

Practical Ways To Making Democratic Education In The Romanian Educational System (Action Possibilities)

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Abstract

The surrounding reality confirms us each time that where citizens are informed and they participate with responsibility to the political life, the democracy is strong, and viceversa. The mission of democratic education relays on the development of democratic spirit, in stimulating initiative, active and responsible participation of citizens to the life of the community. The scope of democratic education consists in the formation of a certain type of citizen, which is the informed, active, responsible citizen, sensible to the problems of the community.

After 1992, Civic Culture as scholar discipline having the objective of education for democracy, was reintroduced in the Romanian education system. This discipline is studied in the primary school, as well as in the gymnasium (7th grade) and professional school. The teaching is made after alternative books of Civic Culture.

Education for democracy represented one of the major concerns of the most intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations: UNESCO, the European Union, the Council of Europe, OSCE, CIVITAS, OECD, IEA, IBE.

In the paper there are presented some ways of integration of new educations, with particularization on the democratic education in the Romanian pre -university and university education system. The paper presents the results of a questionnaire regarding the place and the role of the Democratic Education discipline. Education for democracy is an educational scope, directing the education system towards a common set of values, like: diversity, pluralism, human rights, social justice, wellbeing, solidarity.

Keywords: Romanian Education System, Democratic education, Democratic values

1.Introduction

Democratic education must be regarded as an instrument of defending the citizen's rights and it raises awareness about the existence of individual rights, but also of the responsibilities of exercising these rights.

Education for democracy could lead to the formation of historical solidarity conscience and understanding of the essential relationship between the individual destiny and the social-political context (M. Momanu, 2002, p.133). In addition, the *education for democracy* involves the acceptance of different views and learning problem-solving strategies of nonviolent conflict resolution. The individuals must be formed in the spirit of solidarity with their generation, of respect for those who preceded them and those who will follow them, of confidence in the destiny of humanity and human values.

Education for democracy is considered a priority of the educational reforms at European level. This is seen as an instrument of social cohesion, based on citizens' rights and responsibilities. It also represents a major dimension of the educational policies in all European countries. In Romanian education system, these new contents are tackled especially during the classroom debates, but they are gaining ground and the introduction of *Civic Education* as a subject to be taught in schools is supportive in this respect.

Thus, it may be said that *education for democracy* is an educational goal, directing the education system towards a set of shared values such as: diversity, pluralism, human rights, social justice, welfare, solidarity.

1.2.Practical Ways of Achieving New Educations (Action Possibilities) in The Romanian Pre-University Education System

Practical ways of achieving the new educations (possibilities of action) are:

- introduction of new disciplines, centered on a particular type of education; the difficulty lies in overloading the school curriculum;
- creation of specific educational modules, respectively of special chapters within the traditional disciplines (e.g. Modules with an interdisciplinary character *Why would we be democrats? Democracy in the European Union*);
- infusing classical subjects with educational messages including informational content specific to „new educations”.

After 1992, the Civic Culture, as an object of study whose objective is the education for democracy, was reintroduced in the Romanian education system. This subject is studied both in the primary, secondary (7th grade) and professional education. The teachers use alternative course books. The Table of Contents of the 7th grade Student's Book includes three parts:

1. The civic culture in the contemporary world
2. Life in society
3. Modern states and Constitutions

In the end, we present the point of view expressed by the authors of this Student's Book, Elena Nedelcu and Ecaterina Morar, about the role of teaching Civic Education: „The Civic Education has the role to form the young people as citizens of the State they belong to, as members of various social groups, as citizens of the United Europe, but also as unique, dignified human beings. It includes fundamental rules about life in society, cultivating the self-respect and the respect for others, a taste for independence, responsibility and cooperation, the recognition of other people's rights, human dignity, gender and race equality.”

Through the making of a questionnaire among gymnasium pupils concerning problems of democratic education, at the question: „What modern knowledge would you like to be included in the Civic Education discipline?”, there were reported the following situations, which we hierarchically present:

- ☒ On first place: Human rights, Child rights, Democratic education and the problematic of contemporary world, Life in the knowledge society;
- ☒ On second place: Education forms for democracy, Active and responsible civic participation, Modern states and constitutions;
- ☒ On third place: Civic culture in the contemporary world, Formation of civic virtues, History of European Union, Civil society and democratic practices;
- ☒ On fourth place: Institutions and governance processes in Romania, Democratic organizations at local, national and international level.

In conclusion, it is remarked the preoccupation of pupils towards democratic education and the problematic of contemporary world.

The frontiers between educative situations are not evident: between them there exists an osmosis and a continuity hard to disrupt or to capture in a didactic manner. Actually, this constitutes one of the modern orientations in the Civic Education didactics. What is and how it will be appreciated the place of Civic Education discipline in report to the other disciplines, together with the socio-cultural expectations and changes?

With regard to the place and role of the Civic Education discipline in the school of present, for the increase of the efficiency of the democratic education, we can record: the contribution to the change of optics and visions of pupils regarding the present and future of Civic Education discipline (including those of professors, directors and all the decisional factors); the contribution to the development of intrinsic motivations of pupils for civic capacity; the increase of teaching – learning efficiency of Civic Education discipline regarding the formation of intellectual and practical abilities at pupils, etc.

1.3.Results of a Questionnaire Regarding the Place and Role of Civic Education Discipline

We will present the results of a questionnaire administered to some teacher from the Romanian counties of Bihor, Sălaj and Arad, regarding the place and role of the Civic Education discipline. The questionnaire has proposed to capture the opinions of teachers.

The indirect investigation was used, in writing, by auto completion of the questionnaire. The main objective is the radiography of the existing situation at the educational reality level regarding the holding of information referring to the place and role of the Civic Education discipline in the Romanian education system.

The sample of subjects was represented by a lot of 90 professors which teach the Civic Education discipline.

1.4.Interpretation of answers

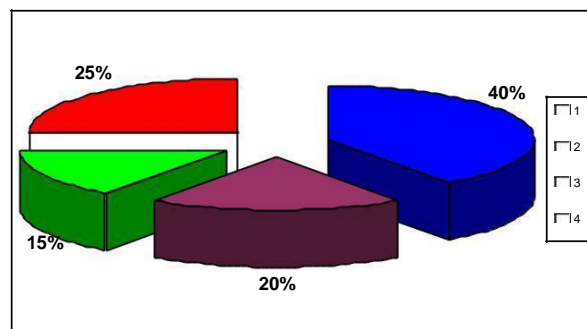
After the processing of data, there was made a radiography regarding the place and role of Civic Education discipline in the instructive – educational process from Romania (it was made an illustration of the answers of the professors regarding the actual problematic of instruction and education in the local communities, the statute of the professor of Civic Education in the Romanian society).

The first item of the questionnaire (annex no. 1) refers to the preference of pupils regarding the Civic Education discipline comparative with the other disciplines.

We present in percentage value these preferences:

- 40% reflect the accentuation of practical – applicative character of the lessons for the formation of civic virtues, of the active and responsible civic participation, of the assimilation of civic knowledge;
- 25% reflect the preoccupation for the formation of civic attitude at pupils and their application in the daily activities;
- 20% reflect the use of computer in the process of teaching – learning – evaluation at this discipline;
- 15% reflect different answers (the use of modern method of teaching and evaluation, the psycho-pedagogic and specialty perfection of Civic Education professors, the preoccupation regarding the digitalization of education and the equipping of schools with modern education instruments, the preoccupation for the continuous formation of Civic Education professors, for the permanent education, etc.

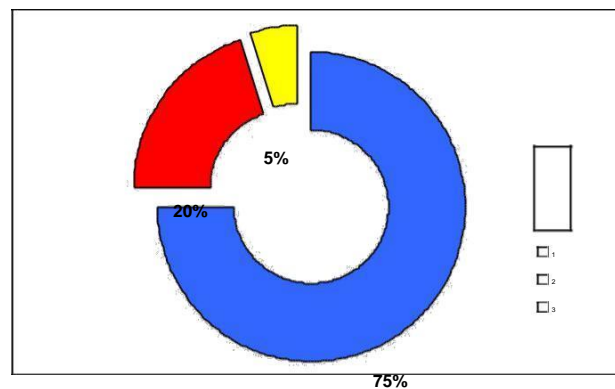
Figure no. 1 – Graphic representation regarding the preference of pupils to the Civic Education discipline



The second item captures the answers which refer to the communication regarding the place and the importance of the Civic Education discipline, in the community and in a modern society. The percentages are:

- 75% - always
- 20% - most of the time
- 5% - sometimes

Figure no. 2 – Graphic representation regarding the communication of pupils regarding the place and importance of Civic Education discipline



The third item refers to the activities which are most relevant for the formation of civic attitude at pupils:

1. groups and micro-groups activities made during the lessons – 35%;
2. individual activities made during the lessons – 5%;
3. practical abilities formation lessons – 35%;
4. use of computer in the teaching – learning – evaluation process – 15%;
5. other (10%) refer to: non-formal activities, during the Otherwise School Program.

The fourth item is reported to the identification of factors which influence in a positive, respectively, negative manner, the promotion of Civic Education discipline in the Romanian education system.

☒ Positive factors:

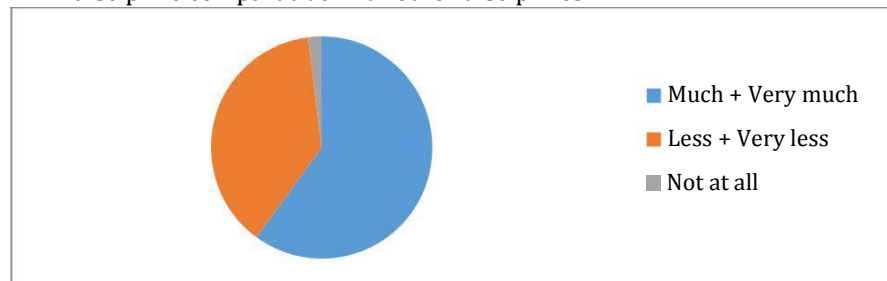
- 40% making practical activities with pupils, in groups and micro-groups;
- 35% the increase of practical – applicative character in teaching – learning – evaluation of the discipline;
- 15% the use of lessons for the formation of practical abilities (creation lessons);
- 10% making non-formal activities regarding democratic education.

☒ Negative factors:

- 45% the use of mixed lesson in teaching;
- 25% the absence of a Civic Education cabinet;
- 15% it is based more on the formation of intellectual abilities rather than practical abilities;
- 15% interdisciplinarity is not applied.

At fifth item, the following results were obtained: 60% much + very much; 38% less + very less; 2% not at all.

Figure no. 3 - Graphic representation regarding the preference of pupils to the Civic Education discipline comparative with other disciplines



ANNEX NO. 1

Last name and first name:
Professor of specialty:
Teaching degree:
Seniority in education:

QUESTIONNAIRE

*By expressing your own opinions in filling in this questionnaire, you will contribute to the formation of a global and real image concerning **The place of Civic Education discipline in the Romanian education system.***

1) In which degree do you consider that your pupils prefer the Civic Education discipline comparative to the other taught disciplines?

.....
.....

2) Do you communicate to the pupils the place and importance presented by the Civic Education discipline in the community and in a modern society?

4. Always 3. Most often 2. Sometimes 1. Never

3) Which of your activities do you consider to be most relevant to the formation of civic attitudes of pupils:

- 1. groups and micro-groups activities made during the lessons
- 2. individual activities made during the lessons
- 3. practice of practical abilities formation lessons
- 4. use of computer in the process of teaching - learning
- 5. other (please specify)

.....
.....
.....

4) What do you consider to be the factors that influence in a positive, and respectively, negative way, the promotion of Civic Education discipline in the Romanian education system?

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.....

5) In which degree do you consider that your pupils prefer the Civic Education discipline, comparative to the other taught disciplines?

5. Very much 4. Much 3. Less 2. Very less 1. Not at all

Thank you for your collaboration!

1.5. Practical ways to achieving democratic education (action possibilities) in the university education system

As practical ways to achieving democratic education in the university education system, we consider that the involvement of students and professors in international projects play a priority role. In this regard, we share our experience in the international project

„USDEC – 3 – Using school for developing european citizenship”, where eight countries have participated (Romania, Czech Republic, Spain, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Turkey).

The project took place at the University of Sakarya (Turkey) in august 2014 (<http://www.usdec2014.sakarya.edu.tr>).

In our seminary, „Dimensions of european citizenship and acquisition of civic competence”, we proposed to increase the importance of acquisition of civic competence in adapting to the challenges of contemporary world. There also were presented two examples of good practices when it comes to active participation of youth in society and volunteering (http://www.usdec2014.sakarya.edu.tr/?page_id=253) (M. Marinescu, V. Marcu, A. Albu, 2015, pp. 188-203).

The education for European citizenship was addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective, exemplifying the way in which pupils / students can be involved in the life of European Union.

The European problems from the university education system refer to curriculum, pedagogies, extracurricular activities that can contribute to the development of European citizenship.

The idea of active citizenship is closely linked to the civic and political education, in the acquisition of civic competence, which could represent the best way through which pupils and students can become effective citizens of an united Europe, fact that contributes to the development of the society that trains them for tomorrow's world.

2. Conclusions

"Education for democratic citizenship involves the learning of democratic behaviour through a diversity of experiences and social practices" (C. Bârzea, 2005, p. 24).

Education for citizenship is considered, on European level, as a priority of educational reforms. This is seen as an instrument of social cohesion, based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Also, it represents a major dimension of educational policies in all European countries. So, it can be stated that education for citizenship is an educational scope, driving the educational system to a set of common values, like: diversity, pluralism, human rights, social justice, wellbeing, solidarity.

European citizenship represents one of the biggest phenomenon which Europe acknowledges. This presents the advantage of rising cooperation between European countries. The prosperity of Member States and the more and more important role played by the European institutions in the economic life and international relations have attracted a big number of members and have deepened the integration process. The fundament of integration constitutes the respecting of values such as: human rights and human dignity.

In the European Union, the respecting of rights and obligations has become a necessity, reason for which there were adopted and ratified by the Member States a series of normative acts which target, among others, the social policy (suitable social protection, social dialogue, fight against social exclusion, etc.), education, professional formation.

On national level, it can be observed that there are three pillars on which education stands on: civil, political and social, which, in their turn, are institutionally sustained by justice organisms, the Parliament or decisional institutions, respectively the educational system and social services. It is stated the „in all the periods characterized by crisis and dilemmas, the democratic ideal was invoked as a hope, as a solution to a new project of civilization”.

Education for democracy is considered to be the most effective way to making a new social contract, based on the rights and obligations of citizens, which would restore the social cohesion and solidarity based on the moral order.

In consequence, the experience of European Union is able to offer three lessons: the preoccupations for the scope of democracy, the link between democracy and its institutionalization, the necessity to report to democracy as a dynamic process.

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