

## **Study of the teachers' and students' options and perceptions of the role of school in the graduates' intellectual and social formation**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the present article is to present the results of a comparative study of the teachers' and students' (important actors of education) perceptions of the role of school in forming the graduates, on the two major plans of human becoming: the intellectual plan and the social plan. Our study was performed on a sample of teachers and students from three military high schools and two civil high school colleges.*

**Keywords:** *option, perception, school, intellectual formation, social formation*

### **1. Introduction**

The idea of the present article has appeared naturally after the conclusions we formulated in the article “*Study on model values and attitudes of high school graduates - a reference of socialization through school*” (published in the Scientific Bulletin no. 2/2009 of DPPD Pitești) in which, by using the content analysis, we pointed out the fact that important official documents of the Romanian school (the Law of Education no. 84/1995, the profile of the compulsory education graduate, the profile of the high school graduate and 35 school curricula) underline the necessity of the school reaching certain objectives of a social nature.

Any acquisition projected on the level of the compulsory education graduate or on the level of the high school graduate is significant through its utility degree in the social plan of the individual's existence, whether this means being a citizen (the role of community

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member or society member), a professional (the role of member of a professional organization) or a particular person (the role of family member, the role of a friend etc.).

## 2. Study hypothesis

The hypothesis that we intend to check in the present study (based on the approach and the conclusions of our study mentioned above) is the following: *If the socialization is prefigured on the level of high school finalities, then the teachers and their students will consider the role of the school important in the students' social becoming, going beyond the pre-eminence of the intellectualism.*

## 3. The structure of the subjects' sample

We consider that it is important not only to describe the configuration of the teachers' and students' options and perceptions of the role of school in the graduates' intellectual and social formation, but especially to make comparisons between the teachers' and the students' positions in order to point out the similarities or the differences. Also, our investigation was conducted in two different educational environments: the civil and military. We made this choice because the socializing objectives are emphasized from the very definition of the mission of the military high school colleges, and the accent in accomplishing the educational activities is placed on the students' (future military professionals) social instrumentation.

Our study was conducted on:

- a sample of 500 students, from three military high school colleges (CML Breaza, CML Alba Iulia, CML Câmpulung Moldovenesc), and two civil high school colleges ("Gheorghe Șincai" National College, Bucharest, "A.D.Xenopol" Economic College, Bucharest), configured as follows:

Structure of students' sample

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Military High School	300	60,0	60,0
	Civil High School	200	40,0	100,0
	Total	500	100,0	100,0

- a sample of 96 teachers, configured as follows:

Structure of teachers' sample

		Frequency	Percent		
Valid	Military High School Breaza	27	28.1	Military High School	64 66.7
	Military High School Alba	16	16.7		
	Military High School Campulung	21	21.9		
	Civil High School AD Xenepol	14	14.6	Civil High School	32 33.3
	Civil High School Gh. Sincai	18	18.8		
	Total	96	100.0	Total	96 100.0

#### 4. Research methods and instruments

In realising our investigation we used questionnaires. The questionnaires applied were of the omnibus type for teachers, as well as for students. The items used in the questionnaires were similar, with the purpose of facilitating the comparison of the answers.

The questionnaires we used have collected numerous data regarding a wider range of themes, that of the socialization through school. In the present study we present the results regarding the teachers' and students' options and perceptions of the dominant role of the school: the role in the intellectual plan or the role in the social plan of the graduates' becoming.

#### 5. The results of the investigation performed

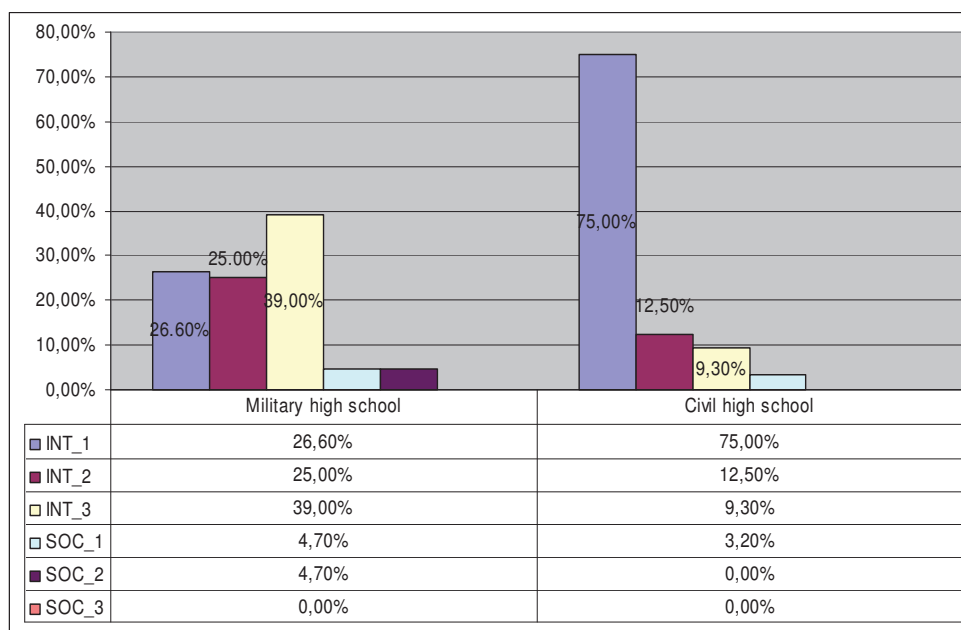
##### 5.1. The teachers' and students' options regarding the role of the school in the plan of intellectual becoming/in the plan of social becoming

In the first part of our investigation we were interested in finding out which is the dominant role of the school, in the teachers' and students' options (the desirable plan). In this purpose we have operationalized the roles of the school as follows:

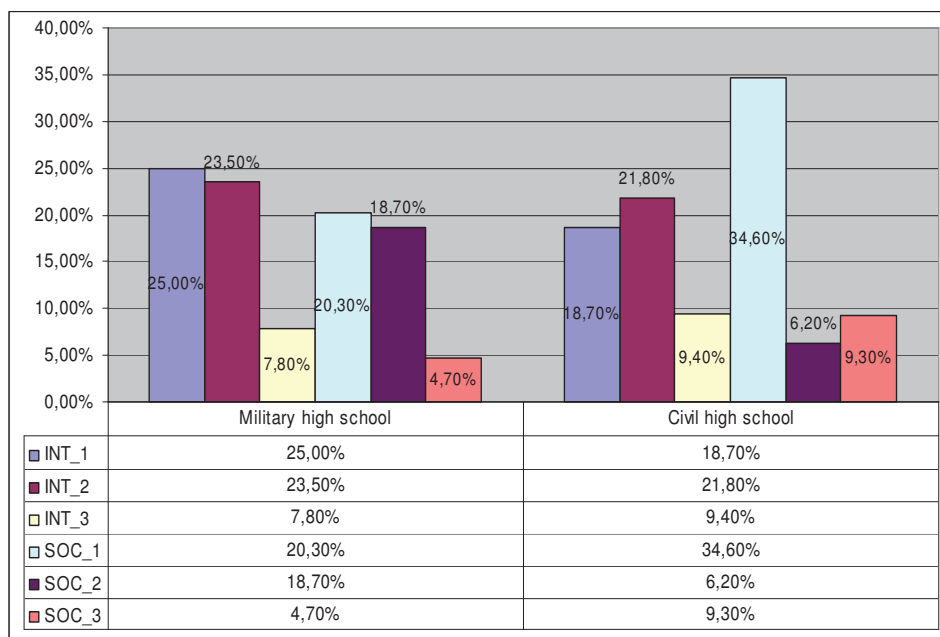
## Indicators – the roles of the school

INDICATORS	
INT. Intellectual role	INT_1.to help the students gain solid knowledge;
	INT_2.to help the students gain a vast general education;
	INT_3.to form intellectual abilities for the students.
SOC. Social role	SOC_1.to teach the students to understand and respect social rules;
	SOC_2.to teach the students how to interact with other people;
	SOC_3.to teach the students how to impose themselves in the social plan

In order to distinguish the answers received and to offer to the responding students and teachers the opportunity to make a hierarchy of their options, we have asked them to indicate “what should school teach the students **first of all**” and “what should school teach the students **secondly**”.



1. Teachers' answers: What should school teach the students first of all?



## 2. Teachers' answers: What should school teach the students secondly?

We notice in the graphics above the overwhelming orientation of the teachers towards the intellectual plan of the school role:

- The first option of the teachers in the civil high school sums up 96.80% on the intellectual plan level;
- The first option of the teachers in the military high school sums up 90.60% on the intellectual plan level.

We must underline the major discrepancy noticed on the level of the first option of the teachers in the civil environment between the three indicators of the intellectual plan: acquiring knowledge (75.00%), gaining general education (12.50%) and developing intellectual abilities (9.40%). In the case of the teachers from the military high school the distribution is more balanced as far as the indicators in the intellectual plan are concerned: acquiring knowledge (26.60%), gaining general education (25.00%) and developing intellectual abilities (39.00%). Therefore the teachers in the high school civil environment see school as a major source in transmitting knowledge (the cumulative model of knowledge) and they almost ignore in their options the formative valences of the school, on the intellectual (the formation of intellectual

abilities), but especially on the social plan. The teachers in the military high school environment emphasize the intellectual role of the school as well, but they move the gravity centre towards the development of the intellectual abilities, necessary in the life-long learning. Both categories of teachers almost ignore in the formulation of their first option the role of the school in the social plan of their students' becoming. The small sample of teachers in the civil education system (3.20%) who indicated as a first option indicators from the social plan of the students' becoming have chosen only the necessity of understanding and respecting the norms, an indicator of the conformation to norms. In the other case, a small part of the teachers in the military environment have chosen, as a first option, the conformation to norms (4.70%), as well as the role of school in facilitating social interaction (4.70%).

On the level of the second option, the civil high school teachers make the following hierarchy of indicators:

1. "understanding and respecting the social rules", 34.60%;
2. "gaining a vast general education", 21.80% ;
3. "gaining solid knowledge", 18.70%;
4. "forming intellectual abilities", 9.40%
5. "students' affirmation on the social plan", 9.30% ;
6. "interacting with other people" sums up to 6.20% of the choices

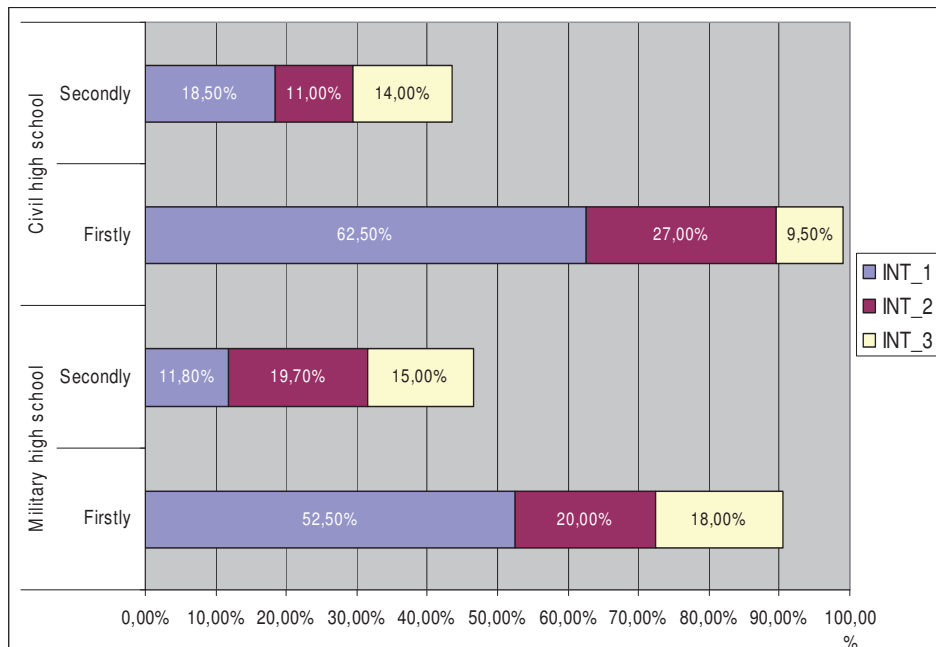
made by the civil environment teachers.

Overall, on the level of the civil environment teachers' second option, there is a balance between the social plan (49.90%) and the intellectual plan (50.10%) of students' formation, with an accent on the level of the social plan of the necessity of students respecting the normative framework (indicator of a socialization conformist practice). The options for the students' development on the autonomous plan (9.30%) represent percentages which are less more inferior to the option for social conformism (34.60%).

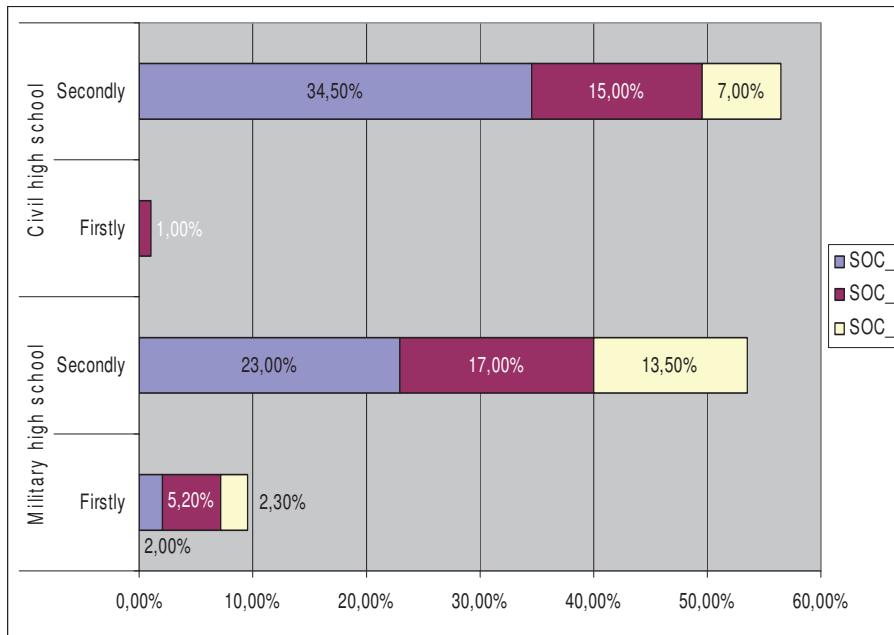
As far as the second option of the military environment teachers is concerned, we come across the following hierarchy of indicators:

1. "gaining solid knowledge", 25.00%
2. "gaining a vast general education", 23.50%;
3. "understanding and respecting the social rules", 20.30%;
4. "interacting with other people", 18.70%;
5. "developing intellectual abilities", 7.80%;
6. "students' affirmation on the social plan", 4.70%.

Overall, the second options of the military high school environment teachers also sums up a higher score in the area of the school in the intellectual plan, 56.30%, compared to 43.70% (which represents the percentage of teachers' options for the formation on the social plan). Within the social dimension of the role of the school, the balance of the military environment teachers' options places first the indicator of social conformism (understanding and respecting the social rules, 20.30%), on the second place the indicator of social interactions (interacting with other people, 18.70%) and on the third place the indicator of social autonomy (social affirmation, 4.70%). Therefore, on the social plan of students' becoming the school plays a decreasing part – from imposing the norms towards the students' autonomous affirmation on the social plan. Together with the teachers' options for the role of the school in forming the students on the two plans we have also studied the students' options for the same problems. The answers received from the students are graphically represented as follows:



### 3. Students' answers: The students' options regarding the role of the school in their intellectual formation



#### 4. Students' answers: The students' options regarding the role of the school in their social formation

The students' answers are to a very large degree similar to their teachers' answers:

- The civil high school students' first option is oriented towards to affirmation in an overwhelming proportion of the role of the school in their intellectual formation: 99.00%. Only 1.00% of the civil students think that first of all the role of the school consists in creating social interaction opportunities for the students.
- The first option of the military students also shows an extraordinary majority as far as affirming the role of the school in the students' intellectual formation is concerned: 90.50%. The percentage of the military students who opt first of all for the role of the school in the social formation is higher than in the case of the civil students: 9.50%.
- Unlike their teachers who chose as a first option the social plan of formation through school in the area of knowledge and of respecting the social norms, the military students have distributed their options in a balanced manner on the level of the three indicators proposed:



- 5.20% opted for the role of the school in organizing social interactions;
- 2.30% opted for the role of the school in the students' affirmation on social plan;
- 2.00% opted for the role of the school in understanding and respecting the social norms.

We conclude that the students who opt first of all for the social plan of their formation have a greater desire not only for the creation of contexts in which they could learn how to practice the norms, but also for creating interactional and personal social affirmation opportunities.

- As far as the second option for the roles of the school is concerned, the civil high school students have the following hierarchy of indicators:

1. "understanding and respecting the social rules", 34.50%;
2. "gaining solid knowledge", 18.50%;
3. "interacting with other people", 15.00%;
4. "developing intellectual abilities", 14.00%;
5. "gaining a vast general education", 11.00%;
6. "students' affirmation on the social plan", 7.00%.

Overall, the absolute value of the options for the indicators of the social role of the school represent 56.50%, more than the absolute value of the options for the indicators of the intellectual role of the school, 43.50%. On the students' level as well we find the same desire for assimilating and exercising the plan of social norms, through school and only lastly, and with the lowest representation, options for experimenting autonomy in the school environment.

- In the case of military students, the hierarchy of options for the secondary role of the school is the following:

1. "understanding and respecting the social rules", 23.00%;
2. "gaining a vast general education", 19.70%;
3. "interacting with other people", 17.00%;
4. "developing intellectual abilities", 15.00%;
5. "affirmation on the social plan", 13.50%;
6. "gaining solid knowledge", 11.80%.

53.50% of the military students' secondary options are oriented towards the role of the school in the plan of their social formation, again with a balanced distribution between the three indicators: of the

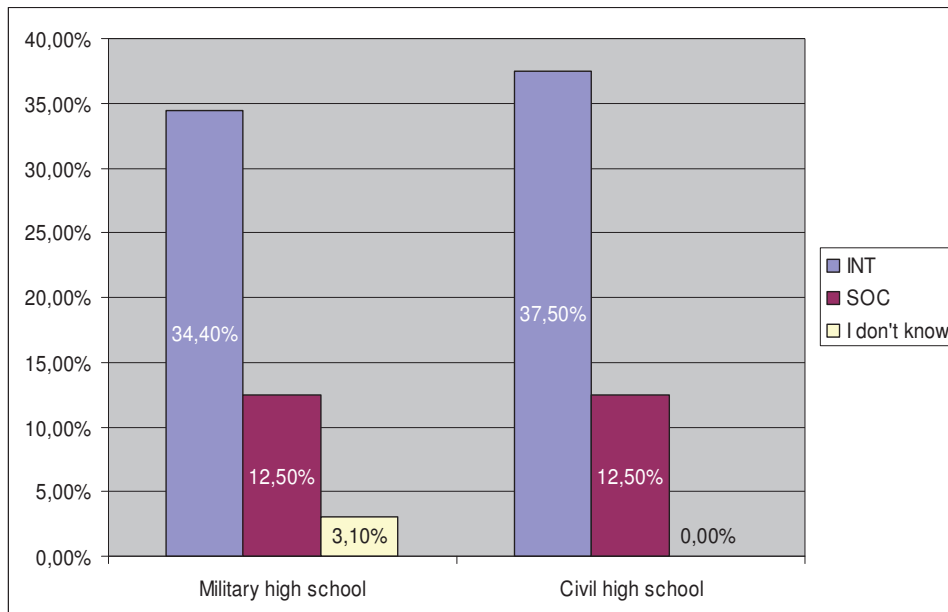
cultivation of norms, of the cultivation of interactions, of the cultivation of autonomy.

## 5.2. Teachers' perceptions of the actual role of the Romanian school in the intellectual formation vs. the graduates' social formation

Besides the teachers' options (the desirable) regarding the dominant role of the school, in general, we intended to investigate their perceptions of the reality in the Romanian school. The study we made also contains the teachers' answers regarding the actual role of the Romanian school, in general, in the accomplishment of the intellectual plan and/or social plan of its students' formation.

The item the teachers had to answer to is the following: "Is the role of the Romanian school more important in the intellectual or in the social formation of the graduates?"

The results obtained after applying the questionnaire are the following:



## 5. The intellectual formation vs. the social formation of the graduates, in the teachers' perception

The results are more than eloquent as far as the teachers' perceptions of the present role of the Romanian school that they are a part of are concerned. If we correlate them with the previous results we can say that the teachers, as important agents of the socialization in the school space, consider that their major role is circumscribed to the intellectual plan of the students' formation. These results confirm the pre-eminence of the intellectualism in the Romanian school, of convictions that have deep roots in the teachers' psychic that their purpose in school, in particular, and of school, in general, is that of transmitting knowledge, and the role of the students is that of receiving and assimilating solid knowledge and of gaining a general education. The teachers do not find important (or they find of very little importance) the fact that school offers to the students opportunities of social learning, of interaction with other people, of social affirmation. The only plausible option regarding social learning is that of adopting and respecting the school norms, necessary for the undisturbed conduct of the didactic act of transmitting – receiving the knowledge.

### **Conclusions of the research**

- The interviewed teachers and students state the overwhelming primacy of the school in the graduates' intellectual formation (results over 90.00%);
- The number of teachers who believe that the school should first of all to accomplish objectives subordinated to social formation is very small reported to the sample size (approximately 6.00% of the interviewed teachers);
- The teachers who opt first of all for objectives of social formation represent a percentage which is three times higher in the military environment compared to the civil environment;
- The teachers in the civil environment who opt first of all for the objectives of the social formation through school believe that the school must cultivate the students' respect for social norms;
- The teachers in the military environment who opt first of all for objectives of social formation through school believe that school has to equally realise the cultivation of social norms and the formation of the competencies necessary for social interactions;
- The teachers' second option regarding the role of the school puts in a balance the intellectual and the social plan of the students' formation.

- 68 % of the teachers in the civil environment who opt secondly for the social objectives of the school think that the school must teach social norms to the students, 19% of them think that the school needs to teach the students how to interact socially, 13% of these teachers opt for the role of the school in the students' social affirmation.
- The teachers in the military who opt secondly for the social objectives of the school offer a balanced image regarding the role of the school in promoting the social norms and in offering opportunities of social interaction, diminishing, however, the role of the school in the students' social affirmation.
- The military students who opt first of all for the role of the school in the plan of their social becoming represent a percentage 9.5 times higher than that of the students in the civil high schools;
- The military students have a significantly higher number of options than their teachers when it comes to the school realising certain socializing objectives in the spirit of gaining autonomy (social affirmation);
- The civil high school students opt in a smaller measure than their teachers for accomplishing the objectives of autonomy cultivation by the school and they manifest a significantly higher desire for the school offering a possibility of learning social interactions.

Following our study, the hypothesis that we wanted to verify is invalid, in the sense that although the official school documents underline the necessity of following and accomplishing important social objectives (see "*Study on model values and attitudes of high school graduates - a reference of socialization through school*", published in the Scientific Bulletin no. 2/2009 of DPPD Pitești), the educational practice in school and the options of the educational actors prove the existence of the intellectualism pre-eminence in the Romanian school. In other words, neither the teachers, nor the students consider the social acquisitions, so useful for their professional and social insertion, to be of prime importance.

We consider that the teachers' improvement programs have to contain themes in which the socializing role of school and, moreover, the importance of teachers in this complex process, are developed and underlined.

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