

## TEACHERS' PERCEPTION UPON THE EDUCATION FOR PRIVATE LIFE: A ROMANIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*Through this study we aim to investigate teachers' perception regarding the integration of the education for private life in the process of education. In this paper there are identified the general directions for integrating the education for private life within the Romanian education. In the methodological part there are presented the results of an observational research that aimed at identifying teachers' perceptions towards the integration of the education for private life among the components of the process of education. The research results indicate positive attitudes towards all the subcategories that regard components of the process of education are assessed by teachers as being very important for the realization of education for private life.*

**Key words:** perceptions, private life, Romanian education, teachers

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### Introduction

The education for private life forms students for a balanced personal life in relation to public life, through an ensemble of rules, laws, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, specific behaviours and actions. Today's multidisciplinary debates regarding privacy also influence the educational steps for transmitting the information which is needed at the level of educational contents and for developing the competences for life (Farstad, 2004). Colleges and universities now find themselves in the spotlight as they grapple with an increasingly complex legal and regulatory environment relating to information privacy and security (Steinfeld and Sutherland Archuleta, 2006).

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In the Romanian educational system there are prerequisites for achieving the education for private life. There are identified the general directions for integrating the education for private life within the Romanian education. The Romanian educational ideal of the school is “the free, full and harmonious development of the human individuality, the formation of an autonomous personality and the assuming of a system of values that are necessary for fulfilment and personal development, for the development of an entrepreneurial spirit, for active citizen participation in society, for social inclusion and employability” (*The Law of National Education - Education Law*, art. 2, Paragraph 1, 2011). There are also specific objectives for training students for the private life according to the various levels of education: training and developing responsibility for their health (grades III-VI); discovery by the students of their own affinities and values in order to create a positive self-image, the development of the independent thinking and responsibility towards integration in the social environment (grades VI-IX); forming a positive and responsible attitude towards the personal actions that have an impact on the social environment, exercising imagination and creativity as sources of a harmonious personal and social life (grades X-XII).

There are positive aspects to achieving the “new education” at the level of *curriculum design*. In terms of educational reform, the compulsory education curriculum is designed so as to contribute to an individual development consistent with the requirements of a knowledge society, of a society based on respect for human beings. Generally, the relationship between education and society must be built so that members of society who are graduates of a stage of schooling are trained in such a way that they aim at, and actually practice, lifelong learning by:

- increasing responsiveness towards the dynamics of change, prospecting for the application of scientific and technological developments, asserting critical or divergent thinking;
- allowing the removal of barriers between academic education and pragmatic education, between “knowing” and “doing”, between “to know” and “to apply”, with an emphasis on training competences;
- stimulating the promotion of values associated with continuous knowledge and efficient work by means of the compulsory education system, but also through political, economic and social agents;
- providing availability for education for private life not only as a priority of the curriculum for compulsory education but also in the actual school practice.

Also, there are approaches and important trends at the *methodological* level for achieving a practical education for private life. I. Cerghit (2006, p. 58) highlights two fundamental guidelines:

a quantitative one, indicating the tendency of multiplication and diversification of methods and a qualitative one, with an emphasis on the renewal and modernization of teaching methods and technologies. Quantitatively, the new education requires a methodology of great diversity and flexibility, including methods, procedures and various means of teaching and learning in a continuous enrichment and differentiation, gradation and customization. At a qualitative level, the main directions that encourage the achievement of education for private life are: promoting the student-centred methodology, focusing on the student' action and involvement, namely the active - participatory methods; extending the group-centred methodology, the interactive methods; focusing upon the pragmatic orientation of the methodology, with a strong emphasis on the use of applied methods.

Fourthly, the current pedagogical conception of *assessment* comes to support the realization of the education for private life. I. Jinga I. (2005, p. 169) considers that assessment is used to adjust the educator's way of working to each student's requirements, to their learning rhythm, and not to show that students have not acquired a certain piece of knowledge or certain skills. If in the intellectual education the assessment can be made more rigorous by means of measuring instruments that are quite precise, at the level of the "new education" the evaluation is realized by estimating the behaviour of students by relating it to certain principles and rules of conduct accepted by society at a given moment.

Regarding the *judicial aspects*, the Romanian educational system has no rules stipulating the right to privacy in school. Miroiu (1998, p. 68) notes that „private life training is missing not only from the curriculum, but also from the normative acts”. We can grasp just a few items related to the respect for confidentiality in the academia. University ethic codes have been developed and adapted after the project of the Ethic Code of the Ministry of Education and Research. In the explanatory memorandum, the authors introduce the protection of the right to privacy under the heading of academic freedom. According to this right, the teaching and administrative staff must respect confidentiality in matters related to privacy of students, they will not give away information unless authorized by the Rector and Deans or only when there are legitimate reasons. This rule also applies in respect to personal requests concerning the maintaining of confidentiality regarding marital status, sexual orientation or hidden disability, address, political, religious affiliation etc. The personnel who have access to documents and information must take care to maintain confidentiality and privacy of such information and protect people who do not want this information to become public. University members must maintain the privacy of confidentiality requests. The personal files are confidential and breach of confidentiality is punished.

Confidentiality represents one of the ten key values of the Code of Professional Ethics for quality insurance and accreditation in higher education in Romania, with legality, independence, objectivity, impartiality, transparency, personal responsibility, professionalism, openness to new dialogue and consensus.

The principle of confidentiality is characterized by faithfulness in providing, expanding, using and providing access to information in accordance with accepted rules and procedures. It means proceeding with discretion and protecting personal data and data related to intellectual property in activities of self-evaluation, external evaluation and accreditation. In the process of external evaluation and accreditation, the display, distribution or publication of information is realized only after the ARACIS Council formulates and approves an official position or statement, a clear definition of the space of information of public interest and only by meeting with the privacy conditions previously determined and agreed upon with the acceptance of this Code by signing a confidentiality declaration.

All these premises offer an optimistic view in terms of achieving “new education”. They provide the necessary conditions to start constructing and successfully implementing the education for private life in school.

### **Research methodology**

#### *Objective of research*

The general objective of our research aims at identifying teachers’ perception towards the integration of the education for private life at the level of the components of the process of education.

#### *General hypothesis*

Teachers consider that a series of components of the process of education are important for the realization of the education for private life.

#### *Participants*

The research lot is constituted of 890 teachers, and it is structured in accordance with independent variables as follows: according to gender: 733 female subjects and 157 male subjects, according to age: 330 subjects with ages between 22 and 31, 278 with ages between 32 and 41, 260 subjects with ages between 42 and 51, 22 subjects with ages between 52 and 61, according to the variable of the teaching milieu: 456 teach in urban areas and 434 teach in rural areas, according to the

variable of didactic experience: 409 subjects with experience between 1 and 10 years, 232 subjects with experience between 11 and 20 years, 227 subjects with experience between 21 and 30 years, 22 subjects with experience between 31 and 40 years, according to the variable of level of teaching: 145 teach in preschool institutions of education, 198 teach in primary schools, 357 in secondary school/ gymnasium, 190 teach in high schools.

#### *Concepts and variables of research*

The concept of *components of the process of education* was categorized in the following categories: school documents, educational objectives, contents categories, methods of teaching, teaching/ learning techniques, forms of organization, didactic means, methods of evaluation, professional competences. Each category comprises specific subcategories.

The dependent variables are represented by the components of the process of education. The independent variables are: gender, age, teaching environment, specialization, didactic degree, management position, didactic experience.

#### *Instrument of research*

In our present research we have drafted a questionnaire in order to observe the premises of education for private life (EPL) at the level of teachers' and students' perception regarding their openness towards the characteristic elements of EPL. The items of the questionnaire exploit the results of the fundamental research and of research starting from the content analysis of the school documents for disciplines from all curricular areas at pre-academic levels.

The questionnaire for the observation of EPL is structured on more dimensions:

1. the importance given to the contents selected in the realization of the education for private life;
2. the assessment of the manner in which private life is respected at the level of the teaching institution;
3. the selecting and building of a hierarchy of concrete manners of achieving education for private life through educational projects;
4. establishing the manners of integration of education for private life at the level of the school curriculum;
5. the selecting and building of a hierarchy of themes specific to EPL at the level of specialty disciplines;

6. the importance given to characteristic elements at the level of the process of education in the realization of EPL.

The questionnaire which was applied to teachers includes all the 6 dimensions, while the questionnaire which was applied to students includes only the first three dimensions.

The first dimension was measured through item 1, with variants of answers between 1 and 5, where 1 = "Very little", 2 = "Little", 3 = "Medium", 4 = "Much", and 5 = "Very much".

The second dimension was measured through item 5 for teachers and item 2 for students, where 1 = "Reduced importance" and 5 = "Great importance".

The third dimension was measured through item 6 for teachers and item 3 for students, where 1 = "The most important", 2 = "Less important", and 3 = "The least important".

The fourth dimension was measured through item 2, where teachers initially expressed their agreement regarding the integration of EPL in school after which they chose only one manner of integration from the existing four: the disciplinary enterprise, the modular enterprise, the infusional enterprise, the transdisciplinary enterprise.

The fifth dimension was measured through item 3, at the level of which we performed the selection of 3 themes specific for each component of private life and then the building of a hierarchy of all these at the level of the teacher's specialty discipline.

The sixth dimension was measured through item 4, with variants of answer between 1 and 5, where 1 = "Very little", 2 = "Little", 3 = "Medium", 4 = "Much" and 5 = "Very much".

The theoretical (content) validity of the questionnaire

In designing the questionnaire, dimensions 1 and 5 cover completely the themes selected after the content analysis of the syllabi and school textbooks of the disciplines for the curricular areas in primary school, secondary school/ gymnasium and high school.

For dimensions 2, 3, 4, and 6 we resorted to a group of 10 experts, teachers at the university with the specialization Education Sciences. They were asked to analyze the items corresponding to the dimensions and express their agreement to the fact that these items measure those respective dimensions. The corresponding items were considered as appropriate.

### *Procedure*

The application of the questionnaires was performed in 2009 year on teachers from Romanian pre-university education system, in the counties of Bacău, Botoșani, Galați, Iași, Neamț, Suceava,

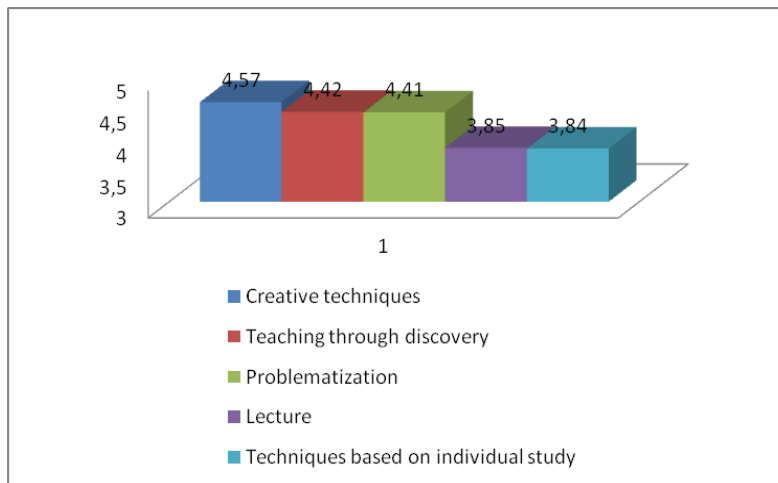
Vaslui, Vrancea. The effective application consisted in completing the columns for each dimension. The subjects were given the necessary time for the filling in of the questionnaires after a careful analysis of its aspects. We also attempted the elimination of the tendency of facade by underlining the fact that there are no correct or incorrect answers, but only personal.

## **Results and discussions**

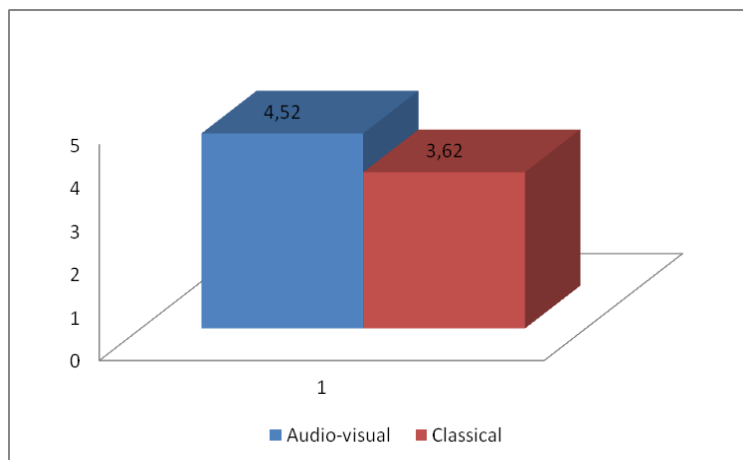
In order to verify the hypothesis we analyzed the statistic indicators (the arithmetic mean and frequencies) for each subcategory at the level of the components of the process of education: curricular documents, educational objectives, educational contents, methods of teaching/ learning, techniques of teaching/ learning, forms of organization, means of education, methods of evaluation, categories of professional competences. We present below the statistic indicators for each subcategory at the level of the components of the process of education.

- Regarding the *curricular documents*, the statistical results indicate that teachers give high importance to all official documents, as syllabus (4,25) and framework plan (4,02), curricular auxiliaries (3,99) and the alternative textbooks (3,46).
- From perspective of *educational objectives*, the statistical results highlight that teachers appreciate all subcategories being important: affective objectives (4,52), cognitive objectives (4,41), psycho-motor objectives (4,26).
- At the level of *educational contents*, the statistical results show that the most important in perception of teachers are the attitudes towards private life (4,30).
- Referring the *methods of teaching/ learning*, the statistical results from Figure 1 prove that teachers give high importance to modern methods, as creative techniques (4,57), teaching through discovery (4,42) and problematization (4,41), comparatively with the lecture (3,85) or the techniques for meaning comprehension based on individual study (3,84).
- In the terms of *didactic means*, the statistical results from Figure 2 indicate that the most important in perception of teachers are audio-visual didactic means (4,52) and the least important are the classical didactic means (3,62).
- As *forms of organizing activities*, the statistical results show that teachers prefer all group forms of organization (4,57) and individual forms of organization (4,47) and frontal forms of organization (4,06).

- In the perception of teachers, the statistical results from Figure 3 highlight that the most appropriate *methods of evaluation* are practical tests (4,40), Self-evaluation (4,35), the observation of students' behavior and activity (4,34) and the least appropriate are the Portfolio (3,98) and the Knowledge tests (3,84).
- At the level of *categories of professional competences*, the statistical results indicate the most important in perception of teachers are the managerial and psycho-pedagogical competences (4,65).

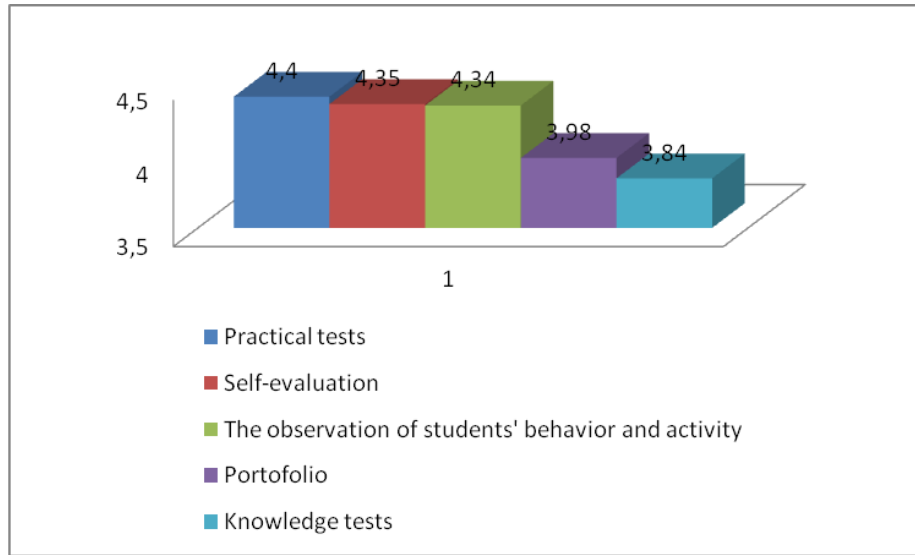


**Figure 1.** *The graphical representation of the statistical results (mean) regarding the teachers' perceptions upon the methods of teaching/ learning*



**Figure 2.** *The graphical representation of the statistical results (mean) regarding the teachers' perceptions upon the didactic means*





**Figure 3.** *The graphical representation of the statistical results (mean) regarding the teachers' perceptions upon the methods of evaluation*

As a result of our analysis, we can observe that all the subcategories that regard components of the process of education are assessed by teachers as being very important for the realization of education for private life in schools. However, the statistic indicators allow a more nuanced analysis for each component of the process of education. With reference to the curricular documents, we can observe that teachers consider the syllabi as the most important document in the realization of education for private life. From the perspective of the educational objectives, the affective objectives have an important role in teachers' perception. In what the educational contents are concerned, the attitudes towards private life stem as the most important. As methods of teaching/ learning, teachers value predominantly teaching through discovery and problematization and as techniques of teaching/ learning, they value most the creative ones. From the category of forms of organization, teachers appreciate the importance of group organization in the realization of the activities specific to education for private life. The audio-visual means are the most useful means of education for the concrete performance of the didactic activities. Practical tests, self-evaluation, and the observation of students' behaviour and activity are the most appreciated from the register of the methods of evaluation. The main categories of competences which are involved in the realization of education for private life are, in the perception of the subject-teachers, the managerial and the psycho-pedagogical competences.

The results we obtained after our investigation indicate teachers' degree of openness towards the integration of the education for private life at the level of the components of the process of

education. After knowing teachers' representations towards this aspect we can propose concrete undertakings of realizing the education for private life at the level of the educational policy and at the level of the educational practice.

### **Conclusions**

After analyzing the research results we can affirm that there are good premises for the implementation of the education for private life in Romanian education system. Teachers have positive attitudes upon the components of education for private life. Based on the results of research, there will be proposed concrete undertakings of its realizing at the level of the educational policy and at the level of the educational practice.

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