

PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR VALUES IN THE SCHOLAR CURRICULUM

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Abstract:

The paper starts from the axiological dimension of education and places under analyses the possibility of curriculum integration for the education of values as a pedagogical solution that gives responsibility to all participants in education towards the reversion and correct reporting of the young people to the permanent values of humanity. There are present some studies and researches from previous years on the young Romanians' values. Nowadays the young are under the threat of assimilating false values just because they are „in vogue”. In this context, the education for values as an integrated curriculum project can offer real answers to the young people's issues: „How should I live my life?”, „How should I be?”, „What kind of person I would like to become?”. In creating situations of integrated learning the integrated curriculum models are very useful, as they serve the practitioners to this project in creating the educational design for training/development of cross-curriculum competences.

Keywords: *education for values, integrated curriculum, cross-curriculum competences*

Education is a value *per se* if it spreads values, shapes the individual through values, the value content of education, shapes the creator through values, stimulates and valorises creative capacities. The concept of education has a certain value significance meaning that refers to that help offered to peers so that they may raise to the authentic existential status of the individual and the acquirement of the authentic human nature.

In terms of educational action, it is not the imposition of values that is the most advantageous strategy, but results are much better when indirect action is made: *by creating and stimulating the needs for values*, so that the pupil adheres to them naturally. Values are not imposed, but looked for, welcome. The waiting space and the need horizon are shaped through certain educative means. The shaping of an axiological knowledge, characterized by the *aspiration for values*, and the availability for valorization, seem to be priority objectives for achieving quality education nowadays. The values infused in education maintain veritable reactive and prospective dimensions in the front of the present and future.

The initiation in culture and the acquirement of cultural instruments are the most important demands which school meets now and in perspective. School is the institution transmitting and setting a certain system of values. Learning in school, made through curricular and

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extracurricular activities, supposes the complex interaction among knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviors. School is attributed an extremely important role in the articulation among education, professional competitiveness and democratic citizenship.

The German philosopher and pedagogue Spranger, the founder of the culture pedagogy refers, in one of his important works [12], to the 3 aspects of a quality education: receptiveness to cultural values, living/vibrating the subjective spirit in contact with supra-individual values and creating own values. Spranger thus highlights the fact that true education performs with priority the transformation of objective values into subjective values and thus the construction of the veritable personalities among the young starts.

Trained in Spranger's school, the Romanian pedagogue Bârsănescu conceives education in a value-based perspective "*...is the activity of modeling the individual, orienting its evolution in the direction of vibration and creation of values through a threefold work: of caring, guidance and cultivation*" [1]

Understood as a mood, as a power of understanding and living values, culture is neither a means nor an action but becomes the purpose of education.

In his famous work, *Democracy and education* (1972), the American pedagogue John Dewey identifies the criterion to appreciate the value of school education, *i.e.* "*the extent to which such education arouses the continuous growth desire of the individual, which is based on the assimilation of cultural values*" [6]. Referring to the educational context, Dewey distinguishes between the *extrinsic values*, clarified by the school curriculum, and the *instrumental values*, those which mediate immediate, intrinsic values. Professor Marga believes that is necessary to "*coming back to firm values is the veritable solution. How can it be made? First of all it is a matter of curriculum: learning grammar, logic, rhetoric, moral, religion is indispensable*". [9]

In promoting education for values through the school curriculum, we need to start looking for answers to natural questions raised by the specific nature of educational activities: What? What for? How much? How? Who will put these educational syllabi into practice? What specialty should the educator launching such a project have? What kind of competences should such an educator have in its professional profile? Let's try to reflect in detail over such essential questions for organizing an efficient educative demarche.

Stipulating that education has as its finality the *shaping of human personality*, the National Education Law establishes the reference framework of the education for values, its main dimensions and means: referring pupils to the values of the national and universal culture (our note: European culture), shaping and developing pupils' intellectual capacities, affective availabilities and practical abilities, in the lifelong training and self-training perspective, their education in the spirit of respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, dignity and tolerance, free exchange of opinions.

Education for values constitutes the answer of the current educational system to the imperatives of contemporaneous world: ecologic education (related to the environment), education for change and development, education for technology and progress, education for communication and for mass-media, education related to population (demographic), education for peace and for cooperation, education for participation and democracy, education for health, sexual education, nutritional education, education for quality work, education for private life, intercultural education, education for spare time, special education, education for a new international economic order, modern household and economic education.

The methodology of valorizing education for values targets all the general contents (moral, intellectual, technological, esthetical, psychophysical) and the general forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal).

Education for values has in view not only the pupils' knowledge of the values on which social norms are founded at a certain time but it allows pupils, at the same time, to critically reflect on values and norms, in the perspective of supplying their creative contribution to community life. Education for values allows pupils to understand and accept value pluralism, value conflict, but also the advantages in exploiting (beneficially for the individual and for society) their progress potential, when societies are based on consensual values and practices established on them, such as democratic values and principles. An efficient education for values allows the individual to refer to various cultural stimuli, other than those specific to immediate insertion culture.

Education for values is approached today in school as optional themes/disciplines from the curriculum at the school's decision by curricular areas (mostly the *Man and society* curricular area), as optional at the level of the study discipline or optional as an integrating theme, and can also be found at the level of the *Counseling and orientation* curricular area, as one of the components of the educative activities being performed in the classroom during educational classes. The introduction in syllabi in the form of optional disciplines, complementary training modules, guides, methodological guides constitutes strategies for implementing the education for values in the current school curriculum.

Also, it is necessary to reconsider the systems for selecting and organizing information within the school, allowing the introduction of: specific modules, integrated as new disciplines, distinct in the curriculum, specific disciplines with a leading role grouping several of the new disciplines (for instance: education for democratic citizenship, global education, international education) and contents specific to a new education in the sphere of several disciplines through an infusional approach.

The research "The Young Romanians' Values" made in 2006 by the "Oricum" Foundation and the British Council established the young Romanian's profile between 15-25 years of age after investigating a group of 99 young people from 5 important cities in the country. According to the values system, the participants in the research placed on the first positions, the family (82.3%), friends (51.1%) and school (47.4%), then money and social values.

Leaders Foundation made during the school year 2010-2011. Within the national education program for high schools, Leadership Authentic, a research that shows which are the main values that young people with ages between 14 and 18 years old have and how their auto portrait looks compared to their own values, beliefs and attitudes. There were 600 high school students involved and the research was made on the bases of 3 interactive exercises. One of the most relevant instruments used in order to collect data for this study was the exercise of choice- which are those values that define me? From a list of 45 values, the participants in the study were asked to choose those 3 values that represent them the most. on the first places the most frequent values chosen by the respondents were: family, friends and respect, followed by optimism and trust. There were no major differences between the urban and the rural areas. Another drill was "the values stock exchange" which had at its bases the principle of selecting and comparing between the value that is present in their life and the value that is wished for their behavior in the future. In the category of values that high school students think they possess there were values as respect and family, and the

most desired values were trust and optimism. The last drill had as its purpose selecting those filters values in order to explain the connection between a set of beliefs and a series of attitudes. The most often used values in order to explain some attitudes were: trust, optimism, courage and respect. The least used values, in this drill, were: will, sociability, responsibility, respect for the environment and patience.

What those studies revealed is a proof of the fact the young man nowadays, indifferently of his background, considers family and friendship are first rang values in a personal values hierarchy. Family is the most important affective, moral and financial support. Friends are also considered important, as they are close confidants among whom the young prefer to spend most of their free time, but sometimes they are disappointed by their own friends whom they trusted and they were betrayed. School still has an important role in the young people's hierarchy of values, but for the students school has a secondary and third place after their job and extra school activities. This result of the previous researches invites the pedagogues and the practitioners to reflect: *What should school do in order to realize an authentic education for values and in the same time to be closer to the young persons' values?*

The integrated approach of the curriculum, specific to the inter disciplines, centered on curriculum themes that puts close school and real life is the pedagogical solution to this question. The integrated curriculum introduces as new subjects disciplines structured around some themes for a certain curricular area or more curricular areas studied through the valor of the contents of some disciplines.

The cross- curriculum themes represent study units that allow the exploration of some significant problems in real life. In order to be successfully introduced in school, the cross-curriculum themes elicits the creation of some diverse learning experiences and experimenting learning acquisition in real and wide contexts. According to L. Ciolan (2008), we can distinguish at least 3 types of cross- curriculum themes:

- *pretext themes*-used as a platform in order to create connections;
- *support themes*-used in order to sustain the development of some integrated competences;
- *context themes*-in order to explore problems of real life.

Professor L. Ciolan presents 4 structural models (p.176-178) of integrating the cross-curricular themes in the school curriculum:

- *the infusion model*- centered on objectives/competences/thematic areas common to many school subjects;
- *the hybrid model*- centered on the appearance of the hybrid as an independent subdomain of integrated type, that articulate many school subjects;
- *the satellite model*- centered on the multi-disciplinary approach in which each subject contributes;
- *the insertion model*- introducing some present and interest themes under the form of some new subjects or optional subjects.

In projecting the educational designs based on curricular integration and in building integrated learning situations, M. Bocos and V. Chis (2013, p.351) recommend to the practitioners 6 models of curricular integration:

- *Curricular integration around a pole (scientific, practical, personal, social);*
- *Curricular integration at the level of didactic activities and of lessons;*
- *Curricular integration at the level of one day didactic activities;*

- *Curricular integration at the level of a system of didactic activities over a period of time;*

- *Curricular integration within the thematic projects;*

- *Curricular integration within the integrated optional subjects.*

Integrated learning experience projected like this can create the formative and simulative context for developing the cross-curriculum competences. The recent pedagogical literature talks about three cross-curricular competences, each with a number of sub-domains:

a. Thinking Competency: critical thinking, creative thinking, reflective thinking

b. Personal and Social Competency: positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility, social awareness and responsibility

c. Communication Competency: language and symbols, digital literacy .

By introducing the integrated curriculum and the cross- curricular competences, one can make a change that is not without difficulties in projecting, realizing and evaluating integrated activities.

The teaching staff directly involved in the promotion of such educational syllabi are aware that shaping attitudes and learning values represent a complicated and time consuming demarche. For this reason, the following aspects should be considered:

Within the common ensemble, the potential of each discipline must be revalued, in terms of education for values, and the adequate didactical strategies.

The adaptation of the school curriculum to interculturality coordinates and also the reexamination of the weight of information and knowledge with a general-human nature in the current school curriculum, the content decongestion of narrow value elements, without affecting the weight of those particular elements which carry high, perennial values. From here, the necessity to review the syllabi by imprinting certain intercultural directions to some disciplines in curricular areas *Man and society, Arts, Language and communication, Counseling and orientation*, but also the existing school manuals so as to highlight the development of the critical-reflexive thinking, the capacities to distinguish between the primary information and its interpretations, which may be different depending on certain values, faiths, perspectives, interests, and of empathic capacities.

The clarification of the value hierarchy, the order of their proposal in the school curriculum must be made depending on the ontogenetic age stages and the psychological and behavioral characteristics of children, so that value promotion is made proportional to assimilation capacities, specific to the children's age.

In the case of pre-school children, the shaping of habits and customs on which morality shall be later based is required. A certain form of *value inculcation* should not be excluded and for this reason the educator shall encourage the pupil's positive attitudes while acting to reduce or avoid its negative attitudes.

In supporting the efficient assimilation of education for values at the pre-school level and the primary cycle, it is preferred to preponderantly use such didactical methods as: ***narration***-presentation of certain stories centered on European values in order to develop the spirit of cooperation, respect and mutual aid; ***learning through play /toy exchange method***-valorizing special occasions to concretize the idea of solidarity; ***directed observation*** of certain materials allowing the understanding of the negative consequences of racial/any discrimination;

Ensuring the quality of such first values set in the incipient stage of education shall prepare and facilitate the acquirement of future values. For this reason, for the gymnasium and high

school level, the following interactive didactical methods are adequate to education for values:

- **exercise** for learning tolerance and responsibility (for instance drafting with the pupils' contribution an internal regulation of the classroom including rights and responsibilities for the pupils of such classroom);
- **learning by discovery**-discovering universal values (for instance drafting certain rules governing the relationships among people, then comparison to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights);
- **historical analysis**-the historical evolution of the individual's fight for defending its fundamental rights, persons and personalities;
- **case study**-breach of the fundamental human rights;
- **simulation**-governing activity (for instance: Mayor for one day);
- **utopia exercises**-the characteristics of a school/city/country/world in which human rights are fully observed;
- **brainstorming** (for instance: 4 teams shall be established; each team shall establish a set of responsibilities of an adult and freedoms of a young individual and finally a portrait of the child of today-adult of tomorrow shall be made) and others.

The school environment, the mechanisms of school organization and functioning tend to become more and more a model of social practices compatible to the ideals of a democratic society in which the first values are exercised: honesty, honor, mutual respect, tolerance, responsibility etc. The program of each school is based on a school project which is public, known by the pupils' families and the community members, meant to valorize the human and material potential of the school and establish a balance between curricular and extracurricular activities. Local traditions shall be revalorized mostly within the curriculum upon the school's decision, so that pupils know the contribution of their forerunners to the enrichment of the spiritual and material patrimony of the community.

Learning education for values is also facilitated by the presence of an affective-positive, stimulating framework, generated by the teacher's behaviour. The educator itself carries a value system, which in the teaching-learning act shall find the educational levers which are indispensable for cultivating its pupils' values, starting from the personal example. Maybe for this reason, the teacher showing respect for its pupils' personality, promoting in the didactical act a balanced speech, without stridence or sentimentalisms, succeeding in establishing democratic relationships with children starting from their sincerity and availabilities, from their imaginative resources, shall covert with didactical skill but also by means of the all methodical instruments, through operable strategies, the educational values, in the pupil's own value code.

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