# APPROACHING THE EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF THE STUDENTS' AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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**Abstract:** *The general issue highlighted in this article is the importance of some educational values (respect, responsibility, cooperation) in assuring the efficiency of the educational process at university level and preparing these students for their future role of employees. Using a 23 items inventory, on a sample of 158 students, our research goal was to establish the most important educational values on which the students' activity in the educational process at university level is settled up and to identify the differences between the first and third year students regarding these values. The results obtained sustain our hypothesis, supposing that students at university level have developed a high level of different types of educational values promoted in the educational process in which they are involved. But, these educational values were not represented at a highest level growth for the third year of study students opposite to the first year of study students. The conclusion of the study emphasizes the fact that that students have engaged in the educational process some educational values such as: respect for teachers or colleagues' opinion and for differences between individuals, and it is very important for students to have more sustainment in their personal development based on: cooperation, responsibility and assuming the results of group work.*

**Keywords**: *axiology, values education, educational values.*

## INTRODUCTION

According to the researchers, the approach of education from the axiological perspective supposes the distinction between the two plans of reporting to the area of values: the theoretical plan, which is assured by the release of a horizon in the educational sciences' field, that can be defined by the concept of axiology of the education, or the axiology of pedagogy, and the practical plan, which will be circumscribed through the concept of values (axiology) education, proposing a valuable orientation of the educational praxis (Cucoș, C., 2006, p.116). Any educational process implemented at university level must guide all the interventions toward the development of the two approaches previously mentioned. It is known that not every field of study treats the theoretical approach of the axiology in education. But each professor can provide an educational process which has as a goal a positive attitude and the implementation of the educational values in different educational

contexts. These values have specific characteristics related to the career development process, but are also general values which will contribute to the personal development of students as individuals. This individual developmental route of the student must be supported by the professors that offer a genuine values education. This way education, from an axiological point of view, should settle up on the orientation of the educational process to the best trajectories, identification and exploitation of the privileged educational moments, finalization of all the searches through the best choices, in order to establish a hierarchy towards the available goals, to operate according to a relevant order of priorities (Bunescu, Gh., 1998, p.5). This educational process involves a high level of participation from the professor and the students in a manner that supposes the following: the educational act priorities are established by both educational actors and students' active participation is obligatory for attending their maximum efficiency. An important characteristic of the educational process with an axiological orientation is the long duration and the fact that this process doesn't valorise immediately the potential of the individual. In this respect, teachers at university level must assure an educational climate which sustains the natural evolution of the three levels of the values internalization, mentioned also by A. Chircev (apud. Iosifescu, V., 2004, p. 52):

- The value acceptance level – supposes emotional acceptance, but the belief of the individual is not present. This emotionally accepted value should be internalised or not, depending on the future educational influences.

- The personal preference level for a distinct value – is the level of the expression of the individual' preference on a certain value. In this moment, the person selects a value from a plurality of values and manifests his desire for its acceptance and internalisation. Each individual selects for himself a set of values which are defined as personal values.

- The participation/ engagement level – involves a high degree of certainty, which encourages the internalisation of this value. This process continues with the emergency of the value among other persons.

In order to attend all the mentioned levels and the implied steps to be completed by the students, the professors at university level must offer a good practice model for internalising educational values. Also, his/her personal model related to the promoted values in the educational process is very important and is assumed by students as a landmark for personal development and promotion of the values. This axiology based approach must assure the balance between students' total engagement in the educational process and a dozen of detachments from supreme values, if the specificity of the educational contexts determines that situation. R. Vigaro affirms that it is a great difficulty to combine on the one hand the engagement of such persons that are deeply attached to the realising values for the individual, and on the other hand a sufficient detachment from these values for avoiding the situations in which such values became oppressive (apud. Iosifescu, V., 2004, p. 77).

A wide number of studies in the specific literature approached the discussion of the topic and researched values education and its possible implications in the educational process. Related to our study issues, we select and shortly describe a few in what follows:

-C. A. Van Kan, P. Ponte, N. Verloop (2013) explore the substance of teachers' educational values and beliefs that underlie their daily classroom interactions. The study develops a typology of six legitimization types that teachers used when interpreting their classroom interactions in terms of their pupils' best interest: a caring legitimization type, a personal legitimization type, a contextual legitimization type, a critical legitimization type, a functional legitimization type, and a psychological legitimization type, entailing a systematic description of what teachers consider to be educationally worthwhile and contributing to the development of an educational vocabulary that enables teachers to inquire, articulate and discuss the educational values and ideals in a deliberate manner.

-S. Kalafatis and L. Ledden (2013) examine the impact of students' perceptions of educational value at a specific point in time which have subsequent evaluations of value during a one-year programme of study. The results of the study confirm the presence of carry-over effects in perceptions of value and indicate that, during the consumption experience, there are re-formulations, modifications and adjustments of students' perceptions of value, demonstrating the temporal nature of perceptions of educational value.

-I. Golyshev (2011) offers an interpretation of the existing approaches regarding consumption values classification, identifying the components of educational services that are important in the context of consumption values and outlining the prospects of applying value approaches to developing educational services at university level.

-D. Kirk (2013) offers two examples to support a case for educational value, built on the examination of one established pedagogical model - Sport Education, which develops a new perspective on ethics and supports the reconstruction of the concept of the educational value and may offer a possible future for physical education development.

- T. Lovat, N. Clement, K. Dally and R. Toomey (2010) argue that values education has moved from being associated mostly with the religious agenda of faith schools to being central in the process of updating research insights into effective pedagogy. The authors consider that it is a vital approach to education in any school setting.

-L. Bills and C. Husbands (2005) analyse the specifically mathematical values which characterize the practice of mathematics teachers and draw on one teacher's articulation of his practice to explore values issues in the teaching of mathematics. The article compares also both the mathematics education literature and the general values education literature.

These studies are oriented to educational values in the teaching process in generally at pre-university or university level, pointing at the importance of teaching values as support for a specific domain development or for the teaching process. The authors highlight the importance of an effective pedagogy adopted in the educational process, in both teaching and learning activities.

**METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS OF THE RESEARCH**
As we observed in the previously mentioned studies, the issues related to values in the educational process are complex. In our study, we consider that the centre of

each educational process based on educational values is represented by the students' values manifested in this process. In this respect, we want to analyse the assumed educational values of the students in the educational process.

**The hypothesis** of our study was: the students at university level have developed a high level of different types of educational values promoted in the educational process in which they are involved, more increased for the third year students then the first year students.

Settled up on a 23 items inventory, our research goal was to establish the list of the most important educational values which are settled up during the students' activity in the educational process. We didn't use a validated inventory, but we proposed some items which are related to group cooperation, respect, equal chances, right and responsibilities in the educational process, considered important for us in order to assure the efficiency of values education. This inventory can be developed and extended in the future on a larger number of students at university level. The sample on which we applied this inventory consists in a number of 158 students from The West University of Timişoara (year 1 and 3 of study). The inventory was applied in the second semester of the year 2012-2013.

***The objectives*** *of the research* were:

O1. To identify the hierarchy of first year of study students 'educational values at university level.

O2. To specify the hierarchy of third year of study students' educational values at university level.

O3. To establish the significant differences between the educational values of first and third year of study students, at university level.

***The discussions about the results*** are based on the analysis of the following dimensions:

1. The score averages for each educational value at first and third year students.

The analysis of data on the highest and lowest average scores of each mentioned educational value for first year of study students reveals the following data:

Table 1 First year students' highest average on educational values

| Educational values | First year students' highest average |
|---|---|
| 1. I treat my teachers with consideration and respect. | 4.77 |
| 2. I ask from my colleagues to manifest respect and honesty in the educational process. | 4.63 |
| 3. I take responsibility for my own actions in the educational process. | 4.44 |
| 4. I respect my colleagues' activity. | 4.36 |
| 5. I respect my colleagues' rights in group activities. | 4.36 |

Table 2 First year students' lowest average on educational values

| Educational values | First year students' lowest average |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.  I help my colleagues in their learning activity. | 3.38 |
| 2.  I cooperate in a constructive way in the conflict solving process. | 3.57 |
| 3.  I take action against the disrespect of my colleagues' rights in the educational process. | 3.68 |
| 4.  I constantly contribute to the assurance of an educational climate adequate for mutual trust. | 3.71 |
| 5.  I perform at the highest level during each educational activity. | 3.73 |

As we noticed (Table 1 and Table 2), the first year students give more importance to the educational values related to the respect for or from other participants in the educational process (teachers and their colleagues) and their involvement in this educational act. Students affirm that they take responsibility for their own actions in the educational process.

The educational values related to cooperation with others or contribution to an adequate educational climate, also obtained the lowest average. This educational value, constantly applied, should determine a well formed competence for relationships in every context. The high level personal performance of students can also be improved and this can be related to the level of personal motivation for the educational process.

Analysing the highest averages for the educational values of the third year of study students (Table 3 and Table 4), we observe that the first place is taken also by respect for their teachers and has a very close score relating to first year of study students (4.74). The respect for their colleagues' activity is also very important for these students. For this sample of students other educational values, such as: honesty and equality of chances are also very important. These are requested from colleagues and from himself/herself in the educational process. Although respecting the freedom and rights of my colleagues is an important educational value (4.29), taking action against disrespecting my colleagues' rights in the educational process is an action which obtained a lowest average (3.84). This is possible because students in the third yea had obtained the lowest average of educational values on the cooperation dimension: helping their colleagues, taking a common responsibility for the team tasks or cooperating in solving conflicts.

Table 3 Third year students' highest average on educational values

| Educational values | Third year students' highest average |
|---|---|
| 1.  I treat my teachers with consideration and respect. | 4.74 |
| 2.  I take responsibility for my own actions in the educational process. | 4.43 |
| 3.  I ask from my colleagues to manifest respect and honesty in the educational process. | 4.40 |
| 4.  I am honest and correct in my relationships by the educational process. | 4.38 |

| 5.      I respect the freedom and rights of my colleagues, not constrained by an authority.<br>6.      I respect my colleagues' activity. | 4.29 |
|---|---|

Table 4 Third year students' lowest average on educational values

| Educational values | Third year students' lowest average |
|---|---|
| 1. I help my colleagues in their learning activity. | 3.65 |
| 2. I think that I am responsible for my colleagues' activity, if we have team tasks. | 3.74 |
| 3. I accept the differences between me and my colleagues. | 3.78 |
| 4. I cooperate in a constructively way in conflict solving process. | 3.79 |
| 5. I take action against breaking my colleagues' rights in the educational process. | 3.84 |

2. Analysing the highest and the lowest averages for the first and third year students we observe that, regarding the highest averages obtained by them, (Table 1 and Table 3) where almost identical educational values regarding the respect for their teachers or their colleagues' activity or rights and asking from their colleagues respect were mentioned. The differences consist in the answer regarding the honesty and the correctitude in their relationships which was mentioned by third year of study students.

Regarding the lowest obtained averages, there are three educational values promoted by the two samples of students (Table 2 and Table 4) and two different educational values mentioned by the first year of study students (the constant contribution to the assurance of an educational climate adequate for mutual trust and performing at the high level in each educational activity) and also two different educational values mentioned by the third year of study students (I think that I am responsible for my colleagues' activity, if we have team tasks and I accept the differences between me and my colleagues). So, taking responsibility for the own or other activity or for the educational climate can be difficult for students. Although students respect their colleagues, the students in the third year of study obtained a lowest average on accepting the differences between their colleagues.

The t test on independent samples (first and third year of study students) does not establish significant differences between the averages of the scores obtained by the first year students  and third year students regarding their educational values. The average obtained by the first year students regarding their educational values was 4.08 and for the third year of study students was 4.10 representing a high level of educational values' manifestation. Thus the determined $p > 0.05$ demonstrating the inexistence of the significant differences between the educational values of the two mentioned samples.

So, the initial hypothesis is partially validated by the results of the research. Although the high level of educational values is reflected by the obtained averages, yet the expected increase of the score for the third year students is not relevant.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

The analysis of the averages obtained by the two samples of the research points to the fact that in the educational process students apply some important values such as: respect for other people's activities, honesty and equality of chances, personal involvement and responsibility. But there is a lower average regarding cooperation and help offered to others in the process of conflict solving or assuming responsibility for each colleague's participation in the educational process. We consider that these concepts are important educational values for the future citizens and employees. In this respect, the educational process must develop some efficient strategy in order to develop these dimensions of values education. We are in accordance with The Delors' Rapport which proposes a few support points for education (Delors, J., 2000): "Learning to know", "Learning to do", "Learning to be", "Learning to leave with others", according a high level of importance to the pylon "Learning to live together" which embraces a common analysis of the future" risks and challenges for attending and implement common projects.

It is important for us that our research results demonstrate that students participate in the educational process with a high level of some valuable referentially as a "totality of the individual mobiles and supra individual normative, which are interiorised by the subject and are manifested in each valuable act (Cucoş, C., 1996, p.186). These results demonstrate that our hypothesis was correctly formulated. But, it is important for students to improve or develop permanently this valuable referential from the first to the third year of study and the T test on independent samples used in our research does not sustain this request. In this respect and because each valuable referential simultaneously involves stable elements (personality, culture) and variable elements (socio-cultural climate, ideology), we consider that teachers at university level must assure more support for personal development of values manifested in the educational process and determine students to be much involved in group activities or supportive activities. Also, they must sustain students as future employees to promote the importance of the educational values for the group activities, a base for cooperation in their future workplace. Only believing in cooperation, support and responsibility students' educational values will be improved and their personal development in the valuing process will be a support for other individuals in different social contexts.

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