

## DEVELOPING MORAL-CIVIC COMPETENCES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Mioara ABAGERU<sup>a \*</sup>, Liliana MĂȚĂ<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Grades I-VIII School of Palanca, Bacău, Romania

<sup>b</sup> “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău, Mărășești Street, 157, RO-600115, Bacău, Romania

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### Abstract

*The transformations produced in Romanian education since 1989 generated the need for education, not just in intellectual, aesthetic and religious terms but, most importantly, on the moral level. The purpose of this study is to present the role of specific methods of moral education in the development of civic competences at pupils from primary education. The research method used is the formative pedagogical experiment doubled by observation as a complementary method. The result of this study shows that the implementation of a methodological stage based on the creative use of civic-moral education methods leads to obtaining real progress regarding the moral-civic competences at pupils from primary education.*

**Key words:** competences, moral-civic education, primary education, psycho-pedagogical experiment

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### 1. Introduction

To educate means to prepare for tomorrow's life, to teach the child to behave intelligently and morally. These two statements are the basis of all moral and social activities, while denying that authoritarian discipline would have no educational value. The profession to educate schoolchildren extensively is unique and requires so many qualities – if not even more than the – as the medical profession, but the teacher's is a more delicate task, since he/she does not come into contact with adults, his/her peers, but children, who ask for the special qualities of selflessness, an ideal function which should serve properly. 21<sup>st</sup>-century people are 'designed' in a versatile world in which ideologies clash, masses are stirred and life seems to be a whirlwind that involves individuals becoming less able to resist, for the education they have received did not

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\* E-mail address: liliana.mata@ub.ro

prepare them for coping with any personality, for resisting the attraction of slogans. In these circumstances, the school must consider its responsibilities and therefore abandon education based on competition and emulation, generating vanity, jealousy, laziness and discouragement, and trigger appropriate means for its purpose: teaching children to work. The moral development refers to the result of the interdependence between social determination, embodied by the social-moral requirements (moral ideal, moral values, rules, moral precepts and rules) and personal self-determination, represented by internal and subjective factors (worldview, psychosomatic features etc.), involved in this process (Crețu, 2009). In countries where people are indifferent towards civic education, there is always a risk of seeing groups that tend to overthrow institutions to their personal or ideological profit. Citizenship is required as a citizen community is aware of their rights and duties and act for the good of the community. Civic education in school and outside may equip each child with the means to meet various legal, especially moral obligations as a citizen with rights and responsibilities. According to Popenici (2001, p. 183) “civic education refers to acquiring and practicing the civic virtues, the desirable behaviour from a social point of view”.

In primary education, the teacher will select the specific didactic strategies for the development of civic-moral competences (Nicola, 2003) according to the age of children and their interests. The most adequate moral methods in primary education are the moral story, the ethic conversation, the moral explanation, the moral example, the case study, counsel, approval, disapproval. The development of moral-civic competences at students represents a long-term action, including automation of four components: cognitive, affective, volitional and social (Racu, 2010). In the methodological part there is performed a pedagogical experiment to highlight the importance of moral-civic methods.

## **2. Research methodology**

### *2.1. The research hypothesis and objectives*

Mainstreaming specific methods of moral education in the subject of Civic Education contribute to enhancing the civic skills of young schoolchildren.

The research objectives are:

- knowledge of the initial level of student training as a starting point for organizing the psycho-pedagogical experiment;

- integrating methods of moral education into training and civic skills development in schoolchildren;
- evaluation of the contribution of specific methods to the development of moral-civic competences of school children;
- recording progress of pupils after the application of the progress factor.

## *2.2. Participants*

In order to pursue the objectives and hypothesis verification of the research, we included a total of 23 students (9 girls and 14 boys) aged between 9 and 11, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Of the 23 pupils, 19 come from harmonious families, with parents actively involved in raising their children, 3 children come from dysfunctional families, being in the care of mothers or grandparents where parents have left the country. Of the 23 children investigated, 4 children have no brothers, 3 children have younger brothers, five children have older brothers and 11 children have both older and younger brothers.

## *2.3. Methods*

The main research method used was the formative pedagogical experiment. Cosmovici (1996) considers the experiment as the most important research method because it provides precise and objective data. Designing and conducting an experiment implies initial observation regarding the manifestation of a psychological phenomenon and defining the problem which is to be solved. Then the model is formulated as a hypothesis and the hypothesis verification continues with the actual conduct of the experiment, organization, statistical processing, data analysis and drawing the conclusions. Therefore, the main stages of the experimental data research are (Dumitriu, 2004): demarcation and formulation of the problem to be understood; stating the hypothesis; setting the variables (depending the case put forward); pre-testing (to ensure that acts effectively on subjects independent variable); establishing the experimental situation; establishing the experimental and control sample; administration of the experimental factor; phase recording, processing, analysis and interpretation of the results and identification of differences; writing the research report.

## *2.4. Procedure*

In the practical part, we tried to demonstrate the need for moral education methods for the subject of Civic Education, through a psycho-pedagogical ascertaining-type of experiment. In Appendix

1, there are presented specific examples of teaching strategies for moral education in lessons of Civic Education.

### 2.5. Results

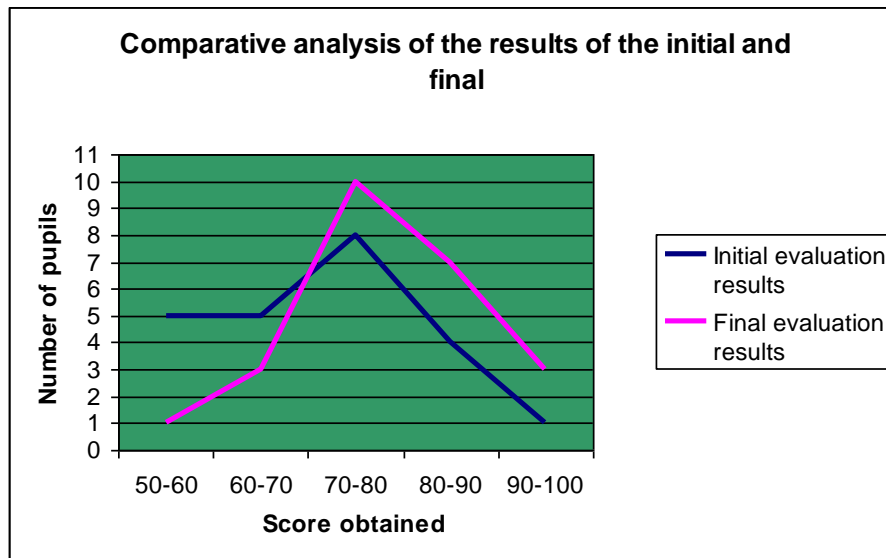
By applying these strategies, progress has been made by the students in the experimental class as follows:

- In the initial stage, ascertaining the level of development of the knowledge of students, results indicated a class average level of development of their civic skills of 7.10;
- In the final evaluation phase, the results showed a slight increase of the development level of civic competence, with only 4% of children having the lowest scores and 13% of them having achieved full marks. Most students, 41% achieved average scores.

As shown in Table 1, if in the initial assessment there was obtained an average grade of 7.10, in the final evaluation the average increased by 70 hundredths, reaching 7.80.

**Table 1.** *The average for the initial evaluation and for the final evaluation*

Initial assessment	Final assessment
7,10	7,80



**Figure 1.** *The graphical presentation of the results of initial assessment and final evaluation*

It appears that the assumption was verified: using the methods of moral education contributes to students' civic skills. The difference between the average of the class obtained at the initial evaluation and the final evaluation of only 70 hundredths, shows that changing attitudes and behaviour requires a longer period of time.

## **Conclusions**

The creative integration of specific methods of moral-civic education in primary education contributes to the development of moral competences. The results of the psycho-pedagogical experiment demonstrate the progress obtained by students from the third grade, the efficiency of the didactic strategies used. Applying a methodical approach based on the creative use of methods of moral education, a set of learning activities specific to each lesson will achieve real progress in terms of civic-moral competence at school children.

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## Appendix 1. Didactic strategies for developing moral-civic competences in primary education

### Activity 1

Components		Description
<b>Theme</b>		Trust and mistrust
<b>Moral-civic competence</b>		the form of the ability to maintain, gain and regain someone believing
<b>Learning sequence</b>		<p>It shows students a sound recording in which a student their age requires using:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Dearest ones,</p> <p>- I have a problem. Mother upset with me because I left home yesterday without lock the front door. I went to play and I forgot the door. Can you imagine being from home! Among other things, my mother said:</p> <p>I trusted you and you let me down! I was instantly felt ashamed and still is. What to do if mother will not trust me? Since yesterday I keep wondering: am I a person who can be trusted or not? I would like to know your opinion.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Peter“</p> <p>Talk together about kneading Peter, focusing our questions on:</p> <p>a) <i>How Peter disappointed his mother?</i> b) <i>How does the boy?</i> c) <i>When we lose trust in someone? But in ourselves?</i> d) <i>How should we behave to earn the trust lost?</i> e) <i>What is harder to lose confidence or to regain?</i></p>
<b>Didactic strategy</b>	<b>Methods</b>	moral story, ethic discussion
	<b>Instruments</b>	audiotape, CD-player
	<b>Organization</b>	frontal

### Activity 2

Components		Description
<b>Theme</b>		Courage, fear and cowardice
<b>Moral-civic competence</b>		the development of the ability to be brave
<b>Learning sequence</b>		<p>I present two images to pupils:</p> <p>What you see in the first picture? But the second? (First picture a man who helps a boy to not drown in the second picture two fire-fighters who extinguished a fire).</p>

<b>Components</b>		<b>Description</b>
<b>Learning sequence</b>		<p>What proves the person who saves child from drowning? (The person who saves child from drowning proves that not afraid of anything when it comes from way a child's life, man)</p> <p>What qualities must have firemen?</p> <p>Ask students to name other trades and practical situations of everyday life involving courage, fear or cowardice.</p> <p>I will write on the board and children books about courage, fear and cowardice.</p> <p>Courage, fear and cowardice are traits of the person.</p> <p>Expresses courage bravery, victory, boldness, facing danger.</p> <p>Fear is fright, fear, anxiety.</p> <p>Cowardice is the negative traits of the person expressing lack of honour, dignity.</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>Divide students into four pairs and they propose a form containing the following exercises:</p> <p>1. One child says: Lady teacher, Michael wants to tell you something.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What lacks to Michael?</li> <li>• What advice would you give?</li> <li>• How do you do when you want to communicate with others?</li> </ul> <p>Each team responds in writing to the three questions, then read the answers to the class will be graded on the board, discussed and then noted in notebooks.</p> <p>2. Build a list of characters from literature that showed courage?</p> <p>3. Role play: Imagine that you have a bad mark and you're afraid to tell your parents. How do you do?</p>
<b>Didactic strategy</b>	<b>Methods</b>	ethic discussion, moral explanation, case study
	<b>Instruments</b>	images, blackboard, notebooks
	<b>Organization</b>	frontal

### Activity 3

<b>Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Theme</b>	Respect and disrespect
<b>Moral-civic competence</b>	the identification of the situations and persons whom we must respect
<b>Learning sequence</b>	<p>Each group of pupils receives one of the following proverbs:</p> <p><i>"The family home, young people respect their parents than everyone home in solitude themselves."</i></p> <p><i>"Remember your mother and your father you sit among men."</i></p> <p><i>"Honour your father and your mother, that you may be well and live many years."</i></p> <p><i>"The teacher is the father of my soul."</i></p> <p><i>"Take respect from friendship and you will get the most beautiful jewellery."</i></p> <p>Teaching Pupils about the text. (Children must help elderly, to spare, to</p>

		follow.)
Components		Description
		Based on quotations/ proverbs and discussions, students identify persons whom must behave with respect: parents, teachers, friends, neighbours, etc. Following discussions with students filled flower petals that are written by the people and symbols.
Didactic strategy	Methods	moral story
	Instruments	tickets, cardboard flower shape of different colours, markers
	Organization	in groups

#### Activity 4

Components		Description
Theme		Goodness and evil
Moral-civic competence		the identification of kindness attracted consequences, namely malice
Learning sequence		<p>Required a student to read aloud the story:  <i>House of 1000 mirrors (Japanese folklore)</i>  <i>A long time ago, in a small village, there was a place known as "The House of 1000 mirrors". A tiny puppy, cheerful by nature, finding this place, decided to visit him. When he arrived, he jumped happily up the stairs and entered the house. He looked down the hall with raised ears and tail wagging. Much to his surprise, found himself on from other 1000 of happy puppies, who gave his tail as well. He smiled, and got 1000 of smiles, so warm and friendly. When he left, he thought: "It's a great place. I'll be back to visit!"</i>  <i>In the same village, another dog who was not as happy as the first, and he decided to visit the house. He climbed the stairs difficult, tail between legs, and head left. When he saw the 1000 unfriendly looking dogs from him, he was scared and bristly back, growling. When other dogs 1000 they started to growl, he ran scared. Once went out, he thought: "It's a terrible place, not going back there again!"</i>  <i>Moral: In life all faces are mirrors. What kind of reflection sees the faces of those you meet?</i>  <i>After reading students are asked to give examples of real situations experienced by them or heard, they earned something by kindness or, conversely, lost because of wickedness.</i></p>
Didactic strategy	Methods	moral story, moral example
	Instruments	story book
	Organization	frontal



### Activity 5

Components	Description
<b>Theme</b>	Honesty and deception
<b>Moral-civic competence</b>	the development of the capacity to be honest
<b>Learning sequence</b>	<p>Divide students into two groups.            Each group will have to read one of the stories proposed by the fellow must submit their story and to initiate a discussion with the whole class on povestirii presented, given the questions prior to every story.</p> <p><b>Group I</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The liar</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"A lad grazed by sheep and shouted that he had seen a wolf:            -Help the wolf! Wolf!</p> <p>Coming peasants flee, but realized that they were fooled. Caddy he flew two or three times this feat, but once it happens that really give raiding wolf in sheep.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Caddy shouted again:            - Help, help the wolf came!</p> <p>Peasants thought that he wants to fool them and they didn't go. As wolf, seeing who has no fear, tear all the flock, at will" (folk tale)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you think about the act boy?</li> <li>2. You how would you have proceeded if you had been in his situation?</li> <li>3. What about peasant behavior?</li> <li>4. You how would you have proceeded instead of the lad? But the peasants?</li> <li>5. Do you find that you are in a similar situation or to witness a similar situation? What ended the story?</li> <li>6. What advice would you give to the boy?</li> </ol> <p><b>Group II</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Power to be honest</b></p> <p>Mary was the only daughter of a very poor family who lived in an adjacent neighbourhood. Although they were poor, parents of Mary never stopped to thank God because he gave a child so lovely. The girl was diligent, obedient, respectful and good learn. One day, being at school, Maria found a 10 lei bill that took it without telling anyone, thinking that the money would help her buy food for her family. At the end lady teacher asked the students if they saw the money that he lost a student. Realizing that it had made a mistake, Maria admits deed and return the money and asking for forgiveness with tears.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think about great deeds?</li> <li>2. You would have done if you had been in her situation?</li> <li>3. What do you think her final gesture?</li> <li>4. What do you think was the reaction of colleagues? But Mrs. teacher?</li> <li>5. How would you behave if our class would be a similar situation</li> <li>6. Do you find that you are in a similar situation or to witness a similar situation?</li> <li>7. How ended the story?</li> </ol> <p>- In what situation do you think should be honest?</p>

Components		Description
Didactic strategy	Methods	ethic discussion, disapproval, moral example
	Instruments	stories
	Organization	frontal, in groups

### Activity 6

Components		Description
Theme		Recapitulation
Moral-civic competence		various
Learning sequence		<p>Ask pupils to extract a text of five that are in a bowl:                      "Irina loves math. Often work additional problems and exercises. Quickly finds solutions to complex problems. As she gained confidence in their forces. Thus, the math is a pleasure for her. Is only <i>very good</i> and Mrs. teacher is based on its possibilities. Today, however, things got complicated. On board was careful not to mistake solving exercise. The statement was as: a <i>sufficient</i>.                      The girl did not know what to do: to tell or not mother?                      My mother saw that she's slaughterhouse.                      - What are you, darling? he asked.                      - Nothing answered her daughter.                      - So little faith you have in me? I do not think you understand?                      Embarrassed and in tears, Irina told her mother what a frame. My mother comforted her crown                      and I said:                      - I trust you! It was just an accident. Take care, take your all steps to not happen again!                      How good is he now girl! Regained confidence in her, but she is upset that questioned the mother's confidence."                      After reading the text, the professor initiate an open discussion based on questions that are written on the board:                      1. What moral traits identified in the text?                      2. Why he lost confidence in it girl? But her mother?                      3. How she regained confidence?                      Is sufficient confidence in you to solve problems? What else is needed?</p>
Didactic strategy	Methods	moral story, ethic discussion, case study
	Instruments	envelope, ticket, blackboard
	Organization	frontal