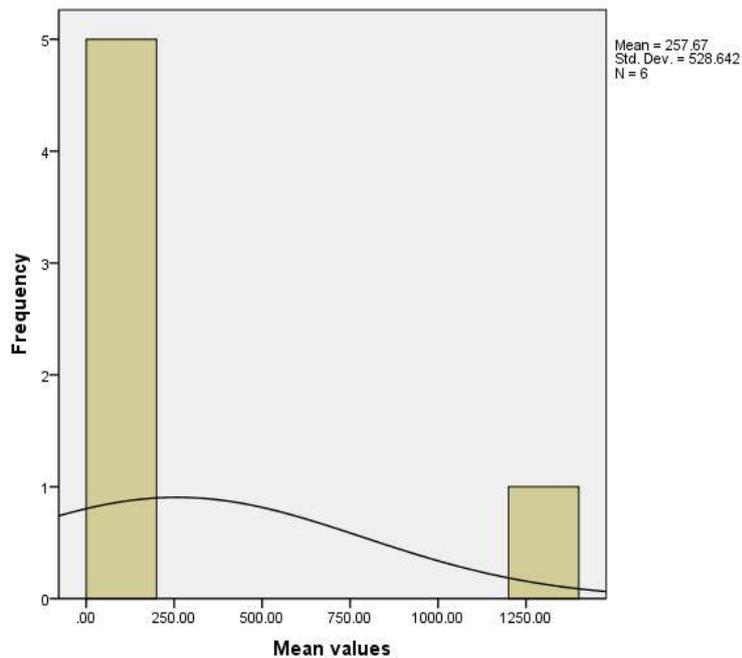
### 3.3 Whole Program Systems Results

Adding all the values for emotional stimuli in the CP, the TM and the KB give an overview of each program system itself. With a mean of 179.89 (StD=209.71, min=3.5, max=572) a distribution of the emotional stimuli throughout the educational fields is represented. It can be seen that 5 out of 9 (seven educational fields, prefaces, curriculum plans) sectors are showing mean values of less than 100.



**Figure 2:** *Frequency distribution of the emotional stimuli in all the program systems per educational fields*

The frequency distribution of the emotions in the program systems shows the obvious non equal distribution of the emotions. Five out of six emotions are showing mean values of less than 250.00 and only one – happiness yells a mean of 1335.33 (StD=599.23, min=831.00, max=2385.00).



**Figure 3:** *Frequency Distribution of the Emotions in the Program Systems*

#### **4. Discussions**

The wordcount for the thematic curriculum plans and teachers' manuals gave expected results on the distribution of words throughout the different educational field. The high count in World around educational fields (EF) shows that this is the EF used more often for social and emotional interaction with the preschoolers. The second highest – Bulgarian language and literature EF, provides texts that usually evoke emotions, and not only name them; thus, gives a different level of understanding to the kids.

The results for the emotion happiness can suggest that throughout the thematic curriculum plans and teachers' manuals educators are led to organise the pedagogical situations in a way to evoke positive feelings about the outcome with the preschoolers. Reviewing the lack of occurrence for the feeling disgust and the low occurrence of all the rest, compared to happiness, question arises, whether the emotional education provides enough stimuli for the teachers to speak about negative emotions and the way kids should deal with them.

Emotions are not distributed evenly throughout the educational fields, but in some program systems emotions are not approached and the emotional education of kids is in the hands of the teacher and his understanding of emotional education.

Similar results are showed in the knowledge books. The finding that Fine Arts, Music and Design and technology education fields are showing low results in emotional stimuli occurrence suggests that they are not explored to their maximum. Arts in all forms give a field

of exploring the feelings, understanding and expressing them in a way much more understandable to kids.

#### **4.1 Limitations**

A limitation of the study can be considered the fact that only half of the program systems were examined. Also only words carrying a meaning of emotion were used for the quantitative content analysis. A qualitative analysis based on a massive thesaurus built of words and phrases evoking the idea of certain emotion can be carried out. Also the current study was based on the six basic emotions from Ekman's theory. Another theory of emotions can be adopted for the research to be carried out.

#### **4.2 Implications and Future Directions**

The whole study raised more questions than it answered. Based on the current finding several possible ways of implementing all base emotions at a deeper level into the program systems for 5-6 years olds can be suggested:

1. New knowledge books or teachings aids can be issued in all educational fields, having the emotional education well integrated throughout the whole curriculum. On one hand this could be seen as a way to facilitate teachers in performing emotional education, however, for a disadvantage might be considered the fact that all the knowledge books are issued by groups of authors, specialized in one educational field only (mathematics for example). Thus, new specialists shall be included in the process so the integration of the two domains can be successful.
2. A new educational field of Emotional intelligence and social skills can be adopted, assessed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. This will assure precise and professional way of approaching the domain of emotional intelligence, with specific time allocated for that in the curriculum, tasks, and games designed for improving those competences. Disadvantage of this approach can be considered the fact that pedagogical situations for this field will be carried only once/twice per week and not on a consistent daily basis.
3. Another way to achieve a cross fields integration of the emotional intelligence within the whole curriculum could be a specific teacher's manual with additional training materials, tools that can be used, guidance and suggestions for adding up on the pedagogical situations that follow along the existing curriculum. If a specific time within the curriculum plan is not allocated for this, it will all stay in the hands of the teacher's professionalism and skills, which will bring up the question of efficiency.

Proper training on working with the manual, mentoring and support might also be needed.

4. Based on a study of the traits that make Social and Emotional Learning systems successful made by the CASEL group (Casel, 2013) it can be suggested that all of the above are implemented as a pack. Advantage of this strategy will be the full extent to which the Emotional education will be brought. This, however, would be the most time consuming strategy.
5. Involving parents in the emotional education of the children might also be a part of a whole educational strategy.

The research gives a baseline for the place the emotional education is currently at in Bulgaria. Future studies shall answer important questions like does the fact that words for emotions and emotional stimuli exist on high frequency in a program system suggests that it will give proper emotional education. Can a choice of which program system shall be used be made only on the wordcount? Steps for improvement can be followed.

### **Acknowledgment**

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