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TEACHERS' COMPETENCE IN CONTEXTUALIZED COMMUNICATION: GOALS, CHALLENGES AND METHODS

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Contextualized communication represents a fundamental dimension of the contemporary educational process, contributing to the optimizing the teacher-student relationship and streamlining the process of training and developing students' knowledge. The article analyzes the main theoretical perspectives on didactic communication, highlighting the teleological and methodological coordinates of contextualized communication within educational activities. The scientific approach capitalizes on the contributions of representative authors from the fields of communication sciences and pedagogy in order to outline a coherent conceptual framework relevant to educational practice. The results of analysis emphasize the importance of adapting the didactic message to the educational and sociocultural context, demonstrating its role in facilitating cognitive learning, supporting students' personality development, and enhancing the effectiveness of educational interactions.

Keywords: *contextualized communication, didactic communication competence, educational process, teaching staff, sociocultural context.*

COMPETENȚA CADRELOR DIDACTICE ÎN COMUNICAREA CONTEXTUALIZATĂ: OBIECTIVE, PROVOCĂRI ȘI METODE

Comunicarea contextualizată reprezintă o dimensiune fundamentală a procesului educațional contemporan, contribuind la optimizarea relației profesor – elev și la eficientizarea procesului de formare și dezvoltare a cunoștințelor elevilor. Articolul analizează principalele perspective teoretice asupra comunicării didactice, evidențiind coordonatele teleologice și metodologice ale comunicării contextualizate în cadrul activităților educaționale. Demersul științific valorifică contribuțiile unor autori reprezentativi din domeniul științelor comunicării și pedagogiei, în vederea configurării unui cadru conceptual coerent și relevant pentru practica educațională. Rezultatele analizei subliniază importanța adaptării mesajului didactic la contextul educațional și sociocultural, demonstrând rolul acesteia în facilitarea învățării cognitive, în dezvoltarea personalității elevului și în consolidarea eficienței interacțiunilor educaționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare contextualizată, competență de comunicare didactică, proces educațional, cadre didactice, context sociocultural.*

Introduction

In recent decades, communication has become a central field of scientific research, being analyzed from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives. In the educational environment, communication acquires specific valences, being directly involved in the process of personality formation and in the development of students' competences.

In an attempt to synthesize the multitude of variables identified in the definitions of communication, we focused our approach on communication with a didactic function, the central interest being attributed to the components through which the source (teaching staff) transmits a message to the receiver (pupil/student) with the intention of forming/developing a communicative behavior using only those elements from the area of communication that provide added clarity and concretization to the specifics of this field of research.

In an educational context, didactic communication represents a particular form of human communication, indispensable in the transmission of instructional-formative contents. Ciobanu O. [2] defines didactic communication as a bilateral teacher-student process, characterized by continuous interaction and by the use of feedback to regulate the educational act.

Among the defining features of didactic communication are:

- the explanatory character, oriented towards understanding the message;
- the logical structuring of contents according to pedagogical principles;
- the active role of teacher in selecting and personalizing information;
- the predominance of verbal communication;
- the evaluative and self-evaluative dimension.

Cucoș C. [3] describes didactic communication as a complex and multi-phase transfer of information between participants in the educational act.

Didactic communication is an instrumental communication, directly involved in supporting a systematic learning process. In this sense, restrictions on content (because learning is equally focused on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, motivations, attitudes, etc.), institutional framework (didactic communication can also exist informally), or those regarding partners are eliminated. In his research, Iacob L. [5] mentions that it is not the presence of characters “teacher-student/students that gives a communication its didactic specificity, but the observance of governing laws of a systematic act of learning”, these being oriented towards optimizing the relationships between the functions and purposes of education, between the objectives - contents - methodology - evaluation of the education/training activity.

The specificity of classroom communication is determined by the institutional framework in which it is carried out and by the specific logic of learning, as a fundamental method of training and education. In this context, Iacob L. highlights the elements that give specificity to didactic communication:

- the explanatory dimension of didactic discourse, which aims to understand what is transmitted;
- the structuring of didactic communication according to the pedagogical logic, which facilitates the understanding of a truth, not just its simple enunciation;
- the active role of teacher, who selects, organizes, personalizes the specialized contents;
- the combination of verbal forms of classroom communication - oral/written;
- the conscious or unconscious emphasis on a dimension of communication: informative, relational, pragmatic, etc. [5].

Theoretical Background

The teacher aims, through participatory communication, to transfer an object of value to the student, assuming, in this sense, different roles: interpreter of information, evaluator, negotiator; thus, “the educator and the educated enter into a process of educational transaction”. The educational message developed by the subject of education (teacher) must provoke the formative reaction of the object of education (student), which has determined the highlighting of pedagogical communication as an axiomatic principle of educational activity, which implies an external and internal inverse connection.

From this perspective, didactic communication cannot be conceived outside the context in which it is carried out, because the efficiency of educational act depends on the ability of teaching staff to adapt the message to the cognitive, emotional and sociocultural peculiarities of the students. Thus, contextualized communication is configured as a natural extension of didactic communication, providing the necessary framework for personalizing pedagogical interaction and optimizing the learning process. If didactic communication establishes the structure and purpose of transmitting information, contextualization gives it relevance and accessibility, facilitating the deep understanding of contents and the active involvement of students in the instructional-formative approach. Thus, contextualized communication becomes an essential tool for adapting pedagogical messages to the real needs of education beneficiaries.

The analysis of contextualized communication involves highlighting its teleological dimension, respectively the purposes and objectives that guide the use of this type of communication in the didactic activity. The approach of teleological coordinates allows understanding how this form of communication contributes to making the educational act more efficient, facilitating the understanding of contents and stimulating the active participation of students in the instructional-formative process.

Teleological Coordinates of Contextualized Communication for Teachers

The main purpose of contextualized communication for teachers is to improve the learning process and understanding of the didactic contents by students. This aspect is essential for the success of education and for the development of students' competences and abilities.

In this sense, teachers must have as a central objective the adaptation of their messages and communication strategies to facilitate the understanding of contents and to stimulate the active participation of students in the learning process. Also, the teleological coordinates include the development of students' communication skills, so that they become more effective in expressing and arguing their own ideas.

Another objective of contextualized communication is to create an open learning environment, in which students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and questions. This aspect contributes to the development of a relationship of trust between teachers and students and to the promotion of a positive educational climate.

We emphasize that contextualized communication in education has multiple goals and directions.

Facilitating understanding and transmitting knowledge. By adapting messages and teaching methods to the needs and level of development of students, teachers transmit complex information in an accessible and relevant way. Thus, the aim is for students to acquire solid knowledge and be able to apply it in various situations.

Developing students' communication skills. This process involves encouraging students to express their thoughts and ideas clearly, ask questions, and actively participate in discussions. Teachers play an important role in modeling effective communication behaviors, helping students become more confident and competent communicators. Developing these skills is of fundamental value in shaping them as individuals and preparing them for adult life.

Creating an inclusive learning environment, in which all students feel valued and able to participate. Education should be accessible to all students, regardless of their individual differences or special needs. By adapting communication strategies and teaching materials, teachers can ensure that every student has the opportunity to learn and develop in an environment that respects their diversity.

Stimulating critical thinking. By using open-ended questions, provocative discussions and interactive activities, teachers can encourage students to ask questions, analyze information and support their points of view. This promotes the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills. Students learn to analyze topics in depth, identify solid arguments and develop the ability to express their opinion coherently.

Building positive relationships and school culture, based on mutual trust and respect. Through active listening, empathy, and open communication, teachers can create an environment in which students feel accepted and supported in their learning process. Trusting relationships between teachers and students foster cooperation and collaboration in the classroom and contribute to the long-term success of educational process.

Adapting to diverse learning contexts. Each class and each group of students is unique, with its own characteristics and needs. Teachers must be flexible and adjust their approach to suit each specific context. This involves adapting teaching materials, teaching style, and communication strategies to maximize student understanding and engagement.

The teleological coordinates of contextualized communication for teachers highlight the essential role of communication in the educational process and emphasize the importance of adapting it to educational needs and goals. Contextualized communication involves the ability of teachers to adapt language and communication style according to specific situations: the level of understanding of students, their cultural, emotional or educational peculiarities. Teachers must adapt the message so that it is clear and accessible to all students, regardless of their level of knowledge or learning styles.

Thus, the teacher's contextualized communication competence can be defined as his or her ability to select, adapt and use verbal and nonverbal language according to the educational context, in order to maximize understanding and the effectiveness of pedagogical act.

One of the important authors who contributed to the development of contextualized communication methodology is Gregory Bateson. He emphasized the importance of understanding the context in which communication takes place and highlighted that the message itself cannot be understood effectively without taking into account the context in which it is transmitted [8].

Specialists in educational sciences [1; 4; 6] show that this competence has a complex structure, which

encompasses several dimensions:

1. *Cognitive dimension* – theoretical knowledge of communication mechanisms, interaction styles and strategies, and psychological peculiarities of students.
2. *Pragmatic dimension* – practical application of communication knowledge in concrete situations (for example, explaining an abstract notion through analogies familiar to students).
3. *Socio-affective dimension* – the ability to use communication to build positive relationships, based on trust, respect, and empathy.
4. *Intercultural dimension* – sensitivity to cultural, linguistic, and social differences, necessary in increasingly diverse schools.
5. *Reflective dimension* – permanent self-assessment of communication efficiency and its adjustment based on feedback received.

Therefore, contextualized communication competence is not an isolated skill, but a set of integrated knowledge, attitudes and skills, which are developed over the long term, through initial training, practical experience and continuous improvement.

Studies in the field [7; 9] emphasize that the development of contextualized communication competence in teachers depends on several factors:

- *Individual factors* – motivation for self-development, openness to new things, empathy, cognitive flexibility.
- *Institutional factors* – the school's organizational culture, leadership style, opportunities for continuous training.
- *Socio-cultural factors* – the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community, dominant social values.
- *Technological factors* – the use of digital tools, which radically change the way teachers communicate with students (educational platforms, real-time feedback applications, social networks).

Teaching experience also plays an essential role: novice teachers often have difficulty adapting the message to the context, while experienced teachers are more able to calibrate their communication.

Although the need for contextualized communication in the teaching process is recognized, practice shows that many teachers face difficulties in developing and applying this competence. Among the most common challenges are:

1. *Rigidity of teaching style* – some teachers use a standardized communicative style, independent of the age or level of students. This leads to the emergence of barriers to understanding and a decrease in school motivation.
2. *Lack of specific training* in initial teacher training programs, the emphasis is often on specialized knowledge, and the communicative and pragmatic component is less developed.
3. *Cultural and linguistic diversity* in current classes, students come from different social and cultural backgrounds. Teachers have difficulty adapting their message to this diversity, which can lead to misunderstandings and even exclusion.
4. *Time and curriculum pressure* overloading the school curriculum limits teachers' opportunities to use varied communication strategies adapted to the needs of each student.
5. *The influence of digital environment* – the emergence of educational platforms and technology-mediated communication brings both opportunities and challenges. Teachers must adapt their communication style to online interaction, where nonverbal language is reduced and student motivation can fluctuate.
6. *Conflict management* – the lack of solid contextual communication skills sometimes leads to the escalation of conflicts between teachers and students or between teachers and parents [6].

These challenges highlight that developing contextualized communication competence is not an automatic process, but requires continuous training, critical reflection and sustained practice. This involves the permanent evaluation of own teaching practice and the adjustment of communication techniques based on feedback received from students and colleagues. Participation in training courses and the exchange of experience with other teachers can improve the ability to communicate in various educational contexts. Effective communication between teachers from different disciplines can contribute to an integrated approach to education. Thus, contextualized communication competence also includes the ability to integrate knowl-

edge from different fields in a coherent way and applied to the real situations of students.

Developing contextualized communication competence in teachers involves the use of specific methods and strategies that help them achieve the objectives set in the learning process. By exploring the methodological coordinates of this process, we highlight the main approaches and methods used to develop contextualized communication competence in teachers.

- One of the main pillars in developing contextualized communication competence in teachers is *specialized education and training*. Teachers need solid preparation to understand the theories and practices of contextual communication and to integrate them into the educational environment. This training process can be achieved through university courses, workshops, seminars and online resources. During the training, teachers learn how to use communication techniques adapted to the educational context and how to manage difficult communication situations.

- Another important method in developing contextualized communication competence is *observation and feedback*. Teachers can benefit from observing and evaluating their communication practices in the classroom, either through self-evaluation or through colleagues or supervisors. Objective and constructive feedback can help teachers identify their strengths and identify areas that need improvement. By observing other experienced teachers and through constructive discussions, new strategies can be learned and communication skills can be improved.

- *Reflection on practice* is an essential method in developing contextualized communication competence. Teachers are encouraged to analyze their own communication interactions, identify the styles and behaviors that work best in their context, and develop self-assessment skills. Through self-reflection, teachers can become aware of and overcome their own biases or assumptions that may affect communication with students.

- *Empathic listening* is an essential competence for teachers who want to communicate effectively in the educational environment. This skill involves not only listening carefully to what students say, but also understanding and encouraging them. Through empathic listening, teachers can create a safe environment in which students feel understood and accepted, which fosters open communication and collaboration.

- *Educational technology* can play a significant role in developing contextualized communication competence. The use of e-learning platforms, online communication tools and multimedia resources can expand the possibilities of communication and learning. Teachers can use technology to create interactive learning environments, to facilitate communication between students and to provide individualized feedback.

- *Applying conflict management techniques* is an important part of contextualized communication competence. Teachers must be prepared to manage conflict situations that may arise between students or with parents. The study and application of conflict management techniques can help teachers resolve conflicts in a constructive way and maintain a positive learning environment.

These methodological coordinates represent the basis for the development of contextualized communication competence in teachers. Through training, observation, reflection and the use of specific approaches and techniques, teachers can become more effective communicators and contribute to improving the educational experience of students.

Adapting communication to the specific context of students is essential to ensure effective communication and a deep understanding of the content. Through research and constant application of this method, teachers can create a stimulating and engaging learning environment in which students are involved and motivated to develop their skills and knowledge.

Contextualized communication competence involves the ability to adapt language, tone, communication style and pedagogical techniques according to the specifics of each educational context. This type of competence is essential to ensure effective and empathetic interaction with students, parents and colleagues, contributing to a productive and inclusive learning environment. Thus, the following categories of contexts in educational communication can be highlighted:

- *Face-to-face teaching context*: Direct interaction between teacher and student in the classroom. Communication competences in this context include clarity of expression, the use of open-ended questions and the provision of immediate feedback.

- *Online teaching context*: Communication through digital platforms, where the skills to explain con-

cisely and provide asynchronous or real-time feedback are essential.

- *Assessment context*: Communication with students and parents about academic performance and the assessment process. Teachers should use clear and neutral language, offering constructive guidance.

- *Counseling context*: Teachers may be called upon to counsel students about educational, emotional, or career issues. This context requires empathy and the ability to provide nonjudgmental support.

- *Interdisciplinary context*: Communication with fellow teachers in interdisciplinary work teams for curriculum development or joint projects. This type of communication requires collaboration and good coordination.

An important aspect of collaboration between teachers to promote contextual communication is to clearly define common goals and the roles of each teacher in this process. Open and transparent communication is essential to ensure the success of this collaboration and to avoid potential conflicts or misunderstandings. At the same time, it is important that teachers have access to resources and support from school leaders and education specialists to support them in their efforts to promote contextualized communication in the school environment.

Through effective collaboration between teachers, a school environment conducive to the promotion of contextual communication can be developed, thus contributing to improving students' academic results and developing them as individuals capable of communicating effectively in various contexts.

Discussions and Conclusions

Contextualized communication is a fundamental element of the modern educational process, as it allows the adaptation of teaching act to the cognitive, emotional and sociocultural peculiarities of students. By constantly reporting on the context in which the pedagogical interaction takes place, the teacher manages to transform the transmission of information into a relevant, accessible and efficient process. Thus, contextualized communication not only complements traditional didactic communication, but also enriches it, giving it flexibility and the ability to respond to the real needs of students.

The analysis of teleological coordinates highlights the fact that the main purpose of contextualized communication is to facilitate the understanding of the contents and improve the learning process. By adapting the message, using interactive methods and stimulating dialogue, teachers can contribute to the development of students' communication competences, the formation of critical thinking and the creation of an inclusive and collaborative educational environment. At the same time, this type of communication favors the building of relationships based on trust and mutual respect between teachers and students, an essential aspect for maintaining a positive and motivating educational climate.

Contextualized communication competence has a complex structure, integrating cognitive, pragmatic, socio-affective, intercultural and reflective dimensions. Its development depends on both individual factors, such as motivation for self-development and empathy, and institutional, socio-cultural and technological factors. At the same time, teachers face numerous challenges, such as rigidity of teaching styles, lack of specific training, cultural diversity of classes or pressure of the curriculum and the digital environment.

In this context, the development of contextualized communication competence involves a continuous process of training, reflection and professional development. By using methods such as specialized training, observation and feedback, self-reflection, empathetic listening and the integration of educational technologies, teachers can improve their ability to communicate effectively in various educational situations. Ultimately, promoting contextualized communication contributes to creating a dynamic and inclusive educational environment, in which students are encouraged to actively participate, develop their competences, and prepare themselves to communicate effectively in contemporary society.

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TIME MANAGEMENT AS A TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCE IN THE WRITTEN AND TAUGHT SCHOOL CURRICULUM: CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

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The article examines the concept of time management within the structure of the educational curriculum in the Republic of Moldova, highlighting its importance as a transversal competency essential for the efficiency of the learning process and the development of students' autonomy. Time management is addressed both theoretically, from the perspective of pedagogy and educational psychology, and practically, through the analysis of the written and taught curriculum, demonstrating that, although its elements are present within the "learning to learn" competency, explicit methodological guidelines and systematic assessment tools are lacking. The study proposes a conceptual framework that correlates educational theory, curricular documents, teaching strategies, and outcome evaluation, emphasizing the interdependence between planning, prioritization, monitoring, and self-regulation of learning activities. Systematic integration of time management into the curriculum supports the development of students' personal competencies, increases the efficiency of the educational process, and prepares them for the professional and social demands of contemporary society.

Keywords: *time management, taught curriculum, transversal competencies, self-regulation, teaching perceptions.*

MANAGEMENTUL TIMPULUI CA COMPETENȚĂ TRANSVERSALĂ ÎN CURRICULUMUL ȘCOLAR SCRIS ȘI PREDAT: PERSPECTIVE CONCEPTUALE

Articolul examinează conceptul de management al timpului în structura curriculumului educațional din Republica Moldova, evidențiind importanța sa ca competență transversală esențială pentru eficiența procesului de învățare și dezvoltarea autonomiei elevilor. Managementul timpului este abordat atât teoretic, prin prisma pedagogiei și psihologiei educaționale, cât și practic, prin analiza curriculumului scris și predat, demonstrând că, deși elementele sale sunt prezente în competența „a învăța să înveți”, lipsesc repere metodologice explicite și instrumente de evaluare sistematice. Studiul propune un cadru conceptual care corelează teoria educațională, documentele curriculare, strategiile didactice și evaluarea rezultatelor, evidențiind interdependența dintre planificarea, prioritizarea, monitorizarea și autoreglarea activităților de învățare. Integrarea sistematică a managementului timpului în curriculum susține dezvoltarea competențelor personale ale elevilor, creșterea eficienței procesului educațional și pregătirea acestora pentru cerințele profesionale și sociale ale societății contemporane.

Cuvinte-cheie: *managementul timpului, curriculum predat, competențe transversale, autoreglare, percepții didactice.*

Introduction

In the field of education, time management is viewed as an important factor that influences the organization and effectiveness of the learning process. Rather than being limited to scheduling activities or following deadlines, it involves the ability to prioritize tasks, distribute effort appropriately, and adapt learning activities to the available time resources. Educational researchers frequently associate these abilities with self-regulated learning, emphasizing that students who are capable of planning and monitoring their own academic activities usually demonstrate higher levels of responsibility and engagement in the learning process [10].

The growing attention given to time management in recent years is largely connected to the increasing complexity of academic demands faced by students. International studies point out that ineffective use of time may negatively affect academic performance, stress management, and students' capacity to maintain consistency in their learning routines. By contrast, the development of effective time management habits

has been associated with improved academic achievement, better concentration during study activities, and a healthier balance between academic and personal responsibilities (World E-learning Organization, 2024) [4].

From a pedagogical perspective, time management should therefore be understood not only as a technical or managerial skill, but also as a component of students' broader educational development. The ability to organize learning activities efficiently contributes to greater autonomy, encourages reflective learning practices, and supports long-term academic adaptation in increasingly demanding educational environments.

In the Republic of Moldova, the modern educational curriculum increasingly emphasizes the development of transversal competencies, among which is the competency of “*learning to learn*”, encompassing elements of self-regulation, strategic planning, and efficient organization of learning activities [8].

Curricular documents focus on fostering a proactive attitude toward learning, stimulating intrinsic motivation, and developing organizational skills for educational activities. References to organization, responsibility, and independent learning can be found in most contemporary educational curricula. Still, when looking more closely at curricular content, it becomes evident that time management is rarely treated as a distinct competence area with clearly defined instructional strategies. In practice, students are generally expected to organize their learning activities on their own, even though explicit guidance on how to develop these abilities is often limited or inconsistent.

This situation influences classroom practice in different ways. In some cases, teachers integrate elements of planning and task organization naturally during lessons or project activities. In other situations, however, time management receives little direct attention and remains secondary to subject-related content. Because of these differences, students do not always develop the same level of competence in organizing academic responsibilities, and the support they receive may vary considerably from one educational context to another.

It is also important to note that time management in schools is frequently understood in a rather narrow sense. The discussion usually focuses on following schedules, submitting assignments on time, or respecting the duration of classroom activities. While such aspects are relevant, they do not fully capture the complexity of the competence itself. Less attention is given to processes such as setting realistic goals, identifying priorities, reflecting on personal learning habits, or adapting study strategies when academic demands increase.

These limitations become easier to observe during periods of increased workload, when students are required to balance multiple tasks simultaneously. Some manage to adapt their routines and maintain consistency in their work, whereas others struggle with planning, concentration, or task completion. Such differences are not necessarily the result of motivation alone; they may also reflect the lack of a more systematic and coherent educational approach toward the development of time management skills within the learning process.

Recent studies in the Republic of Moldova indicate that the effectiveness of time management varies depending on the subject and the students' level of autonomy, and the absence of curricular indicators and well-structured teaching strategies may hinder the development of stable time management skills among students [12].

In today's educational context, where academic demands are becoming increasingly complex and learning tasks more diverse, the explicit integration of time management into curricula and teaching practice appears particularly relevant. Although curricular documents often include indirectly related competencies such as planning and task organization, the absence of a clearly defined and systematic approach means that the development of this skill tends to remain fragmented.

A more coherent pedagogical framework could support students not only in organizing school-related tasks, but also in forming more stable learning routines and strengthening their capacity for self-regulation [4].

Theoretical foundations of time management

In the specialized literature, time management is generally understood as a complex, multidimensional concept situated at the intersection of pedagogy, psychology, and educational sciences. It extends beyond the simple chronological organization of activities, referring instead to how learners plan tasks, prioritize

responsibilities, and adjust learning strategies in response to academic demands. From this perspective, it is closely linked to self-regulated learning and is often considered an important component of effective educational practice [11].

From a pedagogical standpoint, time management involves processes such as planning learning activities, structuring work stages, estimating task duration, and monitoring progress. However, these processes are not purely technical. They also involve cognitive and metacognitive dimensions, as students are required to reflect on their learning behavior, adjust strategies when necessary, and evaluate their progress. In this way, the use of time becomes an intentional and adaptive component of the learning process rather than a mechanical routine [10].

These theoretical perspectives are further supported by psychological approaches such as Temporal Motivation Theory, which explains how individuals' perception of time influences motivation, attention, and effort allocation in relation to deadlines. In educational settings, this translates into observable differences in how students manage cognitive resources, sustain attention, and remain engaged in learning tasks over time [14].

Closely related to this is the concept of self-organization, which is widely regarded as essential for autonomous and lifelong learning. Students are expected to define goals, plan activities, and evaluate outcomes, all of which require the conscious and efficient use of time as a learning resource.

International research increasingly highlights time management as a transversal competence relevant across disciplines and educational contexts. Recent meta-analytical findings indicate that strategies such as planning and prioritization are positively associated with academic engagement and performance, although their effectiveness often depends on contextual factors and the level of pedagogical support provided to students [6].

These strategies are not limited to mere time allocation but also include organizing activities in a way that supports efficient and progressive learning.

Theoretical approaches to curriculum integration

In the curricular context, time management is not only a psycho-pedagogical concept but also a functional element of curriculum design. The modern curriculum emphasizes the development of key competencies, among which is the ability to “*learn to learn*”, which includes dimensions related to planning and managing educational activities. This approach trains students to create effective learning routines, identify available time resources, and maximize these resources in relation to curricular objectives.

Theoretical approaches to integrating time into the curriculum include the development of instructional programs that encourage independent planning of study tasks, the design of educational projects based on self-assessment and self-regulation, and the introduction of tools for self-monitoring progress [7]. These conceptual references support the idea that a structured and intentional approach to time management in the curriculum can significantly contribute to student autonomy and enhance the efficiency of the educational process.

Theorists of time management in education argue that its pedagogical application involves clearly setting learning objectives, prioritizing tasks according to these objectives, and conducting activities at a pace that reflects the level of difficulty and available resources. In practice, this may include integrating planning tools into teaching strategies, using study journals, organizing schedules, reflecting on progress, and adapting activities to the individual pace of the student [5].

In conclusion, the theoretical foundations of time management in education are based on the intersection of pedagogy, psychology, and motivational theories, integrating concepts of self-regulation, strategic planning, and efficient organization of time resources. These conceptual frameworks provide the basis for curricular solutions that support the development of time management competencies and facilitate effective and sustainable learning.

Distribution of teaching time and curricular priorities

Another component of the issue concerns how curricula organize teaching time through framework plans. The approved framework plans for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education establish a fixed number of hours for compulsory and optional subjects but do not include any mechanism

to assess or integrate competencies related exclusively to time management as a transdisciplinary activity (Ministry of Education and Research, 2025) [9]. This organization reflects a prioritization of traditional subjects – such as language and communication, mathematics, or sciences – at the expense of practices that emphasize the development of practical skills in managing personal learning time.

Moreover, the allocation of hours per subject does not provide sufficient curricular flexibility to integrate activities that explicitly foster organizational competencies, such as self-regulation projects, task planning, or personal time optimization techniques. Although curricular documents—including proposals under revision—mention the development of key and transversal competencies, these often remain abstract and difficult to translate into concrete learning strategies oriented toward time management.

Educational implications and directions for curricular development

This „*explicit absence*” of time management as a curriculum element can have significant practical effects. First, students do not always have effective strategies for organizing their study time, and this can influence both their academic results and the gradual development of self-regulation skills. At the same time, teachers may experience difficulties when trying to design learning activities that intentionally develop these competencies, especially in situations where there are no clear methodological frameworks or specific tools for assessing time management.

Conceptual framework of the educational curriculum: the dimension of time management

In educational research, time management is increasingly understood as a complex, multidimensional construct that goes beyond simply arranging activities in chronological order. It is closely linked to the development of self-regulated learning and is often considered an essential competence for academic success. In the literature, time management is described as „the totality of activities through which project stages are completed according to schedule: defining, sequencing, estimating durations, planning, tracking, and controlling” which highlights its dual nature as both an organizational and a self-regulatory process.

From a pedagogical perspective, time management is not limited to efficient scheduling of instructional time. It also refers to students’ capacity to plan their learning tasks, set priorities, and continuously monitor their progress in relation to available time. In this sense, it combines organizational skills with motivational and behavioral aspects of learning, being strongly connected to self-regulated learning, where learners actively guide their cognition, emotions, and actions in order to achieve academic objectives.

Within this approach, time management becomes a key element in the learning process, as students are expected to take responsibility for planning, organizing, and evaluating their own work. This includes distributing study time realistically, prioritizing academic tasks, and gradually building stable independent learning routines. Therefore, time management should be seen not only as a factor that influences academic performance, but also as a foundation for autonomy, responsibility, and self-organization.

Theoretical approaches in education

From a theoretical standpoint, time management is discussed through several major perspectives:

- **Self-regulated learning theory**, which emphasizes the role of metacognitive abilities that allow learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes, including the efficient use of time as a key resource [apud 10].

- **The pedagogical perspective on educational planning**, according to which time management is not only a personal competence but also a condition that supports the efficiency of the instructional process [1]. From this perspective, time is considered a key curriculum resource, and optimizing its use represents a strategic objective in the design and implementation of educational plans.

- **Psychological approaches to temporal motivation**, such as the Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT), which highlights the role of time and the perception of deadlines in motivating students to complete learning tasks. According to this theory, the perception of time influences the prioritization of activities and allocation of effort, which is relevant for developing self-regulation and time discipline competencies in education [13].

These theoretical frameworks suggest that time management is not an isolated concept but an integrative construct reflecting the interaction between cognitive-motivational, pedagogical, and curricular factors.

The concept of time management in the curriculum

Within the educational curriculum, time management can be conceptualized as the set of cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral competencies through which students plan, prioritize, monitor, and evaluate learning activities according to study resources and objectives, with the aim of maximizing efficiency and autonomy in learning.

This conceptualization highlights several fundamental dimensions:

- **Planning** – setting learning objectives and allocating appropriate time to achieve them.
- **Prioritization** – identifying essential tasks and distributing time according to importance and deadlines.
- **Monitoring** – tracking learning progress and evaluating the use of time resources.
- **Self-Assessment** – reflecting on the efficiency of time use and adjusting strategies according to results.

Through these components, time management gains coherence as an integrated part of the “*learning to learn*” competence required by modern curricula to support students’ personal and professional development.

Conceptual relevance for structuring the written and taught curriculum

In developing a methodology for a time management concept within the written and taught curriculum, it is essential to understand that:

- The **written curriculum** must clearly include competencies, objectives, and performance indicators that reflect time management as part of transversal competence development.
- The **taught curriculum** must include teaching strategies, activities, and assessment tools that allow students to practice and develop competencies in planning, prioritization, monitoring, and evaluation of time.

This conceptual framework provides the basis for subsequent research methodology, as it identifies the competency components to be measured, the instructional tools that can be used, and the evaluation criteria that can be incorporated into curricula to support the development of students’ time management skills.

From a curricular perspective, time management can be integrated in the following ways:

- Through **cross-curricular subjects** that develop self-assessment and planning competencies.
- By **including objectives and assessment indicators** related to time organization strategies.
- Through **interdisciplinary projects** that require continuous planning and self-organization.

In this regard, it is necessary to formulate a clear and well-structured concept of “*Time management in the structure of the written and taught curriculum in the Republic of Moldova.*”

The concept of time management in the structure of the educational curriculum (written and taught) for the Republic of Moldova

Time management, in the educational context, is defined as the set of cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral competencies through which students plan, organize, monitor, and efficiently evaluate learning activities in relation to the available time resources and curricular objectives. This concept emphasizes the role of time not only as a simple calendar duration in which teaching takes place, but as a strategic educational resource that influences the quality of learning and the development of students’ personal competencies [11].

Moreover, time management is seen as a transversal competence that supports the development of self-regulated learning – that is, the ability of students to actively take control over the cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes involved in learning.

The written curriculum is the set of official documents (framework plans, competency standards, school programs) that structure what “must be taught and learned.” In the Republic of Moldova, these documents indicate general and key competencies, without explicitly mentioning time management as a separate subject, but they refer to competencies such as learning to learn and self-regulation, which implicitly involve time management skills [9].

Therefore, in the written curriculum, time management could be formalized as:

A transversal competence that supports other key competencies (for example: autonomous learning competence, communication competence, problem-solving competence) and may have specific indicators such as:

- The ability to set short-term and long-term learning objectives;
- The ability to plan learning activities and meet deadlines;
- The ability to evaluate and adjust the use of time resources.

Learning outcomes in school programs specify not only what the student “knows” but also what the student “can do” in relation to their own organization of learning activities.

A written curriculum structured in this way would support the explicit assessment of time management competencies, avoiding situations where these competencies remain only implicit or are left to the discretion of the teacher.

The taught curriculum reflects how the teacher interprets and implements the written curriculum in the actual teaching–learning–assessment process. It includes the strategies, techniques, and educational tools used by teachers to achieve learning objectives. Regarding time management, the taught curriculum should include:

- Teaching strategies for planning and backward design – Teachers can use models such as *Understanding by Design (UbD)*, which start from the expected learning outcomes to structure activities and time allocations throughout the instructional process (UbD promotes planning aimed at deep understanding and efficient organization of activities).
- Practical planning and prioritization activities – Students can be involved in weekly or project planning activities, where they set tasks and deadlines, monitor progress, and reflect on how they manage their time.
- Monitoring and self-assessment tools – Time journals, self-assessment portfolios, prioritization tables, or reflection rubrics that require students to analyze how and how efficiently they used their time for learning.
- Formative assessment focused on self-regulation – Teachers can include evaluation criteria related to students’ ability to plan and manage learning activities, as part of process assessment, not just the final result.

Thus, the taught curriculum integrates time management into concrete educational activities, ensuring not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of organizational and self-regulation competencies.

Conceptually, the relationship between the written and taught curriculum regarding time management should be aligned through the following principles:

- **Clarity of competencies:** The written curriculum indicates competencies related to planning, organization, and self-regulation, which are reflected in the applied teaching strategies.
- **Coherence between objectives and activities:** Activities planned in the taught curriculum aim not only at knowledge transfer but also at developing time management competencies in real learning contexts.
- **Integrated assessment:** Evaluation indicators in the written curriculum must include criteria related to efficient use of time, and these criteria should be applied in student assessment in teaching.
- **Reflection and adjustment:** Students develop the ability to reflect on their own learning process and adjust time management strategies based on feedback received from teachers.

The implementation of the time management concept requires:

- Careful curriculum design at the central level – authors of the written curriculum must include competencies and specific indicators for planning and managing time.
- Professional development of teachers to effectively integrate time management techniques into the teaching process.
- Adapted educational tools – materials, guides, and methodological resources that provide practical examples of integrating time management into teaching activities.
- Formative and summative assessment that includes criteria for time organization, not only knowledge acquisition.

In this way, the contribution to effective and sustainable education is reflected through the application of a well-articulated concept of time management, integrated both in the written and taught curriculum. Such an approach contributes to:

- The development of students' personal competencies, such as autonomy, responsibility, and the ability to strategically plan educational activities;
- Increased learning efficiency, through optimizing the allocation of time for tasks, projects, and preparation for assessments, reducing tendencies of procrastination and organizational difficulties;
- Alignment of teaching practice with the demands of contemporary society, where the competence of time management represents an essential skill not only in the school environment but also in professional and social life.

Based on these conceptual foundations, it is necessary to establish an integrated concept of time management, systematically applied within the educational curriculum of the Republic of Moldova. Such an approach involves clarifying the relationships between the theoretical dimension of the concept, its reflection in the written curriculum (normative documents, framework plans, school programs), and its implementation in the taught curriculum (actual teaching practice).

In this logic, time management becomes an element of curricular coherence, ensuring alignment between educational intentions, the organization of the teaching-learning process, and learning outcomes. Its systematic integration contributes to the optimization of teaching activities, the development of students' competencies, and the improvement of educational results.

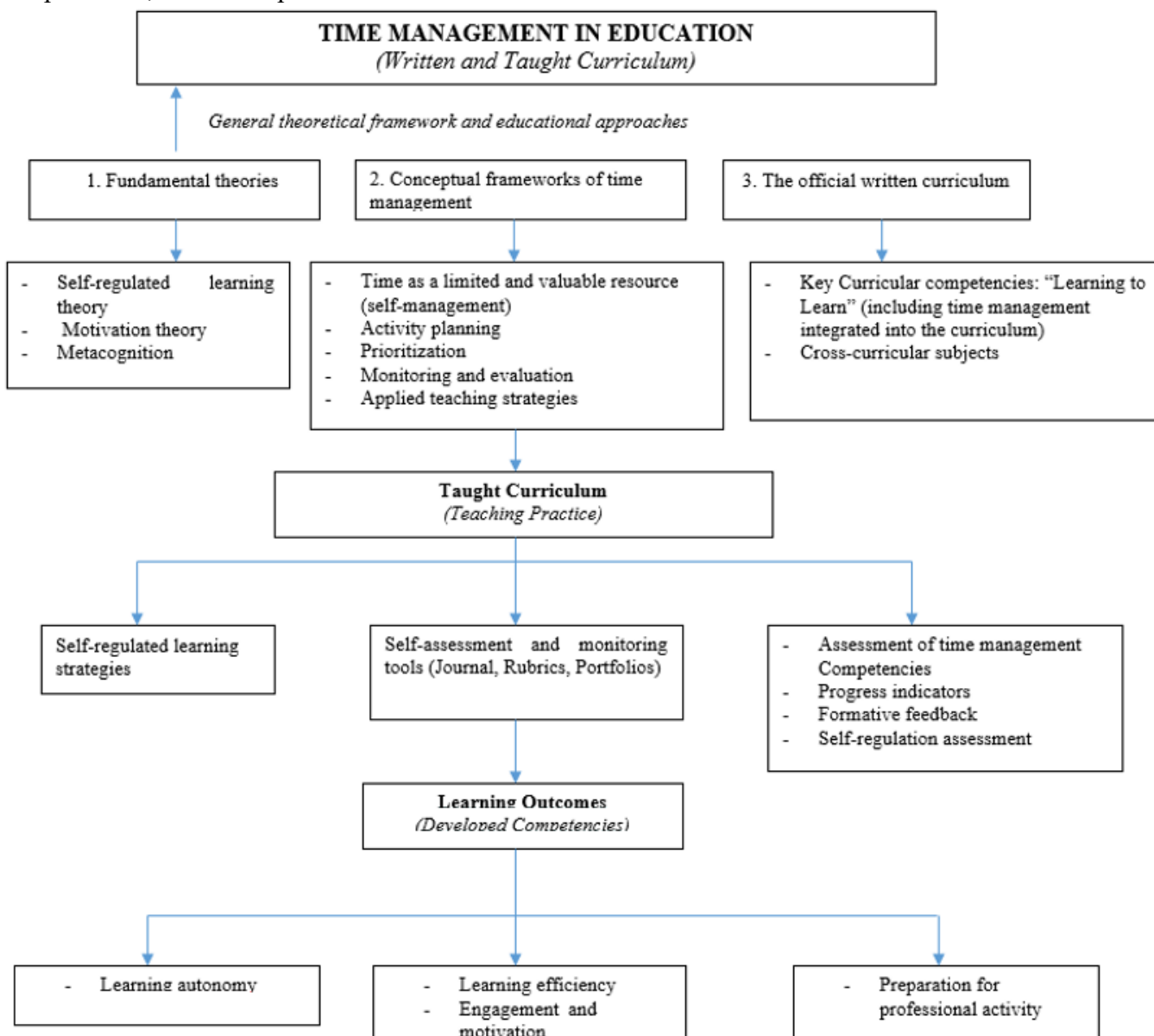


Figure 1. Conceptual model: time management in the educational curriculum (Republic of Moldova)

The proposed conceptual model of Time management in the educational curriculum highlights the interdependence between educational theory, conceptual benchmarks, the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the targeted educational outcomes in the context of the Republic of Moldova, providing a systemic perspective on how time management is conceptualized, integrated, and utilized in the educational process.

At the *theoretical level*, the conceptualization of time management is based on foundations from pedagogy and educational psychology, particularly theories of self-regulated learning, metacognition, and motivation for learning. From this perspective, time management is not reduced to a simple organizational technique but is understood as an internal process of self-regulation, through which the student learns to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning process. Time thus becomes a strategic resource, essential for the efficiency of intellectual activity and personal development.

Based on these theoretical foundations, *the conceptual benchmarks* of time management in the curriculum are outlined. Time is seen as a limited and valuable resource that requires conscious planning, task prioritization, and progress monitoring. Time management is associated with strategies such as organizing activities, setting goals, self-assessment, and adjusting the learning process. Within the curriculum, these elements are subsumed under the key competency “learning to learn,” provided in the official documents of the Republic of Moldova, a competency that presupposes the student’s ability to organize and regulate their own learning, including through effective use of time.

At the *level of the written curriculum*, time management does not appear as a distinct subject; however, it is implicitly integrated into the set of transversal competencies formulated in framework plans, competency standards, and school programs. Curricular documents promote the development of autonomy, responsibility, and self-regulation, elements that indirectly include the dimension of time management. Thus, the framework highlights the fact that time management is present at the normative level, even if it is not explicitly named as a separate curricular component.

The translation of these provisions into educational practice is realized through *the taught curriculum*, where teachers operationalize the principles of time management in daily activities. This is reflected in the rigorous planning of lessons, balanced organization of tasks, engaging students in setting priorities, and the use of self-monitoring tools, such as learning journals or self-assessment sheets. In this way, time management becomes an active educational process, integrated into the dynamics of the teacher–student relationship and the structure of teaching activities.

Finally, the framework includes *the dimension of assessment and educational outcomes*, emphasizing that integrating time management into the curriculum contributes to the formation of sustainable competencies. Assessment targets not only cognitive performance but also students’ ability to organize their activities efficiently, meet deadlines, and adjust their work strategies. The targeted educational outcomes include the development of autonomy in learning, increased efficiency of the educational process, and preparation of students for the demands of professional and social life.

Thus, the framework reflects a coherent logical flow – from theoretical foundations to practical application and impact on outcomes – highlighting the role of time management as an integrative element of the educational curriculum in the Republic of Moldova.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that time management is, in essence, a key competence for improving the effectiveness of the educational process, even if in the curriculum of the Republic of Moldova it is mostly present in an indirect way. While the “learning to learn” competence does include aspects such as planning, prioritization, and self-regulation, in practice these elements are not always supported by clear methodological guidelines that would ensure their consistent application in classroom activities.

What also becomes evident from the literature is the gap between what is formally stated in curricular documents and how these provisions are actually translated into teaching practice. In many cases, time management is addressed in an uneven or fragmented manner, depending largely on individual teacher

initiative rather than on a shared or clearly structured framework. This naturally leads to differences in how students develop these skills.

At the same time, a more deliberate and coherent integration of time management into the curriculum could make a real difference in how students learn to organize their work. Beyond academic performance, it would help them gradually develop more autonomy and responsibility in managing their learning process, which in turn contributes to a more efficient and better structured educational experience overall.

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THE WRITTEN AND TAUGHT ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CURRICULUM EVALUATED BY TEACHERS

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The research object of the scientific investigation in this article is the process of monitoring and evaluating the Romanian language and literature curriculum from the teachers' perspective. The analysis of the results of curriculum monitoring by practitioners (teachers and school managers) is essential, because it transforms raw data into concrete measures to improve the teaching-learning act. By evaluating the way in which the subject is taught and received, teachers can quickly identify discrepancies between theoretical planning and the real progress of students, allowing for a personalization of the teaching approach. This analysis also provides the feedback needed to decide whether the educational resources and methods chosen are effective or whether they require strategic adjustment in order to achieve learning Standards and objectives. Finally, the process ensures the relevance of the education provided, guaranteeing that students acquire the competencies set out in the national standards in a way adapted to their current needs.

Keywords: *disciplinary curriculum, school discipline, Romanian language and literature, teachers, monitoring, evaluation, indicators, quality and relevance of education.*

CURRICULUMUL DE LIMBĂ ȘI LITERATURĂ ROMÂNĂ SCRIS ȘI PREDAT EVALUAT DE CADRELE DIDACTICE

Obiectul de cercetare al investigației științifice din acest articol îl constituie procesul de monitorizare și evaluare al curriculumului de limbă și literatură română în viziunea cadrelor didactice. Analiza rezultatelor monitorizării curriculumului de către practicieni este esențială, deoarece transformă datele brute în măsuri concrete de îmbunătățire a actului de predare-învățare. Prin evaluarea modului în care materia este predată și receptată, cadrele didactice pot identifica rapid discrepanțele dintre planificarea teoretică și progresul real al elevilor. De asemenea, această analiză oferă feedbackul necesar pentru a decide dacă resursele educaționale și metodele alese sunt eficiente sau dacă necesită o ajustare strategică pentru atingerea standardelor și obiectivelor de învățare. În final, procesul asigură relevanța educației oferite, garantând că elevii dobândesc competențele prevăzute în standardele naționale, într-un mod adaptat nevoilor lor actuale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *curriculum disciplinar, disciplină școlară, limba și literatura română, cadre didactice, monitorizare, evaluare, indicatori, calitatea și relevanța educației.*

Introduction

In the architecture of the education system of the Republic of Moldova, the subject Romanian Language and Literature (RLL) occupies a central position, being not only a field of study but also an identity pillar and a fundamental instrument of communication and knowledge. However, the gap between the official curriculum (the written and regulated one) and the implemented curriculum (taught and assessed in the classroom) represents a complex space marked by methodological challenges, variable resources, and diverse pedagogical visions [7].

This study aims to explore this intersection by analysing how curricular documents are internalized, adapted, and ultimately translated into teaching practice by teachers in lower secondary and upper secondary education. In a period marked by successive reforms and the need to align with European standards of competence, the voice of practitioners becomes essential for understanding the viability of current educational policies [2, 11]. In this study, we analyse the results of the implementation of the RLL curriculum in general secondary education in the Republic of Moldova, from the perspective of teaching staff, exploring the discrepancies between the normative document (the written curriculum), classroom practice (the taught

curriculum), and measurable outcomes (the learned and assessed curriculum). Our approach is based on both quantitative and qualitative research, using as the main instrument a questionnaire administered to teachers from lower and upper secondary levels [Apud 5]. The results highlight the need for a better correlation between the volume of content and instructional time, as well as the necessity of auxiliary resources to support a competence-based approach. The article offers strategic recommendations for decision-makers and creative adaptation solutions for practitioners. For theorists and researchers, the presented data provide a current “snapshot” of the state of Romanian language didactics. For decision-makers, the study serves as a warning signal or a support point in the process of monitoring and revising educational policies, emphasizing the need for closer alignment between curricular requirements and the logistical realities of schools. For practitioners, this article may function as a mirror of their own activity, a space for validating common difficulties, and at the same time, a source of reflection on how pedagogical autonomy can be exercised within (or beyond) the limits of a prescribed curriculum. Through this approach, we aim to move beyond abstract theorization and bring to the forefront an honest analysis of how the RLL curriculum is “lived” in schools across the Republic of Moldova, thus providing a solid foundation for dialogue between those who design the regulations and those who bring them to life in the classroom, facilitating access to the key beneficiary—the student.

According to the National Curriculum Framework, 2025, the mission of the National Curriculum is “to provide every student with access to high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education that develops their potential, prepares them to integrate into society and contribute to its development, face future challenges, ensure their well-being, shape the future, and transform society” [1, p. 9]. Through our contributions, we hope to support the new requirements stipulated in the same document regarding the new-generation subject curricula, aimed at “increasing the efficiency of the teaching-learning-assessment process, ensuring interdisciplinarity, and deepening transversal competencies [...], which will serve as a basis for authors of textbooks, methodological guides, and educational software, as well as for long-term and short-term planning of an educational process that will implement the anticipation–action–reflection cycle promoted by the Learning Compass 2030” [1, p. 34].

Conceptual Framework: from official regulations to the classroom

Curriculum theory clearly distinguishes among several levels of its manifestation. In the context of the Republic of Moldova, we are witnessing an evolution in curricular design toward a competence-based approach, which requires teachers not merely to transmit knowledge, but to reconfigure the entire teaching-learning-assessment strategy.

The current conception of the school curriculum stipulates that each document must respond to “society’s expectations regarding the streamlining of school curricula, the relevance of studies for meeting students’ needs, aptitudes, and interests, the integration of new educational paradigms, the optimization of students’ cognitive effort and instructional time, and the assurance of a relevant, accessible, and coherent curriculum” [7, p. 5].

Among the key concepts addressed at the normative-regulatory and praxeological levels, we identify three fundamental epistemological dimensions or perspectives of curricular development typology:

- *The written curriculum*, a document that represents the official intent, the standards and objectives established at ministerial level, the source that defines general and specific competencies, content units, and teaching–learning–assessment strategies, the starting point for any analysis;

- *The taught curriculum*, which refers to the reality of the classroom, influenced by the teacher’s training, available resources, and the specific characteristics of the student group. In this regard, S. Cristea synthesizes views from multiple studies and approaches within curriculum theory, specifying the reference “provided by the teacher in terms of pedagogical/didactic communication and/or learning experience necessary for students in current instructional activity” [3, p. 794]. The Standards for Learning Effectiveness [9] and the Curriculum Implementation Guides [4, 8] establish the link between the written norm and pedagogical practice;

- *The learned curriculum* – acquired/assimilated, internalized, and capitalized upon by students at various levels of competence and performance, as a result of the previous types [Ibidem];

- *The assessed curriculum* – reflects what is truly considered “important” to measure, including at the level of national examinations, in order to evaluate school progress, as well as other aspects related to the officially designed framework, as it was understood, delivered, and “retained” as the impact of the design–instruction–learning process.

Among the key ideas related to this chapter, we also mention *the pedagogical challenges and dilemmas concerning school and the teaching profession*, which provide an in-depth reflective analysis of school culture and the way in which the hidden or real curriculum influences the teaching act. As a conceptual basis for the typology of curriculum (written, taught, assessed, hidden) and the methodologies for evaluating school curricula, we relied on the studies of Prof. Vl. Guțu [5–7], recognized as the principal curriculum theorist in the Republic of Moldova, whose works are fundamental for understanding the specific nature of the national curricular reform and the competence-based approach. In the same vein, another important study outlines guiding ideas regarding the process targeted in our research: “the grounding of a concept and a methodology for evaluating the school curriculum must focus on the current approach to curriculum as educational theory and practice, capitalizing on the idea of curriculum as an educational project, which will generate specific attributes for evaluation, with emphasis placed on assessing curricular products (framework plans, subject curricula/programs, textbooks, methodological guides, etc.), as well as on evaluating the taught–learned–assessed curriculum” [6, p. 10]. With regard to the curricular approach to RLL in the European context of the Republic of Moldova, the late Vl. Pâslaru left us, as an intellectual legacy, multiple studies with synthetic, anthology-type approaches, as well as consistent and well-argued efforts to preserve correctness and scientific accuracy from historical, pedagogical, and philosophical perspectives in general. In his testamentary view, “the modernization of the RLL Curriculum is not only an action aimed at increasing the efficiency of educational practice, but also one of raising awareness of the national-cultural and linguistic-historical identity of learners, parents, and school teaching staff, being the most important means of their intercultural education and of positively influencing the integration of the people of the Republic of Moldova, due to the humanistic and civilizing ideas promoted by the values of the Romanian language and literature” [10, p. 391].

Material and method

This article is based on a descriptive-analytical study grounded in a complex questionnaire administered to 115 teaching staff members from various regions of the country (46.1%) – 53 responses representing schools from villages and districts, and 53.1% (62 respondents) from the municipality of Chișinău. In

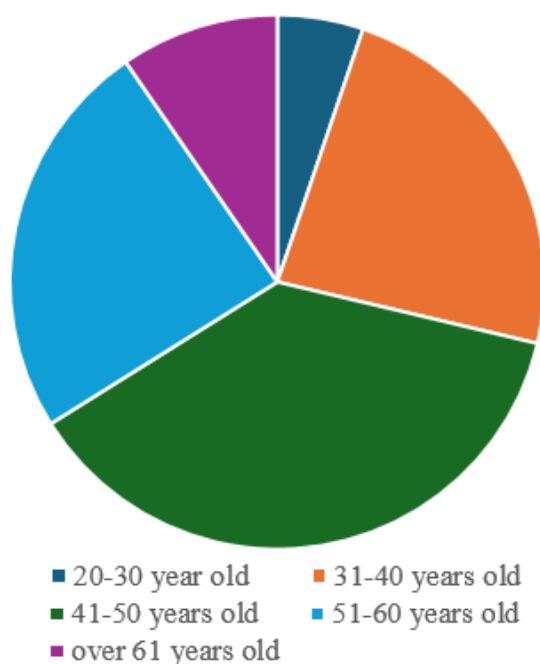


Figure 1. Age Categories of the Sample

terms of the type of institutions, 27.8% are teachers from gymnasiums (lower secondary schools) and 72% from lyceums (upper secondary schools). We note the relevance of the sample from this perspective, as over 95% of current lyceums numerically exceed all types of gymnasium institutions. Regarding the general descriptive status of the sample, we observe that 97.4% of those who agreed to respond to the questionnaire are women, and only three respondents are men – a situation that is also typical for the gender profile of the teaching workforce in the country. From the age perspective, the situation is not very optimistic, yet it is common for recent years in our school environment; the following chart illustrates this situation as follows:

The diversity of the items used in the questionnaire – ranging from rating scales based on various criteria to requests for qualitative answers – allowed the collection of large and diverse data reflecting teachers’ level of satisfaction with the current curricular support, as well as the difficulties encountered in its implementation. The investigation aims to

identify critical points: When does the curriculum become too dense? To what extent do teaching resources (textbooks, guides) support or create difficulties and confusion in the teaching process? How relevant is the proposed assessment for the development of students' linguistic and literary-artistic competencies?

Regarding teaching experience, the sample is heterogeneous according to the requested categories; however, in general terms, we conclude that 74% of respondents have more than 15 years of teaching experience. Likewise, 93.8% have higher education studies in the field of RLL didactics, with teaching degree II – 46.2%, teaching degree I – 29.6%, and higher teaching degree – 13.9%, while the remaining approximately 10% are either without teaching degree or are beginner teachers. When asked whether they had participated, in the last 5 years, in continuous professional development courses related to the development (modernization) of disciplinary curricula, the responses were: Yes, several times – 54 persons (47.4%); Yes, once – 45 respondents (39.5%); No (please comment on your answer) – 15 responses; question left unanswered – one person.

Results and discussions

The *alignment of the curriculum (in the broad sense) with the educational policies of the State and, first and foremost, with the finalities of the education system* is evaluated positively by practitioners, of whom approximately one quarter (24.3%) consider it to a large extent, and 70.7% consider it to a sufficient extent. Furthermore, very similar percentage values were recorded regarding the evaluation of curriculum management and functioning at district and institutional levels, which is also considered sufficient.

Regarding *the level of concordance between the state's curricular policies and the needs and achievements of the Republic of Moldova, as well as with European curricular development trends*, three quarters of respondents consider them to be aligned to a large and sufficient extent. At the same time, every fourth respondent expresses reservations, mainly because: in general, the curricular policies of the Republic of Moldova are largely aligned with European trends, but implementation-related challenges limit their success. Thus, progress can be described as gradual and requiring more time; the system is considered outdated and overly demanding for students; it has not been possible to work with textbooks developed in accordance with the guiding curriculum document in all grades; low level of practical applicability for many topics; too many topics and thematic areas are covered superficially; lack of full consistency/alignment. Among *the factors that hinder the effective functioning of the school curriculum*, in approximately 60 percent of responses there is the low level of motivation of teachers, followed by the low level of motivation of students, insufficient preparation of teachers for curricular changes, their low level of professionalism, as well as poor teaching, logistical, and technological support. There is a need for deeper reflection at all levels if less than half of the surveyed group (47.8%) is largely open to curricular changes and does not equally recognize the need for continuous development and changes in the school curriculum, while 48.7% are moderately open, even if, at first glance, the situation may be considered satisfactory. The *self-assessment of the level of knowledge of the Standards for the RLL subject* [9] is presented in a positive manner in the figure below.

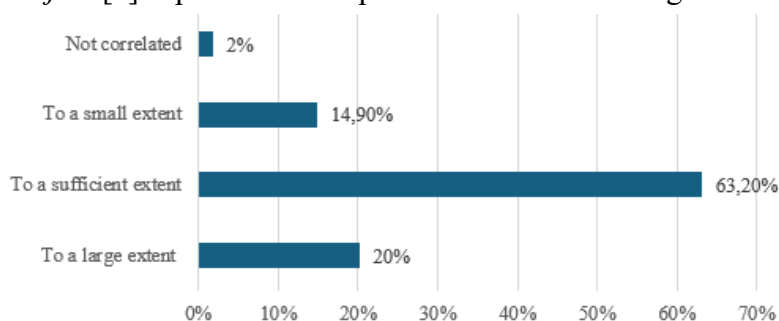


Figure 2. Level of knowledge of the Standards for the RLL subject

The level at which *current standards, through the factors put into action – teachers, and available resources (human, material, time, etc.) – ensure student development* is also perceived in a relatively positive manner: to a sufficient extent – 80.7%, and to a large extent – 11.4%. The same perception is observed re-

garding the evaluation of the extent to which the current curriculum ensures the achievement of educational standards. We note that, for practitioners, standards are not just “additional paperwork”, but an important guiding tool in the didactic design process, helping to establish realistic and measurable learning objectives. Lessons are not planned only to “teach the lesson”, but to ensure that students achieve specific standards, since these provide success criteria, reduce subjectivity in grading, and offer a common framework for defining “performance” at a certain age level. At the same time, they help personalize the learning process by allowing faster identification of gaps in the expected indicators and enabling the implementation of appropriate remedial strategies. Thus, through the items related to standards, valuable information was obtained, which is useful and should be further emphasized and developed functionally in pedagogical research and teacher training programs.

To the question: „How do you think current educational standards fulfil their functions (regulation, evaluation, orientation, certification)?” – 73% of teachers answered „to a sufficient extent”, while 16.5% answered “to a large extent”. For the open question, “In which educational policy documents should educational standards be included for better applicability?”, the responses were distributed as follows: in subject curricula – 66.1%; in the framework curriculum – 26.1%; in separate documents – 24.3%. A special role in regulating the educational process is played by the *study plan*, which has always been present in educational practice, although many teachers consider it primarily operationally important for managers. However, this document precisely indicates how much time (number of hours) is available and where we are positioned within the system through our subject. We note, however, that the vast majority of teachers – 83.5% – state that they frequently refer to the framework curriculum within their educational institution (we hope this reflects reality), while others consult it only once or not at all. Regarding the number of subjects in the framework curriculum, 49.4% of teachers consider it excessive, while the other half share the opposite opinion. The provisions of the framework curriculum regarding subject integration are evaluated as follows: 66% consider them sufficient or largely sufficient, while the others do not see this as valid. Regarding suggestions about reducing the number of hours allocated to certain subjects in the framework curriculum, practitioners’ responses include a wide range of opinions worthy of the attention of decision-makers and experts: RLL in primary and middle school, with the condition of excluding many theoretical notions, keeping the focus on reading and developing communication skills; Mathematics, including fun mathematics – many students do not understand and do not master basic elements; one more hour should be added at the primary level for *Science*; RLL in middle school; Physics in high school classes; I am against reducing the number of hours. There are already few teachers who work for very low salaries; the number of hours should not be reduced, but rather the curriculum should be modified in order to prepare students for life; not only the number of hours should be reduced, but also educational policy should be modified, etc.

Two other questions regarding the *curriculum framework* asked for the general opinion on whether it ensures the implementation of state educational policies regarding the educational ideal and the final outcomes of the education system, and whether it meets the expectations and needs of students in the Republic of Moldova. The answers were – in about 80% of cases – to a sufficient extent, 10% – to a great extent, and the remaining 10% – to a small extent. A very similar situation, with a shift of plus 5% toward “to a very great extent,” was also recorded when evaluating the degree of coverage of key domains of human knowledge for ensuring the development of key and transversal competencies. The arguments in this regard refer to the need for stronger focus on career guidance, legal education, and increased attention to social integration in general. *The degree of ensuring balance and relevance of study disciplines across curricular areas and knowledge domains in the curriculum framework* is assessed as sufficient by 77.4% and as high by 13.9%, while the same approximately 10% consider it critically – to a small extent or not at all. The role of the curriculum framework in ensuring a rational and value-based balance between core subjects, optional subjects, and school-decided subjects, as well as the distribution of time (hours) for studying school disciplines, is also positively assessed by about 90% of respondents. The next two questions sought opinions regarding the opportunities to ensure each student’s individual learning pathway through the subject offerings in the study plan, as well as the level of correlation with non-formal/extracurricular activities. The responses were distributed as follows: on average, 6.3% – to a very great extent; 68.6% – sufficiently;

22.5% – to a small extent; and 2.6% – not at all. The *openness and flexibility of the curriculum framework to modification* depending on the status of the educational institution, its geographical location, and other development opportunities, human, financial, and curricular resources, were assessed by respondents as follows: to a very great extent – 9.7% and sufficiently – 61.6%; to a small extent – 23%. Among the changes that should be introduced in the curriculum framework for the next curricular development cycle, the following are considered priorities: integration of disciplines, promoting an interdisciplinary curriculum that combines exact sciences with humanities, thus facilitating the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills – STEM, STEAM, STREAM; introduction of project-based learning modules that involve knowledge from several disciplines, such as social sciences, mathematics, and technology; making the curriculum more flexible by offering more elective subjects, so that students can choose disciplines that match their interests and professional aspirations; integrating life education and more practical experiences: social, cultural, topographic, and agricultural practices by reducing the number of theoretical hours; implementing formative assessments that allow curriculum adaptation to the specific needs of students; reducing some subjects and decreasing class size. No more than 15 students per class; decongestion of curriculum; increasing the number of hours for certain subjects, especially multiple specializations at high school level; improving assessment by revising evaluation methodologies to include competency-based assessment and not only memorization, thus promoting active and applied learning, etc. Additionally, 93.7% of respondents confirmed that they realistically understand the *role and place of the subject they teach within the curriculum*; the number of hours allocated to the subject they teach does not significantly condition the quality of student results; they are balanced in appreciating the value of other school subjects; they would propose new ideas for modifying the curriculum framework without prioritizing the subject they teach; they would propose original optional subjects at school decision level; and they consult curricula from other countries. However, without respecting the curriculum framework, the teaching process would become chaotic, and students' diplomas would not have legal recognition, since it would not be possible to demonstrate completion of the legally required number of hours necessary for certification. In practical terms, the teacher visualizes through the curriculum framework the identity of each subject; this is not only an administrative document, but the foundation on which the entire didactic architecture at the classroom level is built. In this sense, in our school reality, there is a need for more dialogue and collaboration between teachers who teach in the same class, RLL being the number one subject in the curriculum plan, which requires more integration at the communicative and cultural level with other subjects, in order to ensure greater rigor and didactic depth, related to the profile of the student and graduate – a responsible citizen with a broad cultural horizon and a competent level of communication in the mother tongue. In the opinion of practitioners, the curriculum of the subject they teach has a clear concept and reflects the principles of modern education, centred on the student, on competencies, on active learning, on interdisciplinarity, and on values, to a sufficient extent – 55.7% and to a great extent – 40.9%. It is correlated with other school curricula at the level of an educational cycle and a school year, as a premise for inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, as illustrated in the following diagram.

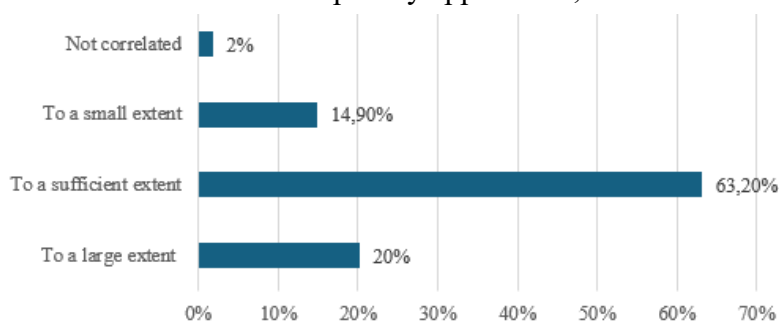


Figure 3. The degree of correlation between school curricula

The *specific competencies of the discipline* taught from the curriculum adequately reflect the knowledge domain of the subject and are formulated in terms of learning outcomes – considered to a sufficient extent by 61.7% of respondents, to a great extent by 35.7%, and only 2.6% (3 respondents) – to a small extent. In

their opinion, these competencies are consistent with transversal/transdisciplinary competencies – to a great extent – 33.3%, to a sufficient extent – 61.4%, to a small extent – 4.4%, and not at all – 0.9%.

Regarding *the degree and complexity of specific competencies of the discipline*, projected across educational cycles and school years, as well as their relevance to students' age and potential, the response scale differs by 1.7% for “sufficient extent” and 2.7% for “great extent”. In turn, competency units, as intermediate achievements, are considered to be formulated taxonomically, in relation to content units and ensure the formation/development of subject-specific competencies – to a sufficient and great extent by 99.1% of practitioners.

Furthermore, the fact that, *in the regulatory document, contents are structured into units/modules relevant to the substance of the given discipline and ensure the progressive development of concepts/notions is appreciated to a sufficient extent* – 54.8%, to a great extent – 39.1%, to a small extent – 5.2%, and only one respondent each chose “to a small extent” and “not at all”. The *accessibility level* of contents was evaluated with the same ratings and similar percentage shares, with insignificant differences. One indicator that still requires significant improvement in the didactic field of RLL teaching, from design to assessment, is the *correlation of content units from the curriculum with those of other disciplines within the same curricular area*, and the distribution of options in the following diagram is, in our opinion, an eloquent argument based on other studies and practices analysed over the years.

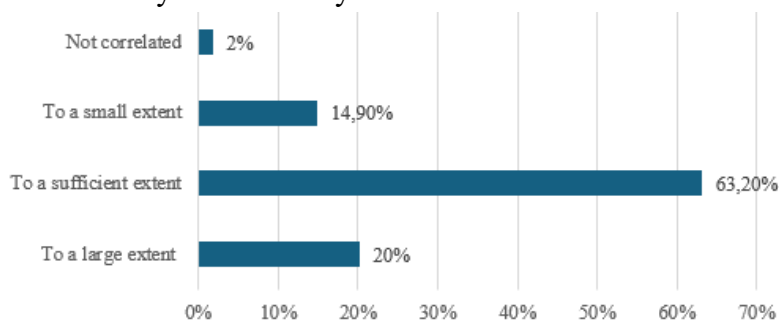


Figure 4. The degree of interdisciplinary correlation of content units

The extent to which the *content units from the taught curriculum ensure the formation/development of the respective acquisitions (competency units) and support individualized/inclusive learning* is evaluated as follows: sufficient – 56.6%; high – 23.5%; low – 15.7%; does not ensure – 5.8%. Some respondents even expressed that too much emphasis is placed on inclusion, to the detriment of the majority of children. *The orientation of the taught subject curriculum toward the application of active/interactive teaching strategies, as well as toward the formation of specific and transversal competencies*, is rated as sufficient and very good by 92.1% of respondents; the others have an opposite opinion or believe that this responsibility belongs mainly to the classroom teacher. Regarding the degree of openness toward teaching creativity in the methodological suggestions and learning activities included in the curriculum, the distribution of responses is almost similar in percentage terms. Items referring to *assessment suggestions* in the taught curriculum show positive responses of over 90%, confirming that clear guidelines for evaluating school results are provided, as well as openness and encouragement toward diversifying and differentiating the assessment of learning outcomes. It is also confirmed that the *curriculum encourages student-centered learning, promoting an active role of students in learning (through assertive communication, cooperation, collaboration, autonomous learning, reciprocal learning, etc.)*; over 92% agree that it also encourages critical thinking for identifying and solving problems in various contexts; it is oriented toward forming authentic attitudes and values, and provides useful suggestions for developing initiative and creativity. At the *structural and linguistic level, the curriculum text* is considered clear, concise, and coherent by 95.5% of practitioners, also providing useful provisions for long-term didactic planning and teaching design in real learning contexts. Furthermore, the types of changes made by respondents in the teaching-learning process are grouped into several categories of responses, relevant both for future curriculum development and for practitioners.

Table 1. Changes introduced during the teaching of the subject in the curriculum

Types of changes/ adaptations/ extensions introduced during the teaching of the subject within the curriculum:	Percentage shares (from multiple choice responses)
I diversified the forms of learning organization: from traditional lessons to non-traditional ones.	65,2%
I established more clearly the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary connections.	54,5%
I further specified and developed the specific competencies of the discipline.	51,8%
I introduced new, more up-to-date information for students in the context of the taught subject.	43,8%
I promoted new (or original/author-based) teaching strategies.	32,1%
I expanded the sub-competencies within each learning unit from a taxonomic perspective.	21,4%

In the same context, as a general conclusion at the personal level, respondents agreed with the following statements:

- I am open to renewing the current curriculum – 59.8%;
- I know and promote the concept of the current curriculum – 57.1%;
- I am motivated to implement the current curriculum – 51.8%;
- I achieve good performance in teaching the given subject – 51.8%;
- I look for the causes of failures in myself – 33%;
- I am resistant to various factors that hinder the effective functioning of the curriculum – 30.4%.

The range of responses regarding the *strengths* of the RLL disciplinary curriculum includes a wide spectrum of opinions, from those referring to: the integrated character of language and literature education and its important contribution to students' development both cognitively and affectively; the development of correct, clear, and nuanced communication skills, both written and oral; promoting the ability to understand and interpret various types of texts; stimulating logical, critical, and creative thinking; opportunities to develop reading, comprehension, and interpretation skills for different types of texts; combining literature with values from national and universal culture; emphasis on interdisciplinarity and integration of elements from history, philosophy, arts, and other fields; formation of a complex worldview; promoting values education such as empathy, tolerance, and respect through literary themes and discussions about characters and complex situations; emphasis on developing students' intellectual work skills; and conceptualization of integrated competencies of reading, reception, oral and written expression, interpretation of messages, and acquisition of individual work methods to help students self-identify as personalities. Other summary qualitative appreciations repeatedly mentioned in open responses include: very well structured, student-centred; balanced; comprehensible, clear, concise, etc.

The RLL curriculum also present certain *weaknesses* that can negatively influence the teaching-learning process, often accompanied by operational recommendations. The most frequently signalled ones include: content overload; large volume of theoretical and literary information; emphasis on memorization of details instead of developing functional competencies; excessive focus on canonical literature, with predominance of classical literary texts, which may distance students from contemporary reality; lack of adaptation to different levels of student competence; the curriculum is uniform, without sufficient resources to address differences in learning pace and styles; students with learning difficulties or gifted students do not always receive adequate support; insufficient emphasis on functional competencies and life skills (e.g., applied communication, drafting official documents); understanding of non-literary texts and practical language use is often neglected; rigidity of the curricular structure affects teachers' freedom to adapt content and methods; there is strong pressure to follow rigid planning and cover the entire curriculum, to the detriment of deep learning or flexibility; emphasis on knowledge-based assessment rather than competency-based

assessment, leading to mechanical learning; national examinations do not always reflect the diversity of competencies and tend to value memorization; insufficient integration of technology, despite contemporary requirements, with minimal or unstructured use of digital tools in teaching; students are not trained to use digital resources for literary analysis or creative writing; subordination of creativity to conformity – students are often encouraged to reproduce standardized interpretations instead of proposing original perspectives on texts; the essence of creative activity is limited by strict assessment requirements; lack of emphasis on multiculturalism – the curriculum focuses almost exclusively on Romanian literature, neglecting texts from other cultures that could enrich students' perspectives; limited infrastructure and resources; high level of abstraction makes the subject intimidating for some students; excessive literary theory; lack of real solutions for individualization and differentiation in assessment; reduction of theoretical terminology; insufficient preparation of students for real life; texts are not always interesting or engaging; curriculum is too dense; more elements could be eliminated; curriculum should be accompanied immediately by textbooks; content is too theoretical, specific to philologists; excessive grammatical theory; too many foreign and anonymous authors; excessive content load.

Conclusions

Thus, the analysis of the results obtained following the application of the questionnaire highlights a series of “Gordian knots” in the educational process for the subject RLL. From the respondents' answers, a clear distinction can be observed between the conceptual appreciation of the curriculum (seen as modern and well-structured in terms of competencies) and its practical applicability. It was clearly noted through responses to scale-type items that a considerable part of the teaching staff considers the volume of content to be over dimensioned compared to the number of allocated teaching hours. A phenomenon of a “race against time” appears, where teachers prioritize covering the subject matter rather than deepening specific competencies. Although the curriculum has been updated, many teachers signal a discrepancy between its requirements and the texts/exercises found in older or insufficiently updated textbooks. Teachers report an acute need for interactive digital resources that would facilitate teaching literature for “Generation Z”. A critical aspect identified in the questionnaire concerns assessment. There is a perceived “gap” between the way teaching is conducted creatively in the classroom and the rigidity of scoring rubrics used in national examinations, which do not always ensure authentic assessment of linguistic and literary-artistic competencies, critical thinking, etc. The study demonstrates that, although the current curriculum framework is advanced from a theoretical perspective, its implementation faces systemic and logistical resistance. A more rigorous selection of mandatory content is necessary to allow teachers time for remedial activities and creativity. Decision-makers must ensure coherence between the curriculum, textbooks, and external assessment tools (exams). The results of our study indicate that a successful curriculum is not only one that is well written, but one that “comes to life” through the adaptability of the teacher. The transition toward a truly functional curriculum in the Republic of Moldova depends on teachers' courage to interpret curricular norms in a personalized manner, transforming the “letter of the law” into the “spirit of learning”.

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CURRICULUM AT SCHOOL DECISION IN DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL DELIMITATIONS

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This article addresses the issue of school-decided curriculum in development as a component of the educational curriculum. The emphasis is on defining and describing the notion of “school-decided curriculum”, in comparison with the notion of “optional curriculum”, but also on the development directions of the school-decided curriculum: deepening the curriculum by subjects, focusing on students’ needs, expanding the existing curriculum in response to students’ special learning capabilities; optional subjects that introduce new study subjects, in addition to those provided for by the curriculum plan. The functions of school-decided curriculum and the optional curriculum are also described: the function of flexibility, the function of individualizing the learning act, the function of social adaptation. It should be noted that the school-decided curriculum and the optional curriculum as a concrete form of realizing the school-decided curriculum are closely related to compulsory school subjects, but also to possible new subjects with optional functions.

Keywords: *educational curriculum, curriculum by study subject, curriculum at school decision, optional curriculum, national curriculum.*

CURRICULUM LA DECIZIA ȘCOLII ÎN DEZVOLTARE: DELIMITĂRI CONCEPTUALE ȘI METODOLOGICE

În articolul dat se abordează problema curriculumului la decizia școlii în dezvoltare ca componentă a curriculumului educațional. Accentul se pune pe definirea și descrierea noțiunii „curriculumului la decizia școlii”, prin comparație cu noțiunea „curriculumului opțional”, dar și pe direcții de dezvoltare ale curriculumului la decizia școlii: aprofundarea curriculumului pe discipline, focalizarea pe nevoile elevilor, extinderea curriculumului existent ca răspuns la capacitățile de învățare deosebite ale elevilor; opționale care introduc noile discipline de studiu, în afara celor prevăzute de planul de învățământ. Se descriu și funcțiile curriculumului la decizia școlii și ale curriculumului opțional: funcția de flexibilizare, funcția de individualizare a actului de învățare, funcția de adaptare socială. E de menționat că curriculumul la decizia școlii și curriculumul opțional ca formă concretă de realizare a curriculumului la decizia școlii sunt în strânsă legătură cu disciplinele școlare obligatorii, dar și cu posibilele noi discipline cu funcții opționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *curriculumul educațional, curriculumul la disciplina de studiu, curriculumul la decizia școlii, curriculumul opțional, curriculumul național.*

Introduction

The concept of *curriculum* occupies a central place in contemporary educational theory and practice, being considered one of the fundamental categories of education sciences. In a broad sense, curriculum designates the structured set of educational purposes, learning contents, teaching strategies, training experiences and assessment methods that organize and guide the instructional-educational process. Through the curriculum, the values and objectives of educational system are transposed into concrete pedagogical practices, ensuring the coherence and continuity of the process of forming pupil’s or student’s personality.

Conceptual Delimitations

In pedagogical literature, the concept of *curriculum* has evolved significantly, going beyond the traditional perspective that limited it to a simple list of subjects or a education plan. In modern approaches, curriculum is understood as *a complex and dynamic system* that integrates not only the contents taught, but also the learning experiences offered to students within the educational institution, including formal, non-

formal and, in certain interpretations, informal activities. Thus, the curriculum reflects both the projective dimension of education (what is intended to be achieved) and the experiential dimension (what students actually experience and internalize in the learning process).

One of the classic authors who significantly contributed to the theoretical foundation of the concept is Ralph Tyler, a representative of the rational-technological orientation in curriculum. In his fundamental work *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), Tyler defines the curriculum as ***the totality of learning experiences planned and organized by the school institution in order to achieve educational objectives***. This perspective emphasizes the intentional and planned nature of educational process, emphasizing the fact that learning activities must be designed systematically, in accordance with the purposes of education and the training needs of students.

The curriculum model proposed by Tyler is based on four fundamental questions that structure the curriculum design process [12]:

- *Which educational objectives should the educational institution pursue?*
- *Which learning experiences can contribute to the achievement of these objectives?*
- *How can these learning experiences be organized efficiently?*
- *How can the extent to which the objectives have been achieved be assessed?*

Through this systemic approach, the curriculum becomes an essential tool for planning and managing the educational process, guiding teaching activity towards the achievement of clearly defined formative outcomes. At the same time, Tyler's model has profoundly influenced the development of subsequent curriculum theories, constituting the starting point for numerous contemporary perspectives that emphasize flexibility, interdisciplinarity and student-centeredness.

In the context of modern education, the curriculum is increasingly viewed as ***an integrative framework of the educational process***, which correlates the purposes of education, learning contents, teaching strategies and assessment mechanisms. Therefore, the development and implementation of the curriculum presuppose a systemic and interdisciplinary approach, capable of responding to the demands of contemporary society and contributing to the formation of competences necessary for the personal and professional development of the individual.

In the development of curriculum theory, the contributions of American philosopher and educator John Dewey have had a significant impact on the way curriculum is understood and conceptualized. Representative of pedagogical pragmatism and progressive education, Dewey promoted a vision of education centered on the direct experience of the student and his/her active participation in the learning process. In this perspective, the curriculum is not reduced to a simple content structure or a formal study plan, but is interpreted as ***the set of educational experiences lived by the student within the school environment and his/her interaction with social and cultural reality*** [8].

According to Dewey, the educational process must start from the interests, needs and previous experiences of students, and learning becomes truly meaningful when it is integrated into authentic and relevant activities for everyday life. Thus, the curriculum is designed as a flexible framework, which facilitates ***the active construction of knowledge through experience, reflection and social interaction***. In this approach, the emphasis shifts from the passive transmission of information to the development of students' ability to think critically, investigate and solve real problems.

In his work *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey emphasizes that the educational value of an experience depends on how it contributes to the subsequent development of the individual. Therefore, the curriculum must be organized in such a way that learning experiences are ***continuous, coherent and progressive***, with each educational activity preparing the ground for subsequent more complex experiences. This idea is reflected in the principle of continuity and interaction, which are fundamental elements of the theory of experiential education promoted by Dewey [8].

In his vision, the school is conceived as ***a democratic learning community***, in which students actively participate in building their own knowledge through cooperation, dialogue and exploration. Consequently, the curriculum must include practical activities, projects, problem-solving situations and collaborative experiences that stimulate students' reflective thinking and intellectual autonomy.

This perspective contributed to redefining the concept of curriculum in contemporary pedagogy, orienting it towards **a student-centered approach**, in which the learning process is conceived as a dynamic and contextualized experience. By emphasizing experience, interest and active participation, Dewey's conception influenced the development of modern curricular models based on discovery learning, project-based learning and constructivist education.

The contributions of the educator and researcher Hilda Taba, in the evolution of curriculum theory, occupy an important place, developing a systemic and rational approach to the curriculum design process. In her view, the curriculum is conceived as **a coherent and structured learning plan**, which integrates educational objectives, study contents, teaching strategies and assessment methods, all of which are organized in a logical and functional way to facilitate the achievement of educational goals [11].

Hilda Taba considered that the development of curriculum must start from the analysis of educational needs of students and society, as well as from the clear identification of the educational goals pursued. In this perspective, the curriculum represents not only a simple planning of teaching contents, but **an integrated system of interdependent components**, which ensures the orientation and organization of the instructional-educational process. Thus, educational objectives define the expected results of the learning process, the contents provide the conceptual and informational basis necessary for the training of students, teaching strategies establish the ways in which these contents are valorized in the teaching-learning activity, and evaluation allows the verification and assessment of the degree of achievement of the proposed objectives.

A defining element of Taba's conception is **the inductive model of curriculum development**, which assumes that curriculum design must start from the level of educational practice and the experience of teachers. According to this model, teachers play an essential role in the development and adaptation of curriculum, since they know best the peculiarities of students, the educational context and the real needs of the learning process. Consequently, the curriculum is not perceived as a rigid and definitive document, but as a flexible framework, which can be adjusted and improved depending on the results obtained and the evolution of educational requirements.

Hilda Taba also proposed **a sequential model of curriculum development**, which includes several interdependent stages: diagnosing educational needs, formulating objectives, selecting and organizing content, choosing appropriate learning experiences, establishing evaluation methods and verifying the efficiency of educational process. Through this rigorous methodological structuring, the curriculum becomes a tool for planning and managing teaching activity, capable of ensuring the coherence and efficiency of the training process.

Therefore, in Hilda Taba's conception, the curriculum represents **a systematic learning plan**, within which the objectives, contents, teaching strategies and assessment are correlated in a logical and functional manner, so that the educational process responds to both the development needs of students and the requirements of contemporary society. This perspective has contributed to the consolidation of modern approaches to the curriculum, oriented towards rigorous pedagogical design, flexibility and the active involvement of teachers in curriculum development.

In Romanian pedagogical literature, the concept of *curriculum* is analyzed and defined through a variety of theoretical perspectives, which highlight its complexity and multidimensional character. Researchers from the Romanian educational space have significantly contributed to the development and nuance of this concept, emphasizing both its projective dimension and its role in organizing and guiding the instructional-educational process.

Thus, the pedagogue Sorin Cristea interprets the curriculum as **the set of school programs and learning experiences designed and organized in order to achieve the goals of education**. In this perspective, the curriculum goes beyond the limits of a simple normative document, being conceived as a conceptual and operational framework that regulates educational activities and guides the process of training students. Through the curriculum, the main directions of the educational process are established, the learning contents are selected and organized, and the formative experiences necessary for the development of students' competences are configured [5].

A complementary approach is proposed by the pedagogue Constantin Cucoș, who considers the curricu-

lum as ***an organized system of educational experiences through which the training and development of the student's personality is achieved***. In this interpretation, the curriculum is viewed as a complex pedagogical structure, which integrates multiple dimensions of the educational process – cognitive, formative, axiological and social – with the aim of harmonious development of the individual. The emphasis is on the role of curriculum in facilitating relevant learning experiences, capable of contributing to the formation of students' intellectual, moral and social competences [4].

At the same time, the analysis of curriculum concept highlights the need for ***a multidimensional approach***, which allows it to be understood from several complementary perspectives. Three main levels of analysis are frequently identified in the specialized literature.

1. From a *functional perspective*, the curriculum is conceived as a tool for guiding and regulating the educational process. It establishes the educational goals and objectives to be achieved and, through them, directs the organization of teaching, learning and evaluation activities. In this sense, the curriculum fulfills the role of a strategic framework for education, providing benchmarks for the design and implementation of the instructional-educational process.

2. From a *structural-functional perspective*, the curriculum is viewed as an integrated system of interdependent components. Among its fundamental elements are educational goals, instructional-educational content, teaching and learning strategies, evaluation strategies, as well as the temporal organization of training activities. The interaction of these components ensures the coherence and efficiency of the educational process, contributing to the achievement of established training objectives.

3. From a *product perspective*, the curriculum is embodied in the set of pedagogical documents and tools that regulate and support educational activity. This category includes curricula, school programs, textbooks, methodological guides, teaching aids and other curricular materials. These curricular products represent the institutionalized form through which the theoretical orientations of the curriculum are transposed into educational practice.

Therefore, the approaches proposed in the Romanian pedagogical literature highlight the fact that the curriculum constitutes ***a complex and integrative concept***, which encompasses both the projective dimension of education, as well as the concrete learning experiences and the institutional instruments through which they are organized and achieved. This multidimensional perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the role of curriculum in the organization and development of contemporary educational system.

In the Republic of Moldova, the curriculum issue is analyzed in a complex and systematic way by the researcher Vladimir Guțu, who proposes an integrative approach to this concept, highlighting its multiple dimensions. According to the author, the curriculum can be understood as a complex pedagogical system that includes several interdependent components: ***the concept of curriculum, its content, the implementation process, the curricular product and the educational objectives pursued***. This systemic perspective emphasizes that the curriculum does not represent just a set of normative documents or disciplinary contents, but a conceptual and operational framework that structures and orients the entire educational process [9].

In this theoretical context, ***the curriculum at the school's decision*** is interpreted as a flexible component of the national curriculum, intended to offer educational institutions the opportunity to adapt the educational process to the particularities of school environment and the requirements of community. This curricular component reflects the principle of institutional autonomy and decentralization of education, allowing schools to capitalize on local resources, the experience of teaching staff and the interests of students in the design of learning activities. Through the curriculum at the school's decision, the premises are created for a better correlation between the objectives of education, the specifics of community and the real needs of the beneficiaries of educational process.

A concrete form of implementation of this curricular component is ***the optional curriculum***, which includes subjects or study modules selected either by students, depending on their educational interests and aspirations, or proposed by the educational institution in order to complete and expand the compulsory curriculum. The optional curriculum allows for the deepening of areas of interest, the exploration of interdisciplinary topics or the development of specific competences that are not sufficiently addressed within the compulsory subjects.

Through this type of curriculum, several educational objectives relevant to the modernization of educational process are pursued. First, the optional curriculum contributes to *the diversification of educational offer*, offering students the opportunity to access various areas of knowledge and to build more flexible educational paths. Second, it favors *the development of students' interests, skills and individual potential*, stimulating motivation for learning and active involvement in the educational process. Last but not least, the optional curriculum facilitates *the adaptation of education to the social, cultural and economic context*, contributing to the correlation of educational content with the realities and needs of contemporary society.

Therefore, from the perspective of modern pedagogy in the Republic of Moldova, the school-determined curriculum and the optional curriculum are important tools for achieving a flexible education, centered on the student and oriented towards the development of competences necessary for active integration into the knowledge society [9].

School-Decided Curriculum – A Component of Educational Curriculum

In the context of current transformations of educational systems, a modern education involves achieving an effective correlation between the different components of the school curriculum, as well as the development of *a new model of didactic thinking*, adapted to contemporary developments in education sciences. Such an approach involves overcoming the traditional boundaries of disciplines and orienting the instructional-educational process towards *interdisciplinarity*, the integration of knowledge and the development of students' transversal competences.

Within this conceptual framework, *the school-decided curriculum* can be defined as the set of educational processes and learning experiences that the educational institution proposes to students autonomously, within its own curricular offer. This curricular component reflects the school's capacity to adapt the educational approach to the peculiarities of students, to the specifics of community and to the available institutional resources. The choice, design and implementation of school-decided curriculum open up important perspectives for *the manifestation of pedagogical creativity* at the level of teaching activity. In this sense, teachers are oriented towards the formulation and achievement of *clearly defined competences*, which they systematically pursue in the learning process, valorizing accessible and relevant contents for students and applying teaching strategies focused on their needs, interests and peculiarities.

In the specialized literature, the term "optional curriculum" is frequently used, alongside the phrase "school-determined curriculum", the two concepts being closely correlated. The school-decided curriculum represents the flexible component of the national curriculum, established and organized at the level of educational institution, while *the optional curriculum* constitutes the concrete form of achieving this component, materialized in subjects or study modules that complement the core curriculum. Therefore, the optional curriculum can be considered *a subcomponent of the school-decided curriculum*, through which the educational offer of the school institution is diversified.

In order to truly contribute to increasing motivation for learning, the school-decided curriculum must meet certain fundamental pedagogical conditions. First, it must be *relevant to the needs and interests of students in the local community*, actively involving them in the process of choosing and configuring their own educational path. Second, its implementation must be *methodologically diversified*, by using modern and interactive teaching strategies, which favor the active participation of students and the development of critical thinking. At the same time, the curriculum must have a *motivating* character, by creating a positive educational climate and by providing constant feedback, oriented towards valuing the individual progress of students [1].

The integration of these dimensions in the curriculum design process contributes to the creation of *a coherent and efficient school-decided curriculum*, integrated into the general structure of the national curriculum and oriented towards the valorization of contents' interdisciplinarity. In this way, the educational process becomes more flexible, more adaptable and more relevant for the development of competences needed by students in contemporary society.

The decision-making freedom granted to educational institutions in the development of part of the curriculum is consistent with *the principles of democratization of education* and reflects the orientation of educational system towards an open model, characterized by curricular pluralism and diversity of educa-

tional options. This freedom allows schools to configure their own curricular offers, adapted to the specific educational context and oriented towards the valorization of students' potential.

At the same time, the inclusion of school-decided curriculum in the education plans can constitute *an important pedagogical opportunity*, as it offers teachers the possibility to overcome the limits of contents provided for in the common core, which often cannot be sufficiently deepened within the limited number of hours allocated to compulsory subjects. The multiple choice system creates favorable conditions for *diversifying learning experiences and for configuring individualized educational paths*, adapted to the interests and abilities of students.

At the same time, the process of developing and implementing the school-decided curriculum also presupposes *the involvement of family in the life of educational institution*, which strengthens the relationship between the school and the community. The new curriculum programs are oriented not only towards the transmission of theoretical knowledge, but also towards the development of certain *functional and complex competences*, which include cognitive, social, practical and attitudinal dimensions. In this perspective, the school-decided curriculum contributes to the formation of an autonomous and responsible personality, capable of adapting to the requirements of a society in a continuous process of change [10].

The analysis of existing relationships between *the curriculum of basic subjects and the school-decided curriculum*, including its forms of concretization through the optional curriculum, highlights the functional complementarity of these components within the national curriculum. If the compulsory subjects ensure the achievement of common training framework and the transmission of fundamental core of knowledge and competences, the school-decided curriculum introduces a dimension of flexibility and adaptability, which allows the adjustment of educational process to the peculiarities of institutional context and the student profile.

From this perspective, the school-determined curriculum and the optional curriculum fulfill a series of **essential pedagogical functions** in the organization and development of instructional-educational process:

- First of all, they exercise *a function of flexibility*, as they allow the adaptation of contents and learning activities to the specifics of educational institution, to the available resources and to the dynamics of contemporary educational requirements.

- At the same time, they contribute to the achievement of *a function of individualization of learning*, by capitalizing on the interests, skills and potential of students, offering them the opportunity to opt for fields of study that correspond to their preferences and educational orientations.

- Another relevant dimension is *the function of didactic innovation*, as the introduction of optional subjects stimulates the initiative and creativity of teachers in designing original educational approaches, adapted to the concrete pedagogical context. Through this curricular component, teachers can experiment with new teaching methods, integrate interdisciplinary approaches and capitalize on various educational resources.

- At the same time, the optional curriculum also fulfills *a social adaptation function*, as it facilitates the correlation of educational offer with the needs and specificities of the community, contributing to the formation of relevant competences for the integration of students into social and professional life.

Regarding its structure, the optional curriculum can be organized into several **types or forms of implementation**, depending on the educational objectives pursued:

- *the in-depth optional*, oriented towards expanding and consolidating the contents of a basic subject, offering students the opportunity to delve deeper into certain concepts or thematic areas;

- *the extension optional*, which introduces new themes or subjects, complementary to the reference subject, contributing to the enrichment of knowledge area addressed in the learning process;

- *interdisciplinary optional*, which integrate contents and methods from several fields of study, favoring the formation of a global and complex perspective on the phenomena analyzed;

- *integrated electives*, which address complex themes from multiple perspectives, capitalizing on the connections between different curricular areas and facilitating the development of systemic thinking and transversal competences.

By granting educational institutions the right to decide on part of the curricular contents and activities, the curriculum at school's decision is, in essence, the expression of pedagogical autonomy of the school unit.

This autonomy derives from the possibility of intervening on a segment of the national curriculum, which allows the configuration of differentiated educational paths, adapted to the profile of institution, the peculiarities of student community and the requirements of social environment. In this sense, the curriculum at school's decision can be considered an indicator of the institution's capacity to capitalize on decision-making freedom in order to develop relevant and innovative educational practices.

The process of introducing and developing *the curriculum at school's decision* within contemporary educational systems is based on a series of pedagogical and managerial premises that justify the need for the direct involvement of educational institutions in the design of part of the curricular offer. The specialized literature emphasizes that the development of curriculum at the school level is based on the idea that *the educational actors directly involved in the training process know best the peculiarities of educational context and the real needs of the students*. In this sense, teachers are considered the most competent in identifying the learning interests and potential of students, which allows them to formulate curricular decisions appropriate to the specifics of institution in which they carry out their teaching activity [3].

At the same time, decisions regarding the curriculum are interpreted *as a continuous and dynamic process*, subject to permanent adaptations depending on the evolution of educational, social and institutional context. Therefore, the adoption of curricular decisions at the school level facilitates the progressive improvement of the curriculum, as it allows its adjustment and improvement in relation to the conditions and requirements newly emerging in the educational environment [3].

Another important premise is related to *the democratic dimension of the educational process*. The development of curriculum at school's decision creates the necessary framework for the active participation of teachers, students, parents and representatives of the local community in the decision-making process regarding the contents of education. This participation contributes to the consolidation of collective responsibility and to the increase of degree of the involvement of all educational actors in the organization of educational process, which can lead to the improvement of education quality provided in school institutions [3].

At the same time, the involvement of *local public administrations* in the development and implementation of the curriculum determines a better understanding of the problems faced by educational institutions and favors their active participation in the identification and resolution of these problems. In this way, the relationship between the school and the local community is strengthened, contributing to the development of a sustainable educational partnership.

In a broader perspective, it is considered that *the school and the local community form an interdependent system*, within which the educational activity reflects the particularities of social, cultural and economic environment in which the institution operates. Therefore, a curriculum developed at the school level is able to capitalize on the specifics of the local context and respond more effectively to the community needs. This approach implicitly determines *the diversification of educational offer* between different educational institutions, each of which can develop educational programs adapted to their own conditions and resources [3].

From a conceptual and functional point of view, *the curriculum at school's decision* is characterized by a series of defining features. First of all, it constitutes *an integral component of the national curriculum*, being designed in close correlation with the core curriculum. Therefore, it does not operate independently, but is planned and organized in accordance with the objectives and structure of the general curriculum of the educational system.

At the same time, this curricular component aims to develop certain *competences that are not explicitly or sufficiently addressed within traditional academic disciplines*. These include competences related to personal development, preparation for social and professional integration, cultivating civic responsibility and forming attitudes and values necessary for active participation in community life. In this perspective, the school-based curriculum contributes to achieving a more complete education and better adapted to the requirements of contemporary society.

This curricular component also has the role of *optimizing the functioning of entire school curriculum*, by completing and expanding the national curriculum. Supplementation should not be carried out exclusively at the level of content, but should also support the processes through which students learn, stimulating the use of various teaching methods and relevant learning experiences. In this sense, the school-decided cur-

riculum is characterized by a clear **student-centered** orientation, emphasizing their interests, motivations and individual peculiarities [10, p. 28].

From an organizational point of view, **the curriculum at school's decision**, frequently materialized through optional subjects, can cover the difference between the minimum number of hours provided for by the core curriculum and the maximum number of hours established by the curriculum for each level of study. This difference is completed by introducing optional subjects or modules, which diversify the structure of study program.

Depending on the method of organization and the area of application, optional subjects can be structured at several levels:

- *The optional at the disciplinary level* includes activities, modules or projects that are not found in the mandatory curriculum or that belong to subjects that are not included in the curriculum. Through them, students have the opportunity to explore new areas of knowledge or to deepen certain topics of interest.

- *The optional at the curricular area level* involves the selection of a common theme that involves at least two subjects from the same curricular area. In this situation, starting from the specific competences of the disciplines involved, units of competence adapted to the theme addressed are formulated, which facilitates an interdisciplinary approach to educational content.

- *The optional at the level of several curricular areas* is also known as the transversal or transdisciplinary optional and involves the integration of disciplines belonging to different curricular areas, and the information and learning experiences acquired by students take on a complex character, favoring the development of transfer competences and integrative thinking on the phenomena studied.

The efficient implementation of **the curriculum at school's decision** implies the assumption of *specific responsibilities by different educational actors*. First of all, the leadership of educational institutions has the role of ensuring efficient management of the curricular process. This must capitalize on the existing human resources in the school, correlate the competences of teachers with the interests of students and the requirements of parents and the local community, as well as create the organizational conditions necessary for the implementation of optional subjects, including by establishing an adequate schedule and ensuring spaces for conducting teaching activities.

The school management is also responsible for approving the proposed optional subjects based on certain *reasoned curricular projects*, which include the subject syllabus, the planning of topics and contents, as well as the teaching strategies used. At the same time, the institution must present the optional educational offer in a transparent manner, ensure correct information for students and parents and obtain their consent for participation in the chosen optional subjects.

As for teachers, they have a central role in designing and implementing the curriculum at school's decision. Teachers must develop curricular offers based on their professional competences, design learning activities adapted to the level and interests of students and develop their own curricular programs for the proposed optional subjects. At the same time, they must establish the duration of curriculum implementation (semester or annual), define the type of optional and the concrete ways of achieving it.

At the same time, teachers are encouraged to adopt *interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches*, going beyond the traditional boundaries of subjects and cooperating with other teachers in the implementation of integrated electives. This collaboration aims to develop a formative education, oriented towards the development of students' intellectual capacities, attitudes and social competences.

Students and parents also have an active role in this process. They must be adequately informed about the institution's offer of elective subjects, including their content, duration, curricular area and the resources available for their implementation. The choice of elective subjects must be made according to the interests and preferences of students, but also in relation to the institution's real possibilities to ensure quality implementation. Once the option for a particular elective subject is expressed, it becomes mandatory for the period for which it was designed.

In the context of implementing the curriculum at school's decision, **teachers fulfill multiple professional roles:**

- *curriculum creators*, designing learning situations and developing the intended curriculum according to the peculiarities of educational context;
- *educational counselors*, supporting students in developing individual learning styles and guiding them in the process of self-knowledge and choosing a professional path;
- *moderators of educational relations*, facilitating communication and cooperation between students and promoting appropriate civic behaviors;
- *partners of students in the learning process*, collaborating with them in carrying out teaching activities and in building knowledge;
- *educational models*, contributing to the development of fundamental attitudes and values among students [10, p. 39].

In summary, **the school-decided curriculum** is **an essential component of the modernization of educational system**, as it facilitates the adaptation of instructional-educational process to the peculiarities of school environment, stimulates the democratic participation of educational actors and contributes to the development of relevant learning experiences for the integral formation of students.

Conclusions

In the context of contemporary transformations of educational systems, the school-decided curriculum and the optional curriculum are asserting themselves as essential tools for the modernization and flexibility of instructional-educational process. These curricular components offer educational institutions the opportunity to adapt the educational approach to the specifics of school community, to the interests and abilities of students, as well as to the requirements of knowledge-based society.

The integration of optional subjects into the curriculum structure contributes to the diversification of educational offer, allowing the expansion and deepening of areas of interest that are not sufficiently exploited within the core curriculum. In this sense, the optional curriculum favors the development of more flexible educational paths, in which students can opt for learning activities that correspond to their interests, motivations and intellectual and creative potential. Through this approach, the educational process becomes more relevant and closer to the real needs of the beneficiaries of education.

The school-decided curriculum also strengthens the institutional autonomy and pedagogical responsibility of teachers, giving them the opportunity to design and implement innovative curricular activities. Teachers can more effectively capitalize on local resources, the cultural specificity of the community and the peculiarities of students' community, thus contributing to the creation of authentic and meaningful educational experiences.

Therefore, the introduction and development of optional subjects transforms the school into an open, dynamic and creative educational space, oriented towards the integral formation of the student's personality. This curricular approach stimulates autonomy in learning, critical thinking and the ability to make responsible choices, essential elements for the development of competences necessary for active integration in contemporary society. In this way, the optional curriculum and the school-decided curriculum contribute to the consolidation of a student-centered educational model, capable of responding to the challenges and demands of a society in a continuous process of change.

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THE VISUAL ARTS CURRICULUM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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The article presents the results of a study that investigates the perceptions of primary school teachers of Visual Arts Education curriculum. The research had the aim to analyze the perspectives of teachers regarding the curricular framework, educational objectives, structure of content, methodological guidelines, strategies of evaluation and the degree to which modern educational principles are reflected in the curriculum. The findings show a predominantly positive assessment of the current curriculum, that is considered clear, coherent, and aligned with contemporary educational requirements. Simultaneously, certain areas that require improvement are identified, including the limited quantity of instructional hours, insufficient teaching resources and challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education practices. The study underscores the necessity of continuous curriculum development and the strengthening of methodological support provided to teachers.

Keywords: *primary education; national curriculum; Visual Arts Education; teachers' perceptions; curricular objectives; assessment strategies.*

CURRICULUMUL LA DISCIPLINA EDUCAȚIA PLASTICĂ ÎN VIZIUNEA CADRELOR DIDACTICE DIN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR: DIMENSIUNI TEORETICE ȘI CONSTATĂRI APLICATIVE

Articolul valorifică rezultatele unei investigații privind percepțiile cadrelor didactice asupra curriculumului la disciplina Educația plastică în clasele primare. Studiul a vizat analiza opiniilor cadrelor didactice referitor la concepția curriculară, finalitățile educaționale, structura conținuturilor, sugestiile metodologice, strategiile de evaluare și aplicabilitatea principiilor educației moderne. Datele obținute relevă o apreciere general-pozitivă a curriculumului actual, acesta fiind considerat clar, coerent și adaptat cerințelor educaționale contemporane. Cadrele didactice recunosc valoarea metodelor interactive, a orientării pe competențe și a deschiderii spre interdisciplinaritate. Totodată, sunt semnalate vulnerabilități privind numărul insuficient de ore, resursele didactice limitate și dificultăți în asigurarea incluziunii. În concluzie, cercetarea subliniază necesitatea dezvoltării continue a curriculumului și consolidarea sprijinului metodologic oferit cadrelor didactice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *învățământul primar; curriculum național, Educație plastică, cadre didactice, finalități curriculare, evaluare.*

Introduction

The current curriculum (2018) represents the 4th generation of national curriculum documents and the 2nd explicitly grounded in a competence-based approach, reflecting a shift to outcome-oriented education focused on the development of key competences among learners. The subject “Visual Arts Education,” integrated in the core curriculum of primary education, contributes considerably to the development of aesthetic, expressive, creative and intercultural competences of learners. However, the efficacy of teaching-learning process depends not only on the curricular content’s quality, but also on its implementation, adaptation and alignment with the current needs of educational beneficiaries [1].

In this perspective, various educational actors play an important role in ensuring the efficient implementation and assessment of the curriculum. An educational actor (stakeholder) is defined as any individual, group, institution or organization that has a direct or indirect interest in the curriculum’s quality and outcomes (e.g., learners, teachers, parents, school managers, higher education institutions, economic environment, etc.) and is involved in different ways in the processes of assessment and improvement of the curriculum [5].

In this context, this article examines the perceptions of teachers regarding the implementation of the “Visual Arts Education” curriculum in primary education, with special accent on its practical realization in classroom settings.

Theoretical Aspects of Curriculum Assessment

The assessment of the National Curriculum represents a systematic process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data related to its relevance, coherence, efficacy, equity and implementation results with the purpose of ensuring the continuous improvement of educational quality. Assessment instruments comprise a set of methods and techniques used to collect data on the curriculum and its implementation (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, classroom observations and statistical analyses), in order to get an objective picture of the educational process’ quality [5].

In the specialized literature of the Republic of Moldova, curriculum assessment is defined as an integral element of curriculum design and development, aimed at generating relevant information on its actual functioning and supporting decision-making processes for improving educational quality. A holistic approach to evaluation is recommended, encompassing the conceptual, structural, procedural and product dimensions of the curriculum, based on clearly defined methodological criteria [2].

Curriculum monitoring is a process through which the curriculum’s implementation is systematically observed and assessed with the aim of ensuring the achievement of learning objectives and the efficacy of teaching strategies [5].

From the perspective of assuring the educational quality, curriculum monitoring and assessment are essential for identifying strengths, challenges and areas requiring adjustment in response to evolving educational and societal contexts. Within this framework, teachers play a pivotal role as primary agents of curriculum implementation, being directly involved in observing learning results and providing evidence-based feedback for its improvement.

In this regard, professional experience of teachers, continuous interaction with students and adaptation to different classroom contexts provide valuable insights into the applicability of curriculum. Rather than acting solely as implementers, teachers function as evaluators, interpreters, and co-constructors of learning experiences, adjusting content, strategies and assessment practices in accordance with the needs of students and contextual realities.

Empirical Aspects of Curriculum Assessment

In this context, this research has the aim to investigate the opinions of teachers concerning the structure, relevance, applicability and efficacy of the curriculum for the Visual Arts Education subject. The study identifies perceptions of teachers regarding the clarity of curricular formulations, the alignment of competences with the age levels of students, the relevance and accessibility of content, opportunities for interdisciplinary integration, diversity of evaluation methods and the support provided by the curriculum for transversal competences’ development. To conduct this empirical investigation, the research instrument Curriculum Evaluation by Subject (Part 5) was administered to teachers who teach Visual Arts Education in primary school classes [2, pp. 59-64]. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items, organized into several thematic sections that target the dimensions: curriculum conception (items 1–2); curricular outcomes (items 3–6); content units (items 7–10); methodological suggestions (items 11–12); evaluation recommendations (items 13–14); student-centered teaching approach (items 15–18); and vision and involvement of teachers in curriculum monitoring (items 19–24). A total of 20 teachers participated in the study.

The results of this research are correlated with data obtained within complementary research on the monitoring of implemented curriculum in the Visual Arts Education subject in primary education [4], conducted within the State Subprogram “Theory and Methodology of Continuous and Cyclical Monitoring and Development of the School Curriculum” (code 01.14.01). While the previous research focused on the analysis of curriculum taught and the educational process from methodological and experiential perspectives, this article complements this approach through investigating teachers’ perceptions of the same curriculum.

This methodological continuity ensures a comprehensive perspective on the assessment of curriculum,

allowing for the triangulation of findings related to curriculum design, implementation, and perceived relevance in educational practice.

Analysis of Data on Teachers' Assessment and Monitoring of the Curriculum

This section analyzes the prospects of teachers on the process of curriculum monitoring and assessment in the Visual Arts Education subject. The questionnaire items were formulated in both closed (with predetermined response options) and open formats, allowing teachers to provide suggestions, proposals and additional explanations. The responses of teachers' regarding the dimension "Curriculum Conception" highlight the perceptions of coherence and values promoted by the curriculum document.

Item 1: Does the curriculum of subject you teach have a clear conception and reflect the principles of modern education: student-centered learning, competency-based approach, active learning, interdisciplinarity, and values?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the results: 70% of respondents believe that the principles of modern education are reflected to a sufficient degree, 25% consider them largely present and 5% assess that they are present to a small degree. These outcomes reveal a generally positive perception among teachers regarding the current curricular conception. The curriculum accentuates the development of subject-specific competences in artistic expression, focusing on practical activities and the cultivation of visual thinking. For example, it states that "activities will stimulate imagination, expressivity and autonomy of students." In some sections, nevertheless, the formulations are general and do not sufficiently clarify the connections between competences, values and learning activities, that may hinder coherent application in practice. The 2018 curriculum promotes a student-centered vision and the development of aesthetic-creative competences. Activity examples such as "Draw my family" and "Primary and secondary color game" support active learning, experimentation and interdisciplinarity with the domains "Man and Society" and "Language and Communication". The accent on values - beauty, cooperation, respect - is evident across all units.

Item 2: Is the curriculum of the subject you teach aligned with other school curricula at the level of a grade cycle or a school year (inter- and transdisciplinary approach)?

The distribution of teachers' responses gives the following results: 60% of respondents consider the curriculum sufficiently aligned, 30% believe it is largely aligned, and 10% assess it as minimally aligned. These results suggest the existence of a framework for curricular coordination. The curriculum proposes common themes, such as "Landscape in Nature" and "Winter Holidays", that can be associated with the Romanian Language (descriptive texts), Natural Sciences (environmental observation) and Music Education. Though, these connections are not systematically indicated; interdisciplinary links are not always clearly highlighted. Teachers must often establish these connections individually, particularly between Visual Arts Education, Music Education and the Romanian Language and Literature. Thematic units such as "Nature", "Family", and "Childhood Holidays" align with content in the Romanian Language Communication, Moral-Spiritual Education and Personal Development. For example, the theme "Autumn" allows the integrated activities, including oral descriptions, artistic collages and poetry.

These results are consistent with the findings of the curriculum implementation monitoring study [4], which highlighted that interdisciplinarity is present rather implicitly, being largely dependent on the initiative of teacher.

Item 3: Do the subject-specific competences in the curriculum adequately reflect the discipline's domain of knowledge and are they formulated in terms of learning outcomes?

The subject-specific competences reflect the domain of knowledge of Visual Arts Education and are formulated in terms of educational results aimed at developing aesthetic sensitivity and artistic expression skills. The outcomes of the investigation indicate a predominantly positive perception concerning the alignment of competences with the discipline's scientific specificity. Specifically, 75% of respondents consider this alignment largely adequate, 20% view it as sufficiently adequate and 5% assess it as minimally adequate. The distribution of responses confirms a high level of professional acceptance of the competency framework proposed by the 2018 curriculum, suggesting its coherence with the discipline's epistemologi-

cal requirements. Analysis of the open-ended responses and competency formulations highlights the presence of clear and relevant learning results, such as “Expressing impressions through drawing, painting and modeling” and “Demonstrating aesthetic taste in personal creations.” These outcomes indicate a focus on developing expressive capacities and aesthetic sensitivity. Though, some formulations remain highly general (e.g., “demonstrating interest in beauty”), that may create difficulties in operationalizing and assessing them. Concurrently, competences such as “exploring elements of visual language” and “expressing emotions through visual means” are formulated clearly, operationally and appropriately for the age level of students, facilitating their translation into concrete and measurable activities. These competences reflect the art education’s central objective: the development of expressivity and aesthetic sensitivity. In addition, the findings indicate the need for further methodological clarifications for more general competences to ensure coherence between formulations, content and learning activities.

To highlight the vertical coherence of the curriculum, synthetic observations concerning the relationship between subject-specific competences (a), content (b) and learning activities (c) are presented:

Grade I. Emphasis is placed on the development of fine motor skills and visual sensitivity through predominantly playful and individual activities: **a)** Exploring elements of the visual language (line, dot, color, shape); expressing emotions through drawing and color; following work rules. **b)** Line, dot, shape, primary and secondary colors; techniques – drawing, painting, collage. **c)** “*First Day of School*” (free drawing); “*My Favorite Colors*” (painting); colored paper collage.

Grade II. Technical skills and the capacity for visual organization are consolidated: **a)** Conscious use of visual elements; organizing compositional space; expressing ideas through various techniques. **b)** Color, shape, space, texture; collage, tempera, modeling. **c)** “*Autumn in Warm Colors*”; “*Seasonal Fruits*” (combined painting techniques).

Grade III. Autonomy and collaborative dimensions are amplified through interdisciplinary integrated activities: **a)** Expressing artistic intention; using contrast and harmony; creating collective works. **b)** Contrast, harmony, visual rhythm; group compositions, thematic posters. **c)** Poster “*Protect Nature!*”; “*Favorite Landscape*” (mixed media techniques).

Grade IV. Transition towards mature artistic expression and self-assessment through portfolios: **a)** Creative use of visual language; appreciation of artistic values; demonstration of artistic autonomy. **b)** Complex compositional elements; study of form, light, shadow; combined techniques. **c)** Project “*The Young Artist*” (personal exhibition); reinterpretation of an artwork. The 2018 curriculum ensures a logical and balanced progression across grade levels, highlighting a development from sensory exploration (Grade I) to artistic autonomy and reflection (Grade IV). The formative and integrative character of Visual Arts Education is evident, contributing to the development of key competences, particularly aesthetic, communicative and social skills. Though, to further strengthen internal coherence, the following recommendations are suggested: increase the operationalization of broadly formulated competences, explicitly correlate them with observable and assessable performance indicators and clarify the evaluative dimension in relation to progression levels of students.

Item 4: Are the subject-specific competences in the curriculum aligned with the key (transversal) competences?

The distribution of teachers’ responses indicates the following: 65% consider the alignment between subject-specific and transversal competences largely adequate, 25% perceive it as sufficiently adequate and 10% assess it as minimally adequate. These results suggest a predominantly positive perception of curricular coherence, but also reveal a need for optimization concerning the explicit articulation of transdisciplinary connections. From the perspective of curriculum content, subject-specific competences are implicitly associated with transversal competences such as communication skills, critical thinking, cooperation and collaboration, and cultural sensitivity. Although, this alignment is primarily implicit and insufficiently formalized in the analyzed curriculum documents. Explicit examples of integrated tasks or interdisciplinary projects that demonstrate the transfer of competences across subjects (e.g., joint projects with the Romanian Language and Literature, History or Civic Education) are not provided. The transversal dimension is, thus, more suggested by the nature of activities than explicitly structured at the level of

competency formulations. Group activities, presentation and argumentation of one's own work and peer evaluation contribute to the development of cooperation, communication and autonomous learning skills. For example, the project "The Young Painter" (personal exhibition with self-assessment and peer feedback) integrates elements of critical reflection, self-regulation and reciprocal evaluation, fostering the development of social and metacognitive competences. It can be concluded that there is a functional alignment between subject-specific and transversal competences, but this alignment is more implicit than explicitly formulated. To strengthen curricular coherence, it is recommended to: explicitly clarify the links between subject-specific and transversal competences within the curriculum structure; include examples of integrated tasks and interdisciplinary projects; and formulate performance indicators that reflect the transversal dimension of learning.

Item 5: Relevance of the Level and Complexity of Subject-Specific Competences in Relation to Students' Age and Potential

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment of the alignment between the complexity of competences and developmental level of students: 80% consider this alignment largely adequate, 15% view it as sufficiently adequate and 5% assess it as minimally adequate. These results suggest a high degree of curricular appropriateness in terms of competency design. From a conceptual and psycho-pedagogical perspective, the subject-specific competences reflect the progressive acquisition of skills appropriate for early school age. For example, the competency "using artistic materials according to the intended purpose" is appropriate for the psychomotor development of children aged 6–10 years, requiring hand-eye coordination, fine motor control and the ability to select suitable tools for the task. Activities such as free drawing, collage and modeling align with the stage of concrete thinking, promoting learning through direct manipulation and sensory experience. In lower grades, competences focus on fundamental acquisitions, including the development of fine motor skills, recognition and use of colors, spatial orientation and the expression of emotions through visual means. Overall, the level of complexity is generally appropriate, following a gradual progression from sensory exploration to conscious and creative use of visual language. Though, some teachers note that certain artistic tasks may temporarily exceed the motor abilities of younger students if differentiated methodological adaptation is not applied. Overall, the subject-specific competences are adequately aligned with the age and potential of students in primary education, reflecting the principles of progression and instructional accessibility. It is recommended, however, to introduce flexibility in the implementation of learning tasks through methodological differentiation to prevent motor or cognitive overload in younger students.

Item 6: Are competence units, as intermediate learning outcomes, formulated taxonomically in relation to content units and do they ensure the formation/development of subject-specific competences?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following assessment: 60% consider that sub-competences are formulated taxonomically to a sufficient extent, 30% evaluate this formulation as largely adequate and 10% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest the presence of a partially coherent structure, that requires optimization concerning the explicit articulation of progression and targeted cognitive levels. Examination of the curriculum content reveals that some sub-competences (e.g., "describe elements of the visual language") are not sufficiently differentiated according to age level and cognitive complexity. The absence of explicit progressive descriptors between Grades I and IV means that the development of skills is not always clearly delineated. Consequently, the responsibility for operationalizing competences and grading task difficulty largely falls on the teacher, who must develop individualized progression grids and evaluation criteria adapted to the grade level. It is observed that the taxonomic structure is not always explicitly formalized, and vertical progression across grade levels is not systematically highlighted. Although, certain learning units (e.g., "Point and Line") present an appropriate gradation of content and activities, suggesting a development from recognition and identification to conscious use and creative application. The formulation of sub-competences could be improved by specifying the targeted cognitive level (e.g., identification, description, application, analysis, creation), including observable performance indicators and clarifying progression between cycles and grade levels. Sub-competences generally contribute to the development of subject-specific competences, yet their taxonomic formulation is not always explicit

or progressively structured. To strengthen curricular coherence, it is recommended to clarify cognitive levels and vertical progression, thereby facilitating both formative and summative assessment of the learning outcomes of students.

Item 7: Structuring Content into Relevant Learning Units and Ensuring the Progressive Development of Concepts

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment of the curriculum structure: 70% consider the learning units largely relevant and well-structured, 25% evaluate this structuring as sufficiently adequate and 5% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest a high level of professional validation of content organization. Examination of the curriculum documents reveals coherent thematic units, such as “Form and Color in Nature”, “Decorative Composition” and “Visual Representation of Space”. These units reflect a logical structuring of content and ensure a gradual transition from fundamental notions to more complex compositional structures. The principle of progression is evident through the gradual introduction of visual concepts (point, line, shape, color), followed by their integration into thematic and expressive compositions. Units such as “Me and My Family” or “Nature as a Source of Inspiration” demonstrate thematic coherence and relevance to the experiential world of students, facilitating connections between artistic content and the everyday reality of children. Generally, the curriculum structure supports a progression from simple to complex, from sensory exploration to conscious organization of visual language. However, some opinions highlight the need for thematic updates, including contemporary dimensions such as visual design, digital media or the valorization of local cultural heritage, to enhance the social and cultural relevance of subject. In general, the curriculum content is coherently structured into learning units relevant to the essence of Visual Arts Education and ensures the progressive development of fundamental concepts. It is recommended, nevertheless, to periodically update the thematic content to align with the dynamics of contemporary visual culture and the current sociocultural context.

Item 8: Are the contents of the taught curriculum accessible and up-to-date for students?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment: 75% consider the contents largely accessible and current, 20% evaluate this characteristic as sufficiently adequate and 5% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest a high degree of content appropriateness in relation to the age characteristics of primary school students. Analysis of the curriculum themes shows that most content is closely connected to the child's experiential world and facilitates affective and creative engagement. Relevant examples include representing favorite toys, painting the surrounding environment or creating collages inspired by stories. These themes support the cognitive and emotional accessibility of learning. Although, feedback of teachers highlights a limitation regarding the curriculum's cultural currency. The digital component is not explicitly included (e.g., digital drawing, use of graphic tablets, introduction to digital art), even though contemporary students show a strong interest in digital visual culture. Some traditional content, while valuable from a formative perspective, may not sufficiently stimulate the interest of today's students without methodological adaptation or contemporary contextualization. Therefore, the inclusion of topics such as digital arts, modern illustration or contemporary forms of visual expression is recommended to strengthen the subject's socio-cultural relevance. Overall, the curriculum content is accessible and appropriate to the developmental level of students, reflecting the everyday experiences of a child. However, to meet the demands of contemporary education, it is recommended to explicitly integrate digital components and elements of contemporary visual culture to strengthen the discipline's attractiveness and formative relevance.

Item 9: Are the content units in the taught curriculum correlated with the content units of other subjects within the same curricular area?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 60% consider this correlation sufficiently realized, 30% evaluate it as largely adequate, and 10% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest a moderately positive, though not fully consolidated, perception of the level of curricular integration within the “Arts” domain. Analysis of content and teaching practices shows multiple opportunities for connecting Visual Arts Education with Music Education, particularly through shared themes such as rhythm, harmony and artistic expressivity. Potential links with Technology Education are also identifiable,

especially in activities involving the creation of decorative objects or practical projects. However, the curriculum document does not systematically provide explicit examples of interdisciplinary activities, making integration largely dependent on the teacher's initiative and competence. Practically, some themes naturally facilitate integration across subjects. For example, the theme "Spring" allows correlations with Natural Sciences (observation of natural phenomena) and Music and Movement (performance of thematic songs). Integrated activities such as "Singing and Painting the Rain" demonstrate the potential for a syncretic approach in which musical and visual expression complement each other. While the correlation of Visual Arts Education with other subjects in the "Arts" area is possible and functional at the practical level, it is not always explicitly formalized in curriculum documents. To enhance interdisciplinarity, it is recommended to include concrete examples of integrated activities and clarify inter-subject competency connections to ensure systemic curricular coherence.

Item 10: Do the content units in the curriculum support the development of subject-specific competences and allow for individualized and inclusive learning design?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following assessment: 65% consider that individualized and inclusive learning is sufficiently ensured, 25% evaluate it as largely ensured, and 10% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest a declarative openness toward individualization, while highlighting limitations regarding the explicit articulation of implementation mechanisms. Analysis of the curriculum document shows an axiological orientation favorable to diversity, with statements such as "each student freely expresses their own vision." This approach reflects the principle of valuing individual differences and expressive freedom, which is characteristic of arts education. Though, the curriculum does not systematically provide methodological guidance for adapting content and tasks for students with special educational needs (SEN). The absence of concrete examples of curricular adaptations, differentiation of complexity levels or adjustment of assessment criteria places the responsibility for operationalization largely on the teacher, who autonomously develops differentiated worksheets and personalized strategies. On the other hand, the structure of the proposed activities allows some flexibility and adaptation to individual learning pace of students. Tasks such as "Complete the drawing based on the model" or "Choose colors appropriate for your emotion" facilitate differentiated expression and enable adjustment of difficulty according to potential of students. In general, the curriculum conceptually supports individualized learning and allows task differentiation in practice, yet it does not provide sufficient explicit methodological guidance for the systematic implementation of inclusive education, particularly for SEN students. It is recommended to integrate clear guidelines for curricular adaptations, examples of good practices and differentiated assessment suggestions to strengthen the inclusive dimension of the subject.

Item 11: Does the curriculum of the taught subject support the implementation of active and interactive teaching strategies, facilitating both the development of subject-specific and transdisciplinary competences?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment: 70% consider that the orientation toward active strategies is largely realized, 25% evaluate it as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest the presence of an adequate methodological foundation focused on active student engagement in the learning process. Analysis of the methodological recommendations highlights the use of interactive methods such as guided observation, aesthetic conversation, role-playing and visual brainstorming. These approaches support the development of divergent thinking, expressive abilities and reflective capacity regarding the artistic product. Activities such as paired drawing or group collaboration projects (e.g., creating an "Autumn Collage") promote cooperative learning and social skills development, while also strengthening the interdisciplinary dimension of educational process. Methodological suggestions encourage artistic experimentation and discovery-based learning through activities such as "Sponge Painting" or "Sand Drawing", that leverage material exploration and direct sensory experience. These practices reflect an orientation toward experiential learning and creative play, appropriate to the developmental characteristics of primary school students. Although, the analysis indicates the need to further diversify and explicitly present practical examples, particularly in relation to contemporary visual-plastic specificity and the integration of digital technologies. Generally, the curriculum is clearly oriented toward ac-

tive teaching strategies and supports the direct engagement of students in artistic creation. The interdisciplinary dimension is possible and functional but could be strengthened through diversification of methodological examples and the integration of innovative approaches aligned with contemporary visual culture.

Item 12: Do the methodological suggestions and learning activities provided in the curriculum offer opportunities for the expression of teaching creativity?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 75% consider that the curriculum largely provides opportunities for the expression of teaching creativity, 20% evaluate this feature as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data reflect a positive perception regarding the degree of flexibility and autonomy offered by the curriculum documents. Analysis of the content shows that the methodological suggestions and proposed activities stimulate freedom of pedagogical expression through activities such as free creative work, school exhibitions and the production of thematic projects using natural materials. Teachers utilize these opportunities by designing projects adapted to the local context and the experiences of students, such as *“My Book of Colors”* or the *“Class Exhibition.”* This approach promotes professional autonomy and allows the adaptation of content according to available resources and the particular students' needs. The analysis also reveals that methodological suggestions are generally more indicative than prescriptive and may be insufficiently developed for novice teachers, who may require concrete examples and models for effective implementation of creative activities. In general, the curriculum supports the expression of teaching creativity and the use of curricular freedom, providing teachers with the possibility to adapt activities to the local context and the needs of students. For novice teachers, it would be beneficial to supplement the curriculum with explicit project examples and detailed methodological guidelines to facilitate the planning and implementation of creative activities.

Item 13: Do the assessment suggestions in the curriculum provide clear references (tools, indicators, test models, etc.) for evaluating student outcomes?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 60% consider that the assessment references are sufficiently clearly defined, 30% evaluate their clarity as largely ensured, and 10% perceive them as minimally clear. These data suggest that, while there is a general recognition of assessment criteria, the level of detail and standardization is limited. The curriculum includes general assessment criteria, such as originality, adherence to the assigned theme, expressiveness and appropriate use of materials. These references allow teachers to evaluate student performance and monitor their progress. Although, the curriculum does not provide standardized assessment tools, such as evaluation sheets, rubrics with performance descriptors or concrete examples adapted to the first-grade level. The absence of these tools limits the possibility of implementing rigorous and objective formative evaluation. Strengthening evaluation would require explicit models of instruments that clarify the criteria and enable comparability of the performance of student. The existing evaluation references lack methodological details and standardized tools necessary for effective formative evaluation. For greater clarity and consistency in evaluating the outcomes of student, it is recommended to include evaluation sheets, rubrics with performance descriptors and concrete examples of application adapted to each age or grade level.

Item 14: Does the school curriculum provide opportunities for diversification and differentiation of student evaluation?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 65% consider that the diversification of assessment is sufficiently ensured, 25% evaluate it as largely ensured, and 10% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest a moderately positive perception of the flexibility of assessment, with potential for further development. The curriculum proposes the use of alternative assessment forms, such as: the student portfolio, that documents individual progress and creative outputs; systematic observation of performance in classroom activities; verbal and visual self-assessment, exemplified by expressing preferences and motivations (*“I like what I made because...”*, *“I like my work because...”*); and narrative assessment, that provides descriptive and qualitative feedback on artistic products. Though, the curriculum does not provide methodological details or concrete models for implementing these assessment forms. The lack of explicit guidance may limit the effective use of portfolios, self-assessment and narrative evaluation, particularly for novice teachers. Assessment diversification could be strengthened through the following:

sample portfolio sheets, rubrics with performance descriptors and examples of visual and narrative self-assessment adapted to each grade level. The curriculum promotes the use of varied assessment forms but does not offer explicit methodological references for their implementation. To enhance the effectiveness of formative evaluation, it is recommended to develop concrete and detailed models that allow systematic and level-appropriate application of portfolios, self-assessment and narrative assessment.

The findings regarding difficulties in applying formative evaluation and differentiating tasks are consistent with the results of the curriculum implementation monitoring study, where the same challenges were identified, including adaptation to individual learning paces and the lack of standardized assessment tools [4].

Item 15: Does the curriculum in the subject promote a student-centered approach, encouraging an active role of the learner?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates that 75% consider the curriculum promotes a student-centered approach to a large extent, 20% evaluate this orientation as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest that the student-centered teaching orientation is positively recognized, although the implementation of its principles may vary depending on specific teaching conditions and available resources. The curriculum includes activities that value the personal expression of students and stimulate initiative, such as creating original compositions inspired by the surrounding environment. In these activities, the student becomes an author of the learning process rather than merely following instructions. Activities like "Drawing a Story Together" promote assertive communication and cooperation, developing social and collaborative skills. Although, some activities described in the curriculum remain too directive, that may limit the degree of autonomous exploration and discovery. Generally, the curriculum supports student-centered learning and active involvement, fostering initiative and creative freedom. To increase effectiveness, it is recommended to emphasize exploratory and discovery-based activities, ensuring that the student assumes a clear role as the author in the learning process.

Item 16: Does the curriculum encourage students' critical thinking for problem identification and resolution in different contexts?

The distribution of teachers' responses shows that 60% consider the curriculum encourages critical thinking to a sufficient extent, 30% evaluate this orientation as largely ensured, and 10% perceive it as minimally ensured. These results suggest that the activities provided by the curriculum offer opportunities to stimulate critical thinking, but the actual implementation depends on the teacher's guidance and how tasks are structured. The curriculum includes tasks that require students to analyze and make decisions, such as "transform a geometric shape into a real object" or "compose a landscape from abstract forms." These activities allow students to explore multiple solutions and make autonomous decisions, implicitly stimulating critical thinking. However, critical thinking as a competency is not explicitly defined in the document, and the elements of critical analysis and self-evaluation are insufficiently developed for this age group. Consequently, fostering critical thinking largely relies on the teacher's intervention and the way learning tasks are structured. Overall, the curriculum provides contexts and activities that can stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving, but the systematic development of this competency requires clearer objectives and the inclusion of explicit tasks formulated in terms of critical analysis and visual-aesthetic problem-solving.

Item 17: Does the Biology curriculum guide the formation of a system of values and attitudes in students?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates that 70% consider the curriculum largely supports the formation of values and attitudes, 25% evaluate this orientation as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data reflect a positive perception of the curriculum's capacity to direct the educational process toward values and attitudes relevant to the students' personal and social development. The curriculum promotes respect for beauty, cultural heritage and nature through activities such as "Depicting traditional motifs in folk ornaments," fostering cultural identity, aesthetic sensitivity and respect for traditions. Themes like "Friendship" or "Nature - My Friend" support the development of empathy, mutual respect and cooperative spirit among students. Although, the value-oriented dimension could be further extended to contemporary aesthetic education, integrating modern perspectives of art and visual culture to form a more complex and contextually relevant value system. In general, the curriculum significantly

contributes to value formation and attitudes of students, promoting aesthetic sensitivity, respect for cultural heritage and social collaboration. For a more comprehensive approach, it is recommended to include elements of contemporary aesthetic education that enhance cultural diversity and current creative expression.

Item 18. To what extent does the curriculum provide guidance that is useful for fostering students' initiative and creativity?

Teachers' responses indicate that 80% consider the curriculum highly effective in fostering initiative and creativity, 15% rate it as moderately effective, and 5% as minimally effective. These findings highlight the curriculum's capacity to stimulate students' creativity through open-ended activities, such as collage, drawing, and modeling, that encourage individual expression and original approaches. By allowing students to propose their own themes, the curriculum enhances autonomy, responsibility and independent planning in artistic tasks. Providing further methodological examples could reinforce these results and support the continued development of initiative and creativity in practice.

Similarly, the curriculum implementation monitoring study highlighted an orientation toward creativity and active learning, as well as the need for a clearer operationalization of transversal competences [4].

Item 19. Do you consider the curriculum text to be formulated in a clear, concise and coherent manner?

The majority of teachers 70% consider the curriculum text largely clear and coherent, 25% moderately clear, and 5% minimally clear. The curriculum is logically structured—competences, content, methodological suggestions, evaluation-facilitating progressive understanding of learning objectives. Academic language and theoretical formulations may challenge novice teachers, and some methodological suggestions could be more explicit to support practical application. Generally, the curriculum provides clear and coherent pedagogical guidance, with additional concrete examples recommended to enhance accessibility for less experienced teachers.

Item 20. To what extent do you consider that the curriculum supports long-term instructional planning and adaptation to real learning contexts?

Most teachers (65%) consider the curriculum moderately supportive, 30% highly supportive, and 5% minimally supportive. While it provides general guidance on competences, content and learning activities, it does not detail units weekly or by semester. Teachers must, therefore, develop annual and thematic plans adapted to class level and available resources. Existing guidelines facilitate semester- and daily-level planning, and provided examples can be adapted to real teaching contexts, ensuring flexibility in curriculum implementation. Overall, the curriculum offers a general framework that requires further adaptation to effectively meet real classroom needs.

Item 21. What changes, adaptations, or extensions have you implemented in the curriculum during the teaching of the subject (multiple responses allowed)?

Teachers reported diversifying learning organization 80.3%, updating content 56.7%, clarifying interdisciplinary connections 58.3%, developing links between competences, content, and strategies 53%, and expanding competences or introducing new strategies 43.3%. Adaptations included clarifying subject-specific competences, introducing contemporary content (e.g., digital art, modern design, national symbols, emotional expression through color) and diversifying teaching strategies through workshops, thematic projects, outdoor painting, cooperative activities and peer assessment. Interdisciplinary links, particularly with natural sciences, were emphasized. Applied creative activities such as collage, visual storytelling, and ecological art fostered students' expressive skills, collaboration, and aesthetic reflection. In general, these adaptations enhanced student autonomy, initiative and active engagement, improving both the relevance and efficacy of learning.

Item 22. How do you personally relate to the curriculum? (multiple responses allowed)

Teachers report understanding and applying the principles of the competency-based curriculum 90%, actively implementing new methodological approaches 85%, achieving visible results in students' aesthetic-artistic competences 80%, and showing openness to updating content and integrating new artistic trends, such as digital art and contemporary design 88%. These findings indicate high teacher engagement and a positive perception of the curriculum. To maximize effectiveness, additional support and resources are recommended to address challenges and strengthen teaching competences, particularly for integrating contemporary trends into learning.

Item 23. Strengths of the current curriculum

Teachers identify several strengths of the current curriculum, emphasizing its relevance and efficacy. Key features include the development of functional competences applicable to real-life contexts, a modular and progressively complex structure and adaptability to individual student needs. Other strengths include conceptual clarity, alignment with modern educational principles, student-centeredness, emphasis on creativity and aesthetic values, promotion of national cultural heritage, support for early visual and cultural education, openness to active and experiential methods, natural interdisciplinary integration and incorporation of digital arts and contemporary approaches. Overall, the curriculum provides a flexible and formative framework that enhances aesthetic, cognitive, social, and creative competences of students, while offering teachers guidance for innovative and context-sensitive instructional practices.

Item 24. Vulnerabilities of the current curriculum

Teachers report several vulnerabilities in the curriculum that may affect instructional efficacy, including limited concrete examples for inclusive adaptation, insufficiently detailed interdisciplinary connections, occasionally abstract theoretical language, few practical assessment guidelines, a need for more applied methodological guidance and limited examples integrating contemporary digital art.

Conclusions

The findings of the present study provide a comprehensive overview of teachers' perceptions regarding the 2018 Visual Arts Education curriculum in primary education and allow for several theoretically and empirically grounded conclusions.

Firstly, the curriculum is generally perceived as a coherent, modern and pedagogically relevant document, aligned with the principles of competence-based education and outcome-oriented learning. Teachers confirm that the curriculum ensures a clear progression of subject-specific competences, supports the development of aesthetic, expressive, creative, and intercultural dimensions of learners' personality, and is largely appropriate to the cognitive and psychomotor development of primary school students. The modular structure and thematic organization are considered functional and conducive to systematic instructional planning.

Secondly, the study highlights a predominantly positive evaluation of curriculum implementation in practice, particularly in relation to student-centered learning, active and interactive methodologies and the promotion of creativity and initiative. Teachers acknowledge that the curriculum provides sufficient methodological openness, allowing for adaptation to classroom contexts and encouraging professional autonomy. Simultaneously, this flexibility generates a high degree of dependence on the individual competence of teachers, particularly in designing interdisciplinary connections, adapting content, and operationalizing competences into measurable learning outcomes.

Thirdly, several systemic challenges have been identified. These mainly concern the insufficient explicitness of interdisciplinary and transversal competency connections, the limited operationalization of competences into observable performance indicators and the lack of standardized evaluation instruments and detailed formative evaluation guidelines. Teachers also report the need for clearer methodological support for inclusive education, differentiation strategies and the integration of digital and contemporary visual culture into the curriculum content.

Fourthly, while the curriculum conceptually supports individualized learning and inclusivity, its practical implementation depends largely on initiative and professional experience of teachers. This indicates a gap between curricular intentions and methodological operationalization, particularly in relation to assessment practices, inclusion of students with diverse learning needs and systematic development of critical thinking competences.

Finally, the synthesis of findings demonstrates a strong convergence between perceptions of teachers and previous empirical research on curriculum implementation, confirming both the functional coherence of the curriculum and the persistence of several recurring vulnerabilities. These include the need for stronger methodological concretization, enhanced interdisciplinarity, improved assessment frameworks and greater alignment with contemporary educational and cultural contexts.

Overall, the 2018 Visual Arts Education curriculum is validated as a structurally coherent and pedagogically valuable framework; although, its optimization requires targeted revisions aimed at strengthening its methodological precision, expanding its digital and contemporary dimensions and reinforcing evidence-based assessment practices in order to ensure higher consistency between curricular design, classroom implementation and learning outcomes.

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MONITORING THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW EDUCATION: EMPIRICAL STUDY

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The scientific article highlights the essence of the method of monitoring school programs in the context of new educations through a national empirical study. The empirical study analyzed some educational policy documents regarding the integration of new educations in the context of taught and written school programs; identified the directions of modernization of school programs from the perspective of new educations in the opinion of educational actors (teachers, students, parents); established value constants of school program monitoring on the dimensions of Communication and Media Education, Peace and Cooperation Education in order to optimize the process of designing teaching activities from the perspective of the conception of the new generation school curriculum. The results obtained from the application of the methodological tool highlighted the need for a contextual approach to the educational curriculum from the perspective of the culture of peace, but also the need for the adaptability of media skills in the school environment through the transversal integration of the new educations currently offered by school programs.

Keywords: *School curriculum, monitoring, new educations, education for peace and cooperation, education for communication and mass media, educational actors, educational institution.*

MONITORIZAREA CURRICULA ȘCOLARĂ ÎN CONTEXTUL NOILOR EDUCAȚII: STUDIU EMPIRIC

Articolul științific reliefează esența modalității de monitorizare a curricula școlare în contextul noilor educații printr-un studiu empiric național. Studiul empiric a analizat unele documente de politici educaționale privind integrarea noilor educații în contextul curricula școlară predat și scris; a identificat direcțiile de modernizare a curricula școlare din perspectiva noilor educații în opinia actorilor educaționali (profesori, elevi, părinți); a stabilit constante valorice ale monitorizării curricula școlare pe dimensiunile Educația pentru comunicare și mass-media, Educația pentru pace și cooperare pentru optimizarea procesului de proiectare a activității didactice din perspectiva concepției curriculumului școlar de nouă generație. Rezultatele obținute în urma aplicării instrumentului metodologic a evidențiat nevoia abordării contextuale a curriculumului educațional din perspectiva culturii păcii, dar și nevoia adaptabilității competențelor media în mediul școlar prin integrarea transversală a noilor educații, oferit actualmente de curricula școlare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Curriculum școlar, monitorizare, noile educații, educație pentru pace și cooperare, educație pentru comunicare și mass-media, actori educaționali, instituție de învățământ.*

Introduction

Currently in the national education system, the implementation of *new educations* represents a decisive factor in achieving educational goals through new content messages, which will constitute answers to the problems of the contemporary world, through [1, p. 28]: Education for sustainable development; Education for global citizenship; Financial education; Entrepreneurship education and innovation; Education for digital skills and artificial intelligence; Media education; Education for equality and inclusion; Education for health and well-being; Education for peace.

In this sense, the *National Development Strategy Education 2030*, which aims for the aspect of *Efficient and Motivating Learning Environments* to adapt the educational system to the new opportunities offered by new learning environments, active/interactive teaching resources and technologies, for the accumulation of new knowledge and experiences, including in order to increase resilience to the challenges of the contemporary world (global warming, crises, pandemics) [11, p. 7]. Therefore, the new educations also mark

the process of methodological valorization in *new generation school curricula* [1, p. 31] at the level of the five dimensions of the activity of *training-development of the student's personality* [4, p. 254], such as: an intellectual approach of the new educations; a moral approach of the new educations; a technological approach of the new educations; an aesthetic approach of the new educations; a physical-sanitary and sports approach of the new educations.

Monitoring school curricula from the perspective of *new educations* means the systematic and continuous monitoring of how the education system and process behave in relation to the proposed changes for the optimization of teaching and managerial practices [6]. Regarding the education process, three types of monitoring are distinguished: *administrative, formative, and school performance monitoring*.

The *purpose* of the research is to conduct an empirical study on the monitoring of school curricula in the context of new education, including the dimensions: Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation in the pre-university education environment.

The research focused on the following *objectives*:

- analysis of educational policy documents regarding new educations in the context of taught and written school curricula;
- identification of the opinion of educational actors regarding the monitoring of school curricula from the perspective of new educations;
- establishment of the value constants of school curriculum monitoring on the dimensions of Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation.

The scientific study used *research methods*: studying school curriculum documents, specialized literature on descriptive analysis, pedagogical synthesis, inductive and deductive method, questionnaire (*Questionnaire on identifying directions for modernizing school curricula from the perspective of new education in the opinion of educational actors - teachers, students, parents*), statistical analysis and interpretation of the results.

New educations through the lens of monitoring taught and written school curricula

The first common desiderata, provided for in European documents, were Education for peace and cooperation, Education for democracy, Ecological education, Intercultural education, etc. For the Republic of Moldova, along with the new educations nominated by UNESCO [12], it would be necessary to recognize Education for identity and Education for property, confirms researcher Vl. Pâslaru [apud 7, p. 21]. In this sense, we are currently arguing for the necessity of the dimensions *Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation* in educational institutions. Being as coordinates of the human ideal as imperatives in overcoming *the crisis of the influence of the war* in the neighborhood, but also *the crisis of disinformation of the population (fake news)* through the media and the addiction to entertainment consumerism, what in the communication of young people we encounter incoherent discourses, the vulgarization of language, the imposition and promotion of anonymity, verbal inflation with maximum redundancy, non-reciprocity, the generalization of monotony, irresponsibility towards a spoken word, the consciousness of non-commitment. In these conditions of maximum awareness of general-human values, the *new educations* come to prepare an adequate behavior, that is, rational that will partially mitigate *the shock of the future among the young generation*. According to the pedagogical meanings of the romanian researcher G. Văideanu, the new educations aim at new specific contents, approached as concrete answers to each identified problem.

In the analytical research of *the written curriculum* - a set of educational curricular documents such as the Framework Plan for primary, secondary and high school education, academic year 2024-2025, approved by MEC Order No. 439/2025 [10] and school curricula at the national level - on the dimensions of *Education for communication and mass media* [5], *Education for peace and cooperation*, which established pedagogical benchmarks for the content of these educational dimensions, presented in Table 1, within the school subjects with mandatory and optional status.

Table 1. New educations reflected in school curricula in the Republic of Moldova

New educations	School subjects
Education for peace and cooperation	<i>Compulsory:</i> History, Geography, Romanian language and literature, Foreign languages (modern), Musical education, Visual arts, Physical education, Moral-spiritual education; <i>Optional:</i> Religion; Education for community development; Intercultural education; Education for tolerance; Electoral education (cl. IX); Lived history - told history (cl. VI-XII); Holocaust: history and life lessons; Learning to think and act strategically; The art of moral behavior (cl. V-IX);
Education for communication and mass media	<i>Compulsory:</i> Romanian language and literature, Foreign languages (modern), History, Geography, Mathematics, Moral-spiritual education; <i>Optional:</i> Media education; Intercultural education; Emotional intelligence in communication (cl. V-IX); The art of narrative communication through video (cl. VI-IX); Education through film. A world to see;
Thematic decades from the perspective of new educations	Value lines of new educations
Decade of Education for democratic citizenship and human rights (December)	<i>Optional:</i> Responsible citizen; Forum of children defenders of human rights; Declaration of human rights; Media education ; Legal education; Norms vs responsibilities ... etc.
Education Week for General Human Values (May)	<i>Compulsory:</i> Europe Days; Peace Education ; General-human values, European Union ... etc.

The need to ensure the integration of *new educations* at the formal–nonformal–informal level has become current in the paradigm of curricular reforms. Therefore, *new educations* represent the desire to expand and deepen the axiological dimension of „formal-nonformal-informal education in pre-university, but also university education” [3], through the prism of cross-curricular thematic decades.

Therefore, the valorization of *new educations* in new generation school curricula - *Education for sustainable development*; *Education for global citizenship*; *Financial education*; *Entrepreneurship education and innovation*; *Education for digital skills and artificial intelligence*; *Education for media*; *Education for equality and inclusion*; *Education for health and well-being*; *Education for peace* - also written in the National Curriculum Reference Framework [1, p. 31], constitute new responses to the challenges of the contemporary world. This educational policy document proposes the predominant way of integrating *new educations*, through the National Curriculum, as resources for the reconstruction of the curricular process focused on learning outcomes and the degree of manifestation of the skills of the graduating student profile, through the prism of their relevance for life. At the same time, these can be capitalized through the model initially proposed by G. Văideanu, later adapted by S. Cristea - methodological approaches for implementation: the infusional, modular, disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary [4, p. 254-255]. Therefore, the dimensions of *Media education*, which is adjacent to *Education for communication and mass media*, and *Peace education*, which is also adjacent to *Education for peace and cooperation*, were synthesized - according to researcher G. Văideanu [12] - we find that both dimensions from the perspective of the curriculum taught will be implemented within the new generation school curriculum, at the level [1, p. 29]:

a) *infusional*, achievable by each teacher through examples, applications, case studies proposed within current teaching activities, possible in all subjects (especially Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, History etc.);

b) *disciplinary*, achievable by including new optional subjects in the curriculum (Peace education, Media education);

c) *interdisciplinary* and *transdisciplinary*, achievable through syntheses, non-formally organized activities, etc. (thematic decades, etc.).

L. Antonesei stated that “We must look at new educations not as isolated dimensions, but in their multiple systemic relationships and from the perspective of the future effect” [apud 9, p. 19]. In the following, we will focus on the relevance of research on the value lines *Education for communication and mass media*, *Education for peace and cooperation* as being less praxiologically disseminated in the continuous and cyclical monitoring and development of the school curriculum.

In school curricula from the perspective of new educations, the value line of ***Education for communication and mass media***, systemically integrated into school subjects, educational activities achievable through thematic decades at the formal-nonformal-informal level, aims to train students in a selective and responsible attitude towards information; training in communicative competence and the ability to communicate; training in axiological personality for a *culture of communication*, including in the media environment, through [9, p. 21]:

- to correctly and adequately manage media messages;
- to operatively decipher the meanings of various media information;
- to select and adapt information sources in line with the values of truth, justice, beauty, etc.

It is precisely this education that leads to the shaping of the individual’s personality to a fine-tuning that allows him to successfully integrate into the social, cultural, and professional environment.

Also in school curricula from the perspective of new educations, the value line of ***Education for peace and cooperation*** aims to transmit a *culture of peace* to students.

The Peace education activity with mandatory status (but, this optional curriculum is missing at the national level!) for educational institutions organized within the Education for general human values week in May, 2025-2026 has the following priority directives:

- eliminating and annihilating aggressive, warlike propaganda, by combating hostile, aggressive, xenophobic, racist attitudes, etc.;
- promoting, forming and encouraging cooperative attitudes between individuals, communities, peoples that are based on cultivating empathy, love and dedication towards our fellow human beings.

According to the European researcher J. Deloros, UNESCO actively advocates for peace – contributing to a *culture of peace* – and mutual understanding, highlighting the value of education “as a manifestation of the spirit of harmonious coexistence, a result of the desire to live together, as active members of the world state, thinking and acting for the good of future generations” [apud 9, p. 23].

School curriculum monitoring practices from the perspective of new educations – on the dimensions of *Media Education* and *Peace Education*

Monitoring school curricula from the perspective of *new educations* represents a process of continuous observation of the managerial and pedagogical approaches organized for the implementation of curricula in a school subject or school subjects (by curricular areas, fields of activity) with mandatory or elective status, such as *Media education*, *Peace education*, according to the empirical study conducted. Monitoring means verifying how the activities carried out progress towards achieving the goals specified in the school curricula.

The initiation of the empirical study started from the need for methodological conditions for the process of monitoring the school curriculum from the perspective of new educations – especially in the dimensions of Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation, argued in the above context, which emphasizes some more complex questions and problems:

- To what extent do school curricula on the dimensions of Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation, sometimes remain just types of education within the trunk of new educations and do not constitute an astringent reality of the present at the level of attitude and general-human values?
- Are Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation, in school-local community partnership, a constructive reaction in relation to the current status of the active citizen and of education in general?
- In what form are Education for communication and mass media, Education for peace and cooperation

presented in today's society at the national level – in general their educational practices – and what influence do they have on the student's personality?

The empirical study followed the following principles of monitoring school curricula from the perspective of *new educations* [1, p. 48], on the dimensions of *Education for peace* and *Education for media*:

- *the principle of validity*: the monitoring process uses instruments that measure the level of professional competence in the application of curricular documents;
- *the principle of reliability*: the consistency of the measurements applied in the monitoring process that provide coherent and stable recommendations;
- *the principle of mutual respect*: monitoring procedures respect the dignity and rights of those who facilitate the monitoring process and of those who are monitored;
- *the principle of fairness*: monitoring is fair, without affecting the natural educational process carried out by the teaching staff in the school discipline;
- *the principle of transparency*: participants receive explicit, accurate and clear information in advance about the purpose, activities, period and tools of monitoring; the results/conclusions/findings of monitoring are discussed constructively/arguably between participants;
- *the principle of applicability*: the method, forms and instruments (questionnaires) applied in the monitoring process are clear, accessible to different educational actors responsible for monitoring, taking into account different resources and available time.

The methodological framework of the empirical study highlighted how the continuous monitoring of school curricula contributes to the identification of directions for modernizing school curricula from the perspective of new education, but also the deep understanding of the needs of educational actors (teaching and managerial staff, students, parents). The *Questionnaire on the identification of directions for modernizing school curricula from the perspective of new education in the opinion of educational actors (teachers, students, parents)* was used as a measurement tool, which includes three pragmatic aspects:

- Approaching Peace education in school subject curricula. The items analyze the contextual approach to the educational curriculum from the perspective of a *culture of peace*.
- Practical ways of implementing Media education in school curricula. The items analyze the need for adaptability of *media skills* in the educational context.
- Transversal *integration of new educations* in school curricula. This subcategory analyzes the need for an integrated education system in school curricula, focused on new educations - didactically transposed through the prism of Peace education and Media education.

The population sample investigated is from pre-university education, with 68 educational actors participating: 38.2% teachers (5 managers and 21 teachers from primary, middle and high school), 44.1% students (from middle and high school), 17.7% parents (of middle school students) randomly selected from five educational institutions, conducted during the 2025-2026 academic year.

The main objective is to examine the existing situation at the level of educational reality regarding *the perception of educational actors (teachers, students, parents) about identifying directions for modernizing school curricula from the perspective of new educations*. We consider undertaking such an approach to be absolutely necessary because the results obtained in this way will constitute an essential support for the organization and conduct of future research.

Within the process of monitoring school curricula from the perspective of *Peace education*, the aim was to ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation/operation of the themes in the subject competencies, teaching and learning methods, school products, including activities at the class and school institution management levels that promote a *culture of peace* among the younger generation. Specialized literature in the field of educational sciences highlights the value of peace both as a goal and as a process in the formation-development of the student's personality. Thus, in the present study, data are obtained, briefly presented in Table 2, with reference to the need to capitalize on *Peace education* in the school subject curricula.

Table 2. Peace Education approach in school subject curricula: the opinion of educational actors

Nr.	Monitored indicators	Response rate			
		To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a lesser extent	Not et all
1.	Recommended learning activities in school subject curricula include themes about <i>peace, tolerance, non-violence, and dialogue</i> .	30.9%	58.8%	10.3%	-
2.	Textbooks and teaching materials that promote values such as <i>respect, empathy and coexistence</i> .	32.4%	45.6%	20.6%	1.4%
3.	Extracurricular school activities, team projects include <i>Peace Education</i> themes.	38.2%	54.4%	5.3%	2.1%
4.	Teaching strategies that encourage <i>non-violent communication</i> through discussions, debates, and mediation in the classroom.	39.7%	38.2%	22.1%	-
5.	The school curriculum builds <i>conflict management skills</i> in students.	16.2%	41.2%	33.8%	8.8%

The learning activities recommended in the curricula of school subjects that include themes about *peace, tolerance, non-violence and dialogue* are favorably appreciated by 58.8% of respondents. Textbooks and teaching materials that promote values such as *respect, empathy and coexistence* are accessible, found in 45.6% of respondents, as well as teaching strategies that encourage *non-violent communication* (39.7%). Thus, evidence was presented by respondents in the open-ended question category, specifying examples of *educational activities or situations in which students applied mediation or peaceful communication skills* (within the school subject or thematic decades), such as: the activity „Violence - the weapon of the weak”; „We have the same rights” etc. - students are actively involved in all thematic decades; the extracurricular activity „Peace Doves”; discussions based on the artistic literature books read, within the Personal Development classes; „Decade of Nonviolence in School” - mediation workshops, discussions about bullying, making posters and messages to promote peaceful communication; „International Day of Peace” – group activities in which students identified conflict situations and proposed nonviolent solutions, etc. Therefore, we appreciate this positive aspect due to the implementation of thematic decades at the level of educational institutions launched in accordance with the Framework Education Plan, in each academic year (especially from 2020 to the present), approved by the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova, but also of other educational programs supported by both decision-makers and UNICEF Moldova in combating school bullying.

The percentage of 41.2%, which refers to the school curriculum that forms *conflict management skills* in students, is noteworthy, but to a lesser extent 33.8% - indicates the permanent need to implement psychopedagogical programs in conflict management in the school environment and other cross-curricular activities to train conflict reduction skills and cultivate tolerance to „learn to live together” in a knowledge-based society.

In a society dominated by the media, the school increasingly has the function not only of transmitting information, but also of selecting, structuring and systematizing information. This is what the study reveals further, presented in Table 3, about the level of training of educational environment actors and learners in capitalizing on practical ways of implementing *Media education* in school curricula.

Table 3. Practical ways to implement Media Education in school curricula: the opinion of educational actors

Nr.	Monitored indicators	Response rate			
		To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a lesser extent	Not et all
1.	The school curriculum trains students in <i>media skills</i> (information analysis, source verification, on-line network security, etc.).	13.2%	39.7%	38.2%	8.9%
2.	Students are encouraged to critically analyze <i>media messages</i> within school subjects.	13.2%	39.7%	38.2%	8.9%
3.	School activities are equipped with <i>digital tools</i> to develop critical thinking in students (fact-checking, multimedia projects, educational software).	23.5%	50%	22.1%	4.4%
4.	Teachers feel prepared to integrate <i>Media Education</i> into teaching activities.	23.5%	50%	26.5%	-
5.	The school promotes <i>media literacy</i> through campaigns, workshops or external collaborations (NGOs, libraries/Novateca, communication science specialists, etc.).	27.9%	50%	16.2%	5.9%

A moderately high percentage (50%) is noted regarding the need to use/equip schools with *digital tools*, such as the *need for professional training* of teaching and management staff on this dimension of new education, but also *media literacy* among students. Similar percentages (39.7%) were obtained regarding the training of *media skills* in students and their involvement in the critical analysis of *media messages* within school subjects.

The answers in the category of the open question “What media communication skills do you consider necessary to be consolidated in the current curriculum in school subjects?” refer as follows:

- *In the opinion of teachers*: to emphasize digital ethics and the value of responsibility for verifying information in virtual space; cross-curricular integrated skills, not just in a separate discipline, so that they are developed gradually, by age levels, evaluated through applied projects, not just through theoretical tests; developing critical thinking in digital education activities, online safety; about how media content is created; assessing the credibility of sources on social networks; digital literacy, understanding media language; responsible communication in the digital environment; security and protection of personal data;

- *In the opinion of students*: communication skills with specialists such as psychologists, communication and media experts; encouraging the exchange of experiences between students, including those from other institutions; frequent use of digital tablets instead of books/textbooks; learning based on digital projects; direct activity on tablets instead of books; interactive communication games.

- *In the opinion of parents*: critical thinking towards media information; online safety; checking information on truthful platforms, in multiple sources, not relying solely on Artificial Intelligence, knowing the difference between the official source and the press; social and civic skills in the media environment.

These results underline the intention of educational actors to capitalize on the *culture of media communication* in school curricula by respecting the ethics and online safety of students. Thus, we can also con-

firm by monitoring the implementation of optional curricula, but also of school textbooks, methodological guides for *Media education* starting with primary, middle and high school grades that refer to the development of a media culture and the way to provide digital tools through which the student learns: to critically analyze messages; to detect propaganda, censorship or discrimination (including the motivations for these actions) in news or other types of public audio-visual and online programs; to understand how certain structural features – such as the distribution of production means and the financing model – can affect the information presented [8, p. 12-13].

Through the process of monitoring the school subject curricula from the perspective of *new educations*, the school – as the main educational agent – has the role of enabling the learner to have a critical sense, with the ability to understand and respond adequately to various challenges from society, to become increasingly agents of their own training, to organize, structure their own knowledge, to discover on their own, having formed their judgment and future responsibility [8, p. 18]. Thus, the results of the research study offer in a restricted way through the data obtained in Table 4, the needs analysis of an education system integrated into school curricula, focused on *new educations* - transposed didactically through the dimensions of Education for peace and Education for media.

Table 4. Transversal integration of new educations into school curricula: the opinion of educational actors

Nr.	Monitored indicators	Response rate			
		To a large extent	To a large extent	To a large extent	To a large extent
1.	The school subject curriculum addresses <i>Peace Education</i> and <i>Media Education</i> as cross-cutting/transdisciplinary areas.	10.3%	38.2%	44.1%	7.4%
2.	Students are involved in integrative (interdisciplinary) projects with cross-curricular themes about <i>peace</i> and <i>cooperation</i> , about <i>media</i> or <i>communication</i> and <i>mass media</i> .	-	36.8%	54.4%	8.8%
3.	The school offers a climate that supports cooperation, dialogue and the responsible use of <i>digital media</i> .	35.3%	55.9%	8.8%	-
4.	<i>Peace education</i> is integrated into school.	17.6%	35.3%	33.8%	13.2%
5.	<i>Media education</i> is integrated into school.	20.6%	35.3%	26.5%	17.6%
6.	Prospective participation in trainings/activities on “ <i>New educations as factors for the continuous development of school curricula</i> ”.	32.4%	41.2%	17.6%	8.8%

These results provide us with a complex picture of the increased need for new educations through the dimensions of *Peace education* and *Media education* in the curricula of school subjects as transversal/transdisciplinary fields, being to a small extent (44.1%) addressed in school practice. As evidence (54.4%),

there is a need to focus on involving students in integrative (interdisciplinary) projects with cross-curricular themes about *peace and cooperation*, about *media or communication and mass media* within school activities. However, it is encouraging that (55.9%) educational actors have confidence that the school offers a climate that supports cooperation, dialogue and the responsible use of *digital media* for the younger generation. Similar percentages (35.3%) were obtained in the mode of moderate perception of integration in school as desirable educational dimensions - *Peace education* and *Media education*. There is also a major interest (32.4% and 41.2%) in participating in various trainings/ activities on „*New educations as factors for continuous development of school curricula*” from educational actors.

In the category of the open question „What changes do you consider necessary for a better integration of new educations into the curricula of school subjects?” the following answers were presented from:

- *Teachers*: curricular flexibility, the new curriculum must answer the question “What do we learn? Why do we learn? And how does it help us in the real world?”; thematic integration and holistic approach to students’ life skills; efficient prioritization in the professional training of teachers with international partnerships, equipment for technologies in the classroom, state-paid subscriptions for digital tools used by teachers; courses and continuing education programs focused on media education, digital education, education for democratic citizenship and education for peace, etc.; webinars and thematic workshops on violence prevention, nonviolent communication, inclusion and classroom management; educational projects and exchanges of good practices, which aimed at the transversal integration of new educations into curricular and extracurricular activities; introducing key competencies specific to “new educations” in the graduate’s profile; correlating content at an interdisciplinary level (e.g.: ecological education integrated with biology, geography, chemistry; civic education in history and Romanian language, etc.); providing greater autonomy to teachers in choosing methods, examples and activities that capitalize on new educations; applying the transdisciplinary model with examples; real-life case studies; introducing current topics (disinformation, climate change, social inclusion, online security), etc.

- *Students*: normalizing Artificial Intelligence in education so that it is seen as support, not a method of copying/plagiarism; online security; interactive communication in lessons; the curriculum must adapt to current realities: technology, social networks, Artificial Intelligence, climate change, etc.; skills to prepare students for real life, not just for exams; fewer tests and more interactive activities; replacing digital textbooks that make carrying digital textbooks convenient and prevent back pain, etc.

- *Parents*: emphasis on practical skills; updating of content and teaching methods; individual projects guided by teachers that help in the practical development of media skills and the application of knowledge about peace and conflict resolution even among students, etc.

Therefore, the context of monitoring school curricula also relates to the degree of training of teaching and managerial staff for the implementation/operation of the competency-based curriculum from the perspective of *new education*. However, we note a positive trend regarding the participation of the surveyed teachers in such continuing professional training courses as: Education for sustainable development and environmental protection; Education for democratic citizenship and human rights; Digital education and online safety; Education for health and healthy lifestyle; Intercultural education and social inclusion; Financial education; Bullying prevention and conflict management in the school environment; Education for volunteering and community involvement; Critical thinking and media education; Education for equal opportunities and non-discrimination; DigiProf; Online safety and personal data protection; Responsible communication in the digital environment; Integration of media education in traditional lessons, etc.

Respondents also have the following categories of expectations in the process of disseminating the results of the empirical study:

- the integration of new educations into the curriculum needs to be carried out coherently and applicatively, through interdisciplinary approaches, continuous training of teachers and the development of clear tools for evaluating the acquired skills, so that the school can truly respond to the current needs of students and society;

- expanding the study by including a more diverse sample of participants (teachers, students, parents and school managers), in order to obtain a more complex perspective on how to integrate new educations into

the curriculum. We also recommend correlating the research results with concrete intervention proposals (methodological guides, models of good practices, continuous training programs), so that the conclusions of the study have practical applicability at the institutional level;

- *Peace education* and *Media education* – as dimensions of new educations – contribute to the formation of the personality of the student, responsible, balanced and capable of facing the challenges of contemporary society;

- to include media skills, I would suggest continuous training of teachers and the development of practical, communicative and digital skills in all educational institutions;

- strengthening the integration of new education through an interdisciplinary approach, updating curricular content, continuous training of teachers and developing assessment tools focused on skills, it is also necessary to monitor the impact of the application of these measures at the institutional level.

In **conclusion**, the empirical study conducted represents a database as a point of analysis and reflection for curriculum designers in the perspective of the further development of the new generation school curriculum focused on the values of new educations by promoting efficient implementation and monitoring methodologies. In the vision of the educational actors participating in this study, *new educations* need to become a natural part of each school subject in the national curriculum, supporting the formation of the student as an active, responsible and emotionally balanced citizen in the face of the challenges of society.

Finally, monitoring school curricula in the context of new educations – especially the analyzed dimensions Peace education and Media education – offers the following pedagogical constants:

- the need to contextualize new educations through learning situations at the local/ regional/ institutional level;
- integrating the culture of peace and the culture of media communication in the teaching process;
- expanding and developing new educations - Peace education and Media education – through school activities, such as: Intercultural education, Human rights education, Education for society; Anti-bullying education, Digital education, etc.;

- curricular design of the dimensions of new educations – especially that of Peace education, the concept of designing an optional curriculum is missing;

- determining the types of curricular products on the dimensions of the new educations;

- training of teaching and managerial staff on the integration of the dimensions of new education in accordance with the development of the concept of the new generation school curriculum.

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RESEARCH ON EDUCATIONAL MENTORING IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (2014 -2025): AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

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The article presents an integrative review of research on educational mentoring in the Republic of Moldova, based on 47 scientific articles, PhD theses, methodological guides, and papers from academic conferences published between 2014 and 2025 and selected according to PRISMA criteria. The aim of study is to analyze thematic directions, methodological approaches, and the main results of national studies on mentoring, as well as to identify directions for future research. The results of analysis highlight a gradual increase in the complexity and diversification of research topics, as well as their alignment with the educational policies promoted by the Ministry of Education and Research during specific periods. The methodological analysis indicates the predominance of qualitative and exploratory studies at the beginning of analyzed period, followed by a gradual increase in quantitative and mixed-methods studies. The analyzed research shows relative conceptual convergence, but remains less developed from an empirical and methodological perspective. The results of integrative review highlight the main gaps in the field and outline directions for the further development of research on educational mentoring.

Keywords: *mentor; educational mentoring; professional development; teaching staff; Republic of Moldova.*

CERCETĂRILE PRIVIND MENTORATUL EDUCAȚIONAL ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA (2014 -2025): O REVIZUIRE INTEGRATIVĂ

Articolul prezintă o analiză integrativă a cercetărilor privind mentoratul educațional în Republica Moldova, realizată pe baza a 47 de articole științifice, teze de doctorat, ghiduri metodologice și lucrări din conferințe academice, publicate între 2014 și 2025 și selectate conform criteriilor PRISMA. Scopul cercetării: analiza direcțiilor tematiche, a abordărilor metodologice și a rezultatelor principale din studiile naționale privind mentoratul și identificarea direcțiilor de cercetare viitoare. Rezultatele analizei evidențiază creșterea graduală a complexității și diversificarea temelor abordate în cercetări, precum și alinierea tematică la politicile educaționale promovate de MEC în perioade concrete. Analiza metodologică arată predominanța studiilor calitative și exploratorii la începutul perioadei analizate, cu o creștere a studiilor cantitative și mixte ulterior. Cercetările analizate sunt relativ convergente în plan conceptual, însă mai puțin dezvoltate empiric și metodologic. Rezultatele revizuirii integrative evidențiază principalele lacune ale cercetărilor din domeniu și conturează direcții pentru dezvoltarea cercetărilor viitoare privind mentoratul educațional.

Cuvinte-cheie: *mentor; mentorat educațional; dezvoltare profesională; cadre didactice; Republica Moldova.*

Introduction

Educational mentoring is internationally recognized as an essential practice for the professional development of teachers [3]. TALIS study data show that mentoring supports the development of teaching competences and increases job satisfaction [12]. According to the same study, the majority of school principals consider mentoring to be an important practice for the professional development of teachers.

Research on educational mentoring has developed significantly in the international literature in recent decades. The international literature provides a solid theoretical framework. The theories of experiential learning and reflection on practice, as articulated by Dewey and Schön, emphasize the role of reflection in professional development [2, 14]. The theory of situational learning and the concept of communities of practice, proposed by Lave and Wenger, show that novice teachers learn through gradual participation in the activities of professional communities [10, 15]. Kram described mentoring as a relationship that fulfills both career development and psychosocial functions [9]. Feiman-Nemser highlighted that mentoring helps novice teachers integrate

into the profession and develop their professional identity [4]. More recent studies confirm that mentoring supports the development of teaching competences and teacher retention in the education system [7, 8]. However, it is noted that there is no unanimously accepted definition of mentoring and the mentor's roles. Approaches differ depending on the context, professional traditions and educational policies [1].

In this context, the recent study by Mitescu-Manea and colleagues compares mentoring practices in Romania and the Republic of Moldova [11]. The authors highlight differences related to pedagogical traditions and educational policies, but also similarities in terms of support for novice teachers and continuous professional development. The study shows how mentoring is adapted to the national context, highlighting both similarities and local specificities [8]. During the Soviet period, in the Republic of Moldova, there was the concept of *nastavnicestvo* (*guided induction*). It described a hierarchical relationship between an experienced and a novice teacher. Modern mentoring does not have such characteristics.

In the Republic of Moldova, research in the field of educational mentoring has evolved significantly since the approval of the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152/2014, which defines the concept of mentor and mentoring and regulated mentoring activity, through Articles 3, 19, 55, 58, and 134 [13]. Since then, research in the field has intensified, analyzing both theoretical and applied aspects. The specialized literature includes scientific articles, academic studies and methodological works that analyze the role of the mentor, the competences required for this role and the impact of mentoring on the professional development of teachers. However, this research is dispersed, and synthetic analyses that provide an overview of the evolution of research in the field are relatively few. In this context, this article aims to analyze the literature on educational mentoring in the Republic of Moldova by applying the PRISMA guidelines, which allows for the rigorous selection of relevant studies and ensures the transparency of the review process.

This integrative review aims to identify and analyze research on educational mentoring conducted in the Republic of Moldova during the period 2014-2025. The review examines the thematic areas addressed in national studies, the methodological approaches used, as well as the main results reported, in order to outline the current state of research in the field and identify relevant directions for future investigations.

Research Methodology

The integrative literature review was conducted in accordance with the recommendations of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guideline. The identification and analysis of scientific publications related to educational mentoring in the context of the educational system of the Republic of Moldova was carried out in accordance with the PRISMA criteria. The literature search was conducted in two academic databases: Google Scholar and the National Bibliometric Instrument (IBN). In both databases, several search queries in Romanian, English and Russian were used. In Google Scholar, we applied queries such as "*mentorat educațional Moldova*", ("*educational mentoring*" OR "*teacher mentoring*" OR "*mentorat educațional*") AND (Moldova OR "*Republic of Moldova*"), "*intitle: mentoring Moldova education*", as well as "*наставничество образование Молдова*". The advanced search option was also used to identify studies published in the period 2014-2025. To complete the results, the *Cited by*, *Related Articles* and *Bibliographic Lists* of relevant publications were also analyzed.

Through this strategy, 116 publications were identified in Google Scholar and 86 publications in the IBN database, resulting in a total of 202 papers. After merging the results from the two databases, 97 duplicate publications were eliminated, leaving 105 papers for the screening stage. During this stage, the titles and abstracts of the studies were analyzed, and 42 publications were excluded because mentoring was not the primary focus of the research.

Thus, 63 papers were assessed for eligibility through full-text analysis. Following the application of inclusion criteria, 16 papers were excluded, for the following reasons: essay-like or reflective articles without scientific substantiation ($n = 2$), studies on mentoring conducted or presented at scientific conferences in the Republic of Moldova that analyzed the specifics of mentoring in other countries ($n = 5$), and papers on mentoring in other professional fields, such as social work, medicine or entrepreneurship ($n = 9$). Finally, 47 studies were included in the systematic literature review. The PRISMA diagram illustrated the study selection process for the integrative review.

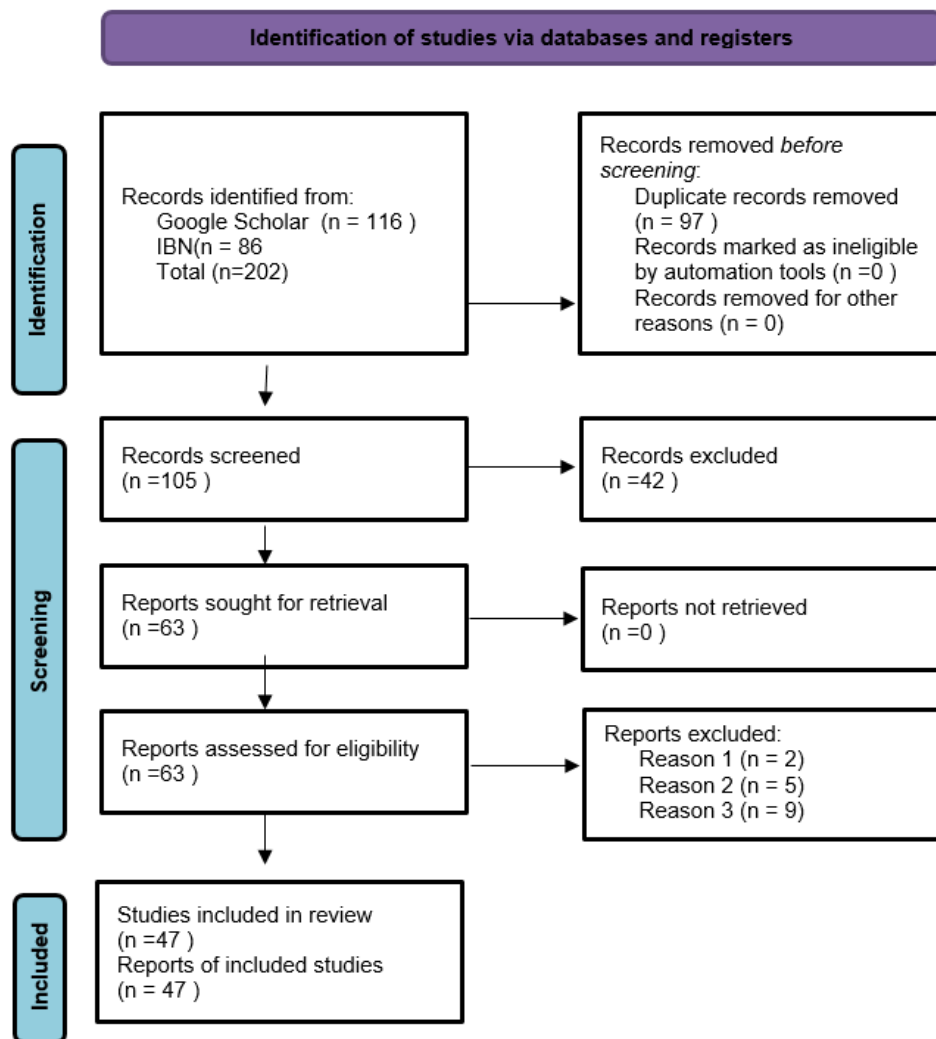


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

The studies included in the final sample (n = 47) are presented in *Appendix 1*. For each publication, the year of publication, type of publication, research objective, methodological approach used and main results were recorded. The main characteristics of the reviewed studies are presented in the following section.

Results of Integrative Review

a. Dynamics of Studies' Publication

The analysis of studies on educational mentoring in the Republic of Moldova shows a fluctuating trend in scientific interest over the period 2014-2025. The dynamics of study publication highlights two moments of significant intensification of research. The first peak, recorded in 2016, can be interpreted as a response of the academic community to the introduction of concept of mentoring in the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152/2014 [13], which established the legal framework for the development of mentoring activities in the educational system. For the first time, mentoring was explicitly included in the national regulatory framework, which contributed to the increase in interest in the analysis of this phenomenon in the specialized literature. The second peak, recorded in 2024, coincides with the consolidation of institutional and regulatory framework on mentoring in the educational system. During this period, important normative acts were adopted, such as Government Decision No. 807/2023 on the organization and functioning of the Public Institution National Institute for Education and Leadership (NIEL) [6] and Government Decision No. 608/2024 on the approval of the Regulation on mentoring activity [5]. This evolution suggests that research on educational mentoring is influenced by the dynamics of educational policies and reflects the structural changes occurring within the education system of the Republic of Moldova.

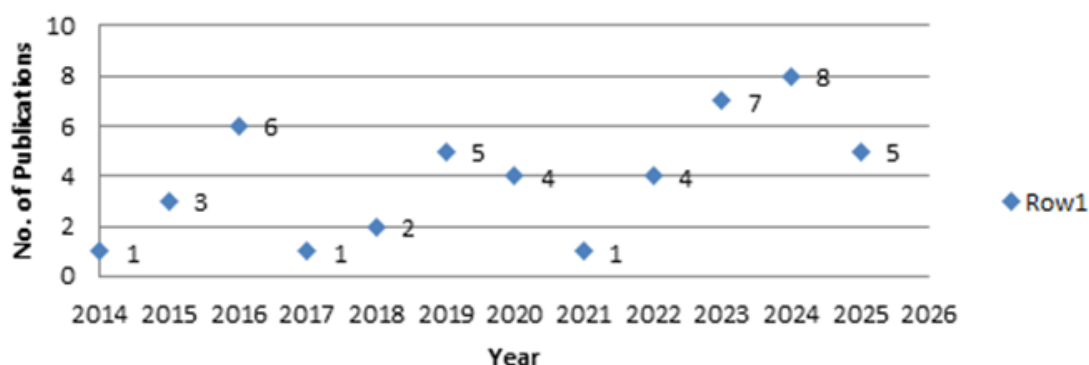


Figure 2. Dynamics of Research in Educational Mentoring Field in 2014-2025 Period

b. Typology of Publications

The analysis of the type of publications highlights the main channels for the dissemination of research on educational mentoring in the Republic of Moldova. Of the total of **47 studies** included in the analysis, **19 (40%)** are articles published in national scientific journals, and **4 (8.5%)** articles were published in international scientific journals. A significant number of studies (**22 - 47%**) are published in **conference proceedings**, which indicates the important role of these academic events in promoting and discussing research results in the field. At the same time, the analysis also identified **a PhD thesis** and **a methodological guide**, which complement the corpus of analyzed studies and reflect the interest in developing theoretical foundations and practical tools regarding educational mentoring. The distribution of publication types suggests that research in the field of educational mentoring is disseminated predominantly in the national academic space and at scientific conferences, while its presence in international journals remains relatively limited.

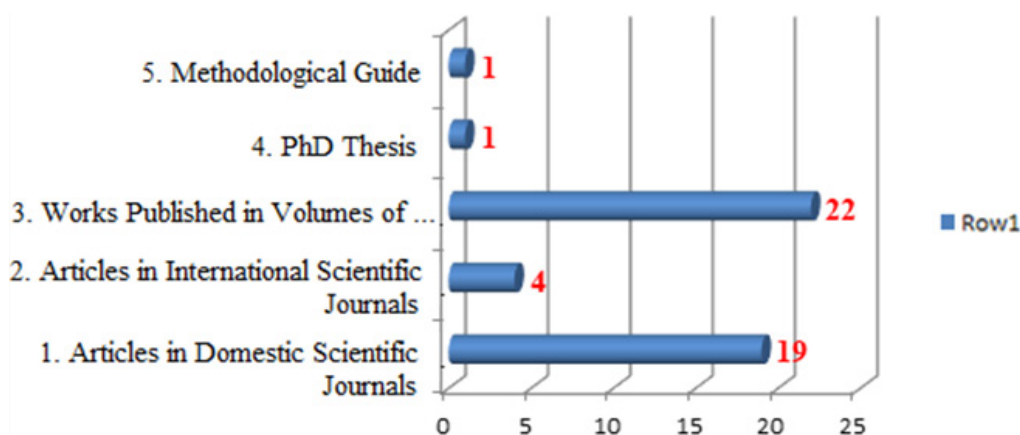


Figure 3. Typology and Number of Publications

c. Methodological Approaches

The analysis of studies included in the integrative review highlights the diversity of methodological approaches used in research on educational mentoring. According to the criterion of research method, the most frequent are qualitative studies (36 – 77%), followed by mixed studies (7- 15%) and quantitative studies (4 – 8.5%).

From the perspective of the research purpose, most studies are explanatory (18 – 38%), followed by descriptive studies (15 – 32%) and exploratory studies (14 – 30%).

The data by year indicate an increase in mixed studies in the period 2022–2024, what suggests a growing interest in the in-depth analysis of the mentoring phenomenon and in understanding the institutional contexts in which it develops. This interest can be explained by the system-wide implementation of mentoring programs, a process coordinated by NIEL. Most of the mixed studies analyzed mainly highlight connections between variables, without validating cause-and-effect relationships. In addition, the unit of measurement is often subjective, based on the perceptions of participants involved in the mentoring process, such

as novice teachers or mentors. This affects the robustness and generalizability of the findings. The implementation of mentoring at the system level is still in its early stages. Mixed and quantitative research on this process is also in its infancy. However, this is not an justify the lack of solid studies; rigorous research can be conducted even in the early stages of a program, providing important evidence for the improvement and development of mentoring.

Compared to the international literature, research from the Republic of Moldova is still empirically limited. The number of studies based on mixed methods or longitudinal analyses is relatively small, which limits the assessment of mentoring's impact of on the professional performance of teachers and on the quality of educational process. In this context, the development of broader research programs and the use of diversified methodological tools could contribute to advancing understanding of the mentoring phenomenon and to the substantiation of evidence-based educational policies.

d. Thematic Directions Addressed in Analyzed Studies

The analysis of research on educational mentoring in the Republic of Moldova shows a clear transition from conceptual concerns to complex and applied approaches. Between 2014 and 2016, studies focused on the theoretical foundation of mentoring. Researchers clarified the concepts of mentor, mentee and mentorship, argued the need for mentoring and highlighted the essential competences of the mentor. During this period, more specific themes began to emerge, such as mentoring for teachers in the context of inclusive education, the development of theoretical models and the introduction of *coaching* concept into discussions about mentoring. These directions reflect the concerns of educational policies of the respective period. Between 2017 and 2019, research was mainly exploratory and explanatory, with a qualitative predominance. Mentoring had not been officially implemented, and studies focused on understanding the phenomenon. Topics covered included the influence of mentoring on internships in higher education, evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs, the impact on teacher motivation, student behavior, and competences' development. This stage contributed to building a conceptual framework for mentoring.

The 2020-2022 period highlighted the focus on mentoring for the professional insertion of beginners, including in early childhood education institutions. Studies analyzed mentoring from pedagogical, sociological, and interactionist perspectives. Throughout the 2014-2025 period, approximately 10 research studies dedicated to mentoring beginners were identified, signaling a constant interest in this topic.

Although the 2014 Education Code mentions three types of mentoring – pedagogical practice, professional insertion and continuous professional development – research dedicated to mentoring for professional development appeared only in 2022 and was approached tangentially until 2025. This indicates a later understanding and acceptance of this type of mentoring.

In the period 2023-2025, research became more complex and diversified. Topics targeted mentoring in higher education, mentoring focused on pedagogical reflection, program optimization and the development of methodological guides. Recent studies explored the challenges and solutions for implementing mentoring programs and for continuous professional development, while maintaining attention to the mentoring of beginners. This stage reflects the maturation of the field and the transition from exploratory analyses to interdisciplinary and applicative approaches, aligned with recent reforms and the current educational context.

In conclusion, the analysis of themes highlights a coherent evolutionary path. Initial conceptual concerns were gradually complemented by applied and multidimensional studies. Mentoring of novices remains a central theme throughout the period, while themes related to professional development, mentoring in higher education and pedagogical reflection appear only in recent years, signaling the progressive adaptation of research to new educational contexts and the needs of the education system.

Conclusions and Perspectives for Future Research in Educational Mentoring

The integrative review of the literature on educational mentoring in the Republic of Moldova highlights a progressive evolution of scientific interest in this field during the period 2014–2025. The studies analyzed reflect the gradual development of research, from conceptual and theoretical approaches to applied and interdisciplinary investigations. Significantly, the research covers all three types of mentoring specified in the Education Code: practice mentoring, which supports the initial integration of teachers into the school

environment and the formation of basic competences; mentoring for the professional insertion of novice teachers, which facilitates adaptation, increased autonomy and the development of professional identity; and mentoring for continuous professional development, which supports the consolidation of pedagogical competences and reflection throughout the career. In this way, the literature shows that the field of mentoring is approached from the perspective of both initial support and sustainable professional development.

The research analyzed highlights that mentoring contributes to the development of professional and personal competences, including teaching, managerial, digital and interpersonal skills, as well as to the strengthening of pedagogical reflection and the capacity for self-assessment and planning. Mentoring also supports the professional integration of novice teachers, facilitating adaptation to the institutional environment, increasing motivation and active involvement in the educational process, while methodological support and value-based mentoring contribute to promoting inclusion and reducing aggressive behavior. The impact of mentoring also extends to the organizational level, by supporting a collaborative culture, strengthening communities of practice and increasing the quality of the educational process, while management's involvement, adequate resources and the appropriate regulatory framework remain essential factors for the success of programs.

However, the literature review highlights several important gaps. Most of the existing studies are qualitative or conceptual, and detailed longitudinal and quantitative research is limited. Studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive perspective on the impact of mentoring are still few. There is also an imbalance in the types of mentoring studied: novice mentoring receives the most attention, while other forms – continuing professional development mentoring, value-based mentoring, group mentoring or interdisciplinary mentoring – remain underexplored. Research on mentoring of experienced teachers, mentors, management teams or rural and vocational education institutions is also limited.

Based on these observations, future research should focus on developing longitudinal studies that allow for the assessment of mentoring's impact on teachers' professional development and performance in the long term. The use of mixed methods, integrating quantitative and qualitative perspectives, can generate stronger evidence and support the development of standardized instruments for assessing the competences, motivation and impact of mentoring. In addition, future studies should explore different forms of mentoring, including group mentoring, value mentoring, and interdisciplinary mentoring, as well as mentoring of managers and institutional teams, to understand how individual development can support institutional transformation. Investigating diverse contexts, including rural institutions, small schools, and underrepresented communities, will help ensure the equity and relevance of research results.

At the same time, integrating international good practices, adapted to the cultural specificity and level of training of staff and institutions in the Republic of Moldova, can be a valuable direction for future studies. Developing flexible methodological guidelines, continuous evaluation of programs through direct feedback and analysis of institutional data, as well as promoting integrated mentoring and coaching programs, can support the effective application of mentoring at the system level, with an impact on institutional performance, staff retention, and organizational culture.

Overall, the literature review confirms that educational mentoring is an essential strategic mechanism for the professional development of teachers and for the modernization of education system. Strengthening empirical research and implementing well-founded institutional programs can valorize the potential of this tool, contributing to increasing the quality of education and the sustainable development of the school system in the Republic of Moldova.

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Appendix 1. List of Works Included in Integrative Review of Educational Mentoring

No.	Author	Year	Title
1	Antoci, D., Mislitchi, V., Diacon, M.	2020	Mentoring valorization in combating violent and aggressive behavior in preadolescence and adolescence
2	Andrițchi, V., Balan, T.	2015	Theoretical approaches to mentoring from the perspective of professional development
3	Andrițchi, V., Șova, T.	2025	International and national models and practices in the field of mentoring
4	Armașu-Cantîr, L., Kichuk, N., Ivanova, D.	2024	Mentoring in teaching education
5	Axinte, R.	2017	Career and professional success through mentoring
6	Balan, T.	2015	Historical evolution of mentoring in education
7	Balan, T.	2015	Mentoring for professional development – a perspective for implementing educational reforms in the Republic of Moldova

No.	Author	Year	Title
8	Balan, T.	2016	Peculiarities of valorization of mentoring in the professional development of the teaching staff
9	Balan, T.	2016	System of specific mentor competences for the professional development of teachers
10	Balan, T., Andrițchi, V.	2015	Psychological benchmarks of mentoring activity in the context of professional development
11	Botnari, I.	2016	Role of mentoring in the professional development of teachers
12	Caluțchi, D.	2024	Continuous training of novice teachers in early education institutions
13	Cara, A., Lungu, T.	2016	Mentoring activities implemented within the project “Integration of children with disabilities in mainstream schools”
14	Carauș, I.	2018	Determinants of the effectiveness of internship
15	Cazacu, L.	2023	Mentoring activity in early education - challenges and solutions
16	Cazacu, L.	2024	Experimental benchmarks of mentoring activity in the opinion of teachers from early childhood education institutions
17	Cazacu, L.	2025	Trends in continuous professional development of teachers in preschool education through mentoring activity
18	Cebanu (Slutu), L.	2020	Ways of professional integration of novice teachers in the educational process
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DEVELOPING TEACHERS' COMPETENCE IN PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN A DIGITAL CONTEXT

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The design of promoting educational services in a digital context involves planning and delivering online marketing communication to persuade beneficiaries to engage with educational offerings, combining four key components: identifying the target group, creating the marketing message, selecting communication channels, and integrating feedback. Developing teachers' competence in promoting educational services in a digital environment is a complex and imperative process, involving participation in training situations aimed at acquiring a set of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes aligned with these four components. This article presents a series of specific strategies focused on developing this competence, providing a guiding framework for the continuous professional development of teaching staff and strengthening the capacity of educational institutions to respond effectively to the demands and challenges of the digital education market.

Keywords: *competence, competence in promoting educational services, digital environment, strategies, teaching staff.*

DEZVOLTAREA COMPETENȚEI DE PROMOVARE A SERVICIILOR EDUCAȚIONALE ÎN CONTEXT DIGITAL LA CADRELE DIDACTICE

Designul promovării serviciilor educaționale în context digital presupune proiectarea și furnizarea comunicării de marketing online pentru a-i convinge pe beneficiari să acceseze ofertele educaționale, prin îmbinarea următoarelor componente: identificarea grupului țintă, crearea mesajului de marketing, selectarea canalelor de comunicare și integrarea feedbackului. Dezvoltarea competenței de promovare a serviciilor educaționale în context digital reprezintă un proces complex și imperativ, prin implicarea cadrului didactic în situații de formare care urmăresc achiziționarea unui ansamblu de cunoștințe, capacități, valori și atitudini în cheia celor patru componente. În prezentul articol sunt reflectate un șir de strategii specifice, orientate spre dezvoltarea acestei competențe, care constituie un cadru orientativ pentru formarea continuă a cadrelor didactice și pentru consolidarea capacității instituțiilor de a răspunde eficient cerințelor și provocărilor pieței educaționale digitale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competență, competența de promovare a serviciilor educaționale, mediu digital, strategii, cadre didactice.*

Introduction

The growing role of education in building a knowledge-based society, together with globalization, internationalization of the educational services market, and negative demographic trends, places educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova in a highly competitive environment. In this context, an institution's market performance depends on its ability to accurately assess current realities, understand the functioning of the educational market, and adapt strategically to change. Given the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the current environment, institutions must transform challenges into opportunities, revising their vision, educational offerings, and marketing strategies to remain relevant and competitive [10, p. 4].

In the context of the growing importance of digital education, the European Union has launched the Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, a policy initiative designed to support the sustainable and effective adaptation of education and training systems in EU member states to the digital era [7, p. 3].

As digital technologies advance, the educational process becomes increasingly visible and accessible through online platforms, digital resources, and interactive tools. This transition necessitates the development of effective strategies for promoting educational services in digital formats, capable of attracting and

retaining prospective learners. Today's generations select institutions and study programs under the influence of online environments, taking into account reviews, social media presence, and digital marketing strategies.

In this context, adopting an integrated digital marketing approach becomes essential for educational institutions. Managing the development of competence in promoting educational services in a digital context is a global imperative, given the expansion of digital technologies across all areas of social, economic, political, and cultural life. Integrating these technologies into education transforms digital promotion competence into a necessary skill for teaching staff to meet the demands of educational marketing in the digital era.

Therefore, digital marketing is not merely an operational tool but a strategic mechanism for adapting to the dynamics of the contemporary environment, contributing to the relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of educational institutions in a competitive educational market.

The Specifics of Promoting Educational Services in a Digital Context

Under current conditions, no institution can afford to operate without a clear vision, both in the short term and the long term, that ensures not only its very existence but also its rationality and efficiency in an environment that is becoming increasingly complex and dynamic.

In response to the multiple changes occurring in both the microenvironment and the macroenvironment in which it operates, an institution must adopt a specific behavioral and attitudinal stance. This stance materializes in the delineation of strategic directions and the practical modalities for their implementation, and is reflected in the content of the institution's marketing policy [2, p. 310].

Communication and the development of an educational institution's image in the market—through public relations and advertising—within the framework of marketing strategies constitute a particularly important objective, as they fundamentally contribute both to increasing the demand for the specific services provided and to enhancing their perceived quality [2, p. 310].

Indeed, “without the ability to attract students, teachers, specialists, facilities, and equipment, schools will cease to exist” [2, p. 313]. The acquisition of resources is achieved through exchange. Educational institutions offer courses, educational programs, career preparation, and other services on the education market. In return, they receive the necessary resources: tuition fees, donations, time, energy, and positive word-of-mouth from parents.

In the context of digitalization, one of the fundamental objectives in the field of communication policy for educational institutions is the extensive use of online promotional opportunities. This task is inherently complex and entails the implementation of a set of actions, such as the development and continuous optimization of the institution's official website, promotion through search engines, the strategic use of social media platforms, and ensuring a consistent presence on various educational portals and forums [11, p. 118].

The promotion of educational services in the digital context has become an essential necessity in the era of advanced technology, shaped by rapid transformations in the field of education and evolving market demands. This approach involves the use of diverse digital tools and platforms to attract and inform prospective beneficiaries about the educational offering.

Beyond adapting to emerging technologies, educational institutions must enhance their visibility and attractiveness through well-designed digital marketing strategies. Search engine optimization (SEO), social media advertising, and video content represent only a few of the instruments that, when employed effectively, can engage diverse audiences and foster a dynamic educational community [9].

At the same time, the creation of relevant and valuable content is essential to addressing students' needs and to building a relationship of trust between institutions and prospective learners. Accessibility and inclusion likewise constitute key components of this transformation, ensuring that all users, regardless of their abilities, can benefit from the available educational resources.

The continuous evaluation of the impact of digital marketing strategies is vital for the adaptation and ongoing improvement of these initiatives. By leveraging web analytics and user feedback, institutions can respond promptly to shifts in consumer preferences and optimize the educational experience they provide. Thus, within this continuously evolving educational landscape, institutions that adopt a proactive and innovative approach will have the greatest prospects for success [8, p. 59].

Therefore, the promotion of educational services in the digital context represents an imperative and complex process, requiring the consideration of multiple *dimensions*, including:

- *Continuous professional development of teaching staff* represents a strategic pillar in the promotion of educational services within the digital context, as it ensures the ongoing updating of technological, pedagogical, and communication competencies necessary for the effective integration of digital tools into the educational process. It encompasses not only the use of technology, but also the development of educational marketing skills, the construction of a relevant online presence, and the creation of interactive content capable of attracting and sustaining students' interest. Participation in specialized courses and workshops enables teachers to capitalize on learning platforms as flexible and collaborative environments, thereby increasing student engagement and motivation. At the same time, investment in continuous professional development contributes to strengthening an organizational culture oriented toward innovation, quality, and adaptability, with a positive impact on academic performance [3].

- *The creation of a digital educational ecosystem* entails the development of an appropriate technological infrastructure, characterized by reliable internet connectivity and access to modern devices—essential conditions for the effective delivery of online educational activities. Such an ecosystem integrates accessible, user-friendly, and adaptable educational resources that allow for the personalization of the learning process according to students' diverse needs and learning styles. By fostering collaboration and interaction in the digital environment, it creates opportunities for more dynamic and inclusive education. The implementation of a coherent strategy in this regard contributes to the formation of an active educational community and to preparing students for the demands of an increasingly digitalized society [5].

- *Community engagement and the development of strategic partnerships* constitute an essential dimension in strengthening the capacity to promote educational services in the digital environment, by facilitating access to complementary resources, expertise, and perspectives. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations can support initiatives related to digital inclusion and lifelong learning, while partnerships with the private sector may provide the technological and financial support necessary for the implementation of innovative solutions. Moreover, cooperation with other educational institutions encourages the exchange of best practices and the professional development of teaching staff within a collaborative framework. Through such an integrated approach, a dynamic educational ecosystem can be established, capable of responding to current challenges and generating sustainable solutions [6].

- *The use of digital marketing* in promoting educational services involves the strategic capitalization of social media platforms and online tools in order to build an authentic and sustainable relationship with the target audience. In an increasingly competitive educational environment, the personalization of messages according to students' characteristics, interests, and behaviors becomes a decisive factor in communication effectiveness. The collection of feedback through surveys and digital interactions enables the continuous adjustment of campaigns and enhances the relevance of the transmitted content. Thus, digital marketing extends beyond mere promotion, contributing to the development of active educational communities and to strengthening the institution's competitive positioning in the market [4].

- *Impact evaluation and the systematic integration of feedback* form the foundation of a sustainable strategy for promoting educational services in the digital context, as they enable the assessment of implemented actions and the identification of areas for optimization. The use of analytical tools facilitates the collection and interpretation of data regarding user engagement, message visibility, and content relevance. At the same time, direct feedback from students and other beneficiaries provides essential qualitative insights for refining strategies and improving the educational experience. By establishing a continuous mechanism of monitoring and adaptation, institutions consolidate trust-based relationships with their communities and ensure the long-term effectiveness of their educational initiatives [1].

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the promotion of educational services in the digital context involves multiple dimensions that leverage technology to enhance accessibility, relevance, and the effectiveness of communication with prospective beneficiaries. Adaptability to emerging technologies and the continuous assessment of impact are essential for the success of these initiatives.

Particularities of Teachers' Competence in Promoting Educational Services in a Digital Context

The explosive global development of information and communication technologies presents educational institutions with multiple challenges that cannot be ignored. As a result of technological advancement, a generation has emerged that is more modern (neoteric) than previous ones. Generation Y is now being replaced by Generations Z (born between 1995–2010) and Alpha (born between 2011–2025), which are “technology-savvy” generations [12, p. 89].

Currently targeting Generation Z representatives—nicknamed “digital natives”—educational institutions are still in the process of adapting their strategies to the behavioral characteristics of this generation. Their modes of interaction, learning habits, and values have changed significantly. They are accustomed to rapid information flows and process information differently. Their learning is characterized by a preference for speed, nonlinear processing, multitasking, efficient use of technology, individualism (versus teamwork), and personalized work [13, p. 206].

Although still insufficiently studied, Generation Alpha is, according to researchers, quite distinct from previous generations, mainly because their reality and all aspects of life have been dominated by technology [14, p. 784]. Such heterogeneity among beneficiary segments poses a series of challenges for educational institutions, related to diversifying educational offerings, delivery methods, and the promotion of educational services, thereby requiring financial, logistical, managerial, and marketing decisions at the institutional level.

In this context, the competence to promote educational services in a digital environment becomes imperative.

The design of educational service promotion in the digital context involves planning and delivering marketing communication (online) aimed at persuading beneficiaries (students, parents, etc.) to engage with educational offerings, by combining the following **components** of educational service promotion:

1. **Identifying the target group** involves a deep understanding of the characteristics, motivations, and digital behavior of beneficiaries, such as students and parents. This includes demographic, psychographic, and lifestyle analysis, as well as online consumption habits. By clearly segmenting the audience, marketing messages can be tailored to resonate with the specific needs and expectations of each group. For example, students may be attracted to interactive content or educational apps, while parents may respond to safety assurances and tangible results. This approach increases communication relevance and the effectiveness of campaigns.

2. **Creating the marketing message** entails developing clear, attractive, and persuasive content that highlights the benefits of educational services, combining rational and emotional elements with an effective call-to-action. The message must be adapted to the specific audience and communication channel. For example, promoting an innovative program can combine student performance statistics with inspirational stories. For flexible programs, messages can emphasize the advantages of online or hybrid learning and personalized learning opportunities. Thus, the message becomes a strategic tool that drives engagement and enrollment decisions.

3. **Selecting communication channels** requires careful analysis of the target audience's preferences and behavior to maximize message impact. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook can be used for visually engaging content for students and detailed information for parents. Google Ads and SEO facilitate capturing search intent and quick access to relevant information. Webinars, educational videos, and partnerships with influencers or educational blogs enhance credibility and engagement. A multiplatform strategy ensures efficient coverage and adapts messages to each audience segment.

4. **Integrating feedback** involves collecting and analyzing beneficiary opinions through surveys, reviews, comments, and online interactions. This information allows for message adjustments, channel optimization, and improvement of educational services. For example, questions or suggestions received on social media can be used to clarify and refine promotional content. Direct interactions, such as live chats, enable personalized communication and rapid response to beneficiaries' needs. In this way, feedback becomes a vital tool for the continuous improvement of digital marketing strategies.

The structural components of the competence for promoting educational services in a digital context are based on a system of approaches from the fields of marketing and educational management, such as: the Kano Model, the “3I” Theory—interest, initiative, image, Social Exchange Theory, and others.

Developing the competence to promote educational services in a digital context is a complex process that involves teachers in specific training contexts, aiming at acquiring a set of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of the Competence for Promoting Educational Services in a Digital Context among Teachers

Components of Promoting Educational Services in a Digital Context	Dimensions of Competence		
	Knowledge “Knowing”	Skills “Knowing How to Do”	Values and Attitudes “Knowing How to Take a Stand”
Identifying the Target Group	- possesses knowledge regarding the demographic and psychographic characteristics of potential students; - recognizes the psychobehavioral patterns of the target audience in the digital environment (platforms used, ways of interacting with educational content, etc.).	- collects feedback from various sources (surveys, discussions, focus groups) in order to better understand the expectations and needs of potential educational stakeholders; - selects and/or applies specific tools for identifying the target group in a digital context.	- demonstrates openness and curiosity toward the use of digital platforms to identify the needs of the target group (students, parents, etc.); - shows flexibility and adaptability in situations involving the identification of the target group through digital means.
Creating the Marketing Message	- possesses knowledge about the structure of a promotional message and educational services in a digital context; - distinguishes the types of elements in a marketing message in online communication.	- designs persuasive, clear, and attractive online marketing content; - adapts the marketing message to the specific needs of the target audience (demographics, behavior, preferences).	- demonstrates motivation in disseminating promotional messages about educational offerings in a digital context; - provides evidence of accuracy and relevance in the process of creating the marketing message in a digital context.
Selecting Communication Channels	- possesses knowledge regarding accessible communication channels and the interests of the target audience; - identifies online communication channels relevant for delivering marketing content in a convincing and attractive way.	- observes the effectiveness of different online channels and adjusts communication sources based on communication efficiency; - participates in transmitting messages about educational offerings in a digital context.	- shows initiative in promoting educational offerings in a digital context; - demonstrates critical thinking in the process of selecting communication channels for promoting educational services in a digital context.
Integrating Feedback	- possesses knowledge about methods of collecting feedback online from students, parents, etc., regarding educational offerings; - distinguishes techniques and methods of feedback in online marketing communication.	- designs feedback collection situations in a digital context; - optimizes communication channels regarding educational offerings based on the feedback received from the target group.	- demonstrates responsibility in utilizing feedback provided by students, parents, etc., with the aim of improving the promotion of educational services in a digital context; - exhibits a tolerant attitude focused on the opinions of the target group.

The development of competencies in promoting educational services in the digital context represents a crucial factor for the ability of educational institutions to respond effectively to current challenges and trends in the educational market, ensuring visibility, relevance, attractiveness, and continuous adaptability to the diverse needs of beneficiaries, as well as competitiveness in the contemporary educational environment.

Strategies for Developing Teachers' Competence in Promoting Educational Services in a Digital Context

To support the development of competencies in promoting educational services in the digital context among teaching staff, a series of specific strategies have been developed, presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Strategies for developing competencies in promoting educational services in the digital context among teaching staff

Component 1. Identifying the Target Group		
Strategy	Goal	Example of Activities (name and outcome)
Strategy: Digital Observer	Enhancing the ability to identify and interpret the expectations, needs, and psychobehavioral patterns of the target group in the digital context.	“Five-Second Test – Instant Digital Impact” Outcome: Practicing the ability to quickly assess the impact of a digital post (poster, video, text) on the target group (students, parents, etc.). “My Audience’s Digital Profile” Outcome: Understanding audience segmentation (students, parents, etc.) and adapting messages to their needs and psychology.
Strategy: Application of Tools for Identifying the Needs and Interests of the Target Group in the Digital Context	Developing the ability to use relevant tools to identify the needs and interests of the target group in the digital context.	“Digital Radar – What Signals Do Parents and Students Give Me?” Outcome: Identifying subtle cues in online comments, reactions, and questions that reflect interest, hesitation, or rejection. “Digital Mini-Survey – What Does My Audience Want?” Outcome: Becoming familiar with tools for collecting data on the expectations and needs of students and parents (e.g., Google Forms, Mentimeter, Slido).
Component 2. Creating the Marketing Message		
Strategy: Crafting Educational Marketing Messages	Developing the ability to craft educational marketing messages.	“Scroll Like an Observer – What Catches the Eye, What Causes Rejection?” Outcome: Developing the ability to interpret the (visible and invisible) reactions of the target group to digital educational content (posts, posters, announcements, campaigns). “Write Your Message” Outcome: Practicing the creation of relevant and persuasive messages for the target group.
Strategy: Strengthening the Ability to Design Educational Marketing Messages in the Digital Context	Enhancing the ability to design educational marketing messages in the digital context.	“Anatomy of an Effective Digital Message” Outcome: Evaluating educational marketing messages in the digital context to identify the elements that make them effective and applying these criteria in creating one’s own messages. “From Idea to Message – Designing Digital Content” Outcome: Practicing the process of creating a digital educational marketing message.

Component 3. Selecting Communication Channels		
Strategy: Developing Critical Thinking in Selecting Digital Communication Channels	Enhancing critical thinking in the selection of digital communication channels.	“Exploring and Analyzing Digital Communication Channels” Outcome: Identifying the main characteristics of digital communication channels and selecting them according to the purpose of promoting the educational offer. “Analyzing a Digital Educational Marketing Message: What Makes the Channel Appropriate?” Outcome: Analyzing the impact of communication channels on the effectiveness of a digital educational marketing message.
Strategy: Persuasive and Engaging Distribution of Educational Marketing Messages in the Digital Context	Developing the ability to distribute educational marketing messages persuasively and engagingly in the digital context.	“Creating Educational Marketing Messages That Inspire and Attract” Outcome: Enhancing the ability to create educational marketing messages that capture attention and motivate the target group to engage with educational offerings. “Developing a Multichannel Distribution Plan for an Educational Marketing Message” Outcome: Developing the ability to create a distribution plan that incorporates multiple digital communication channels to maximize the impact of the educational marketing message.
Component 4. Integrating Feedback		
Strategy: Applying Feedback Tools in Online Marketing Communication	Developing the ability to apply feedback tools in online marketing communication.	“Introduction to Feedback Tools in Online Marketing” Outcome: Familiarizing participants with various feedback tools used in online educational marketing. “Collecting Online Feedback to Improve the Promotion of Educational Services” Outcome: Developing the ability to use online tools to collect feedback from students, parents, and other participants in order to evaluate and improve the promotion of educational services.
Strategy: Leveraging Positive and Feasible Feedback in the Digital Promotion of Educational Services	Improving the ability to evaluate and leverage positive and feasible feedback in the digital promotion of educational services.	“Analyzing Feedback from Online Comments and Reviews” Outcome: Understanding the importance of feedback from online comments and reviews for improving educational marketing messages. “From Feedback to Action – Responsible Decision-Making in Educational Promotion” Outcome: Developing teachers’ responsibility in using feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to enhance the promotion of the school’s educational services.

These strategies constitute a guiding framework for the continuous professional development of teaching staff, facilitating the integrated development of the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for the effective promotion of educational services in the digital environment.

Conclusions

Promoting educational services is a complex and dynamic process based on the application of educational marketing theory, aiming to attract, inform, and motivate beneficiaries (students, parents, communities) to access and benefit from the institution’s offerings, through the diversified use of digital and traditional

communication channels, with the goal of strengthening the institution's image, increasing visibility, and differentiating itself in the educational market.

The competence of promoting educational services in the digital context involves a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, which include correctly identifying the target audience, creating persuasive and relevant messages, selecting and appropriately using digital communication channels, as well as continuously evaluating and adjusting strategies based on received feedback.

Accordingly, to develop competence in promoting educational services in the digital context, a set of strategies based on the four components of educational service promotion is proposed. At the same time, the following **are recommended for teaching staff**:

- Participate in continuous professional development programs dedicated to the use of digital platforms to develop competence in promoting educational services.
- Develop the ability to identify the needs and interests of the target group through the use of digital tools and the analysis of the data obtained.
- Strengthen skills in drafting and creating attractive and relevant educational marketing messages for different digital channels.
- Practice selecting and efficiently managing online communication channels to maximize the impact of promotional messages.
- Leverage feedback received from the target group to adjust and optimize digital promotion strategies for educational services.

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CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS OF STUDENTS' VALUE ORIENTATIONS

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The article focuses on the conceptual clarification of students' value orientations from a pedagogical perspective, emphasizing their role in personality development of students within contemporary education. The study is based on a theoretical analysis of the concepts of value and value orientations, highlighting their interrelations and their function in guiding behavior and decision-making. The structure and main characteristics of value orientations are examined, with attention to their cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, as well as their systemic and dynamic nature. The paper also analyzes relevant typologies of value orientations, underlining their significance for understanding the diversity of students' value systems. The findings indicate that value orientations represent essential mechanisms through which values are internalized and transformed into behavioral regulators. In the context of value pluralism and social change, education plays a key role in forming coherent value orientations that support responsible behavior and social integration.

Keywords: *value orientations, values, value education, the axiological dimension of education, education for values, education through values.*

DELIMITĂRI CONCEPTUALE PRIVIND ORIENTĂRILE VALORICE ALE ELEVILOR

Articolul abordează conceptul orientărilor valorice ale elevilor din perspectivă pedagogică, evidențiind rolul acestora în dezvoltarea personalității elevilor în contextul educației contemporane. În acest articol este realizată o analiză teoretică a conceptelor de valoare și orientări valorice, fiind subliniate interrelațiile dintre acestea și funcția lor în orientarea comportamentului și a procesului decizional. Sunt analizate structura și caracteristicile orientărilor valorice, cu accent pe dimensiunile cognitive, afective și comportamentale, precum și pe caracterul lor sistemic și dinamic. De asemenea, sunt examinate tipologii relevante ale orientărilor valorice, evidențiindu-se importanța acestora pentru înțelegerea diversității sistemelor valorice ale elevilor. Rezultatele subliniază că orientările valorice constituie mecanisme esențiale prin care valorile sunt interiorizate și transformate în repere comportamentale. În contextul pluralismului valoric, educația are un rol fundamental în formarea unor orientări valorice coerente.

Cuvinte-cheie: *orientări valorice, valori, educația valorilor, dimensiunea axiologică a educației, educația pentru valori, educația prin valori.*

Introduction

In recent decades, pedagogical reflection has increasingly focused on the axiological dimension of education, as students' personality development is conceived not only as cognitive development, but also as value-based (axiological) development. Values represent fundamental reference points that guide individuals' behavior, decisions, and social relationships, while the educational process plays an important role in their transmission, internalization, and appropriation by students. From this perspective, students' value orientations can be understood as the expression of how values are integrated into their system of beliefs and attitudes, influencing their relationship with themselves, others, and society.

However, in the context of contemporary social, cultural, and educational transformations, the issue of value orientations becomes increasingly complex. Globalization, the development of information technologies, and the diversification of socialization environments expose students to multiple, often divergent, value systems, which may generate uncertainty and fragmentation in the formation of their value system. Under these conditions, the role of education can no longer be reduced to the transmission of values, but involves facilitating a reflective and critical process of selecting, internalizing, and integrating them, capable of supporting the development of an autonomous and responsible personality.

The relevance of values education is also emphasized in international and national educational policy documents. At the international level, documents such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture [2], developed by the Council of Europe, highlight the role of education in promoting democratic values, social responsibility, and respect for human rights. At the same time, UNESCO initiatives such as Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development emphasize the need to develop universal values such as solidarity, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

At the national level, these orientations are reflected in documents regulating the organization and development of the education system. The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova [3] establishes, among the aims of education, the formation of an autonomous and responsible personality capable of valuing and respecting the principles of a democratic society. Furthermore, the National Curriculum Framework [3] highlights the role of education in the formation of personal, social, national, and universal human values, while the Guide for the Integration of Values-Based Education into the National Curriculum [7] provides methodological guidelines for integrating values into educational activities. Under these conditions, students' value orientations cannot be reduced to simple outcomes of the transmission of values, but must be understood as structures through which students construct their own way of relating to reality. Therefore, the analysis of this concept becomes essential for understanding how values are transformed into guiding principles of behavior and personality development within the contemporary educational context.

Theoretical perspectives on the concepts of *value* and *value orientations*

In the specialized literature, the concepts of value and value orientations are analyzed from diverse theoretical perspectives, being addressed within philosophy, sociology, psychology, and pedagogy. From an axiological perspective, values are considered normative reference points that express what is regarded as important, desirable, or worthy of pursuit in a society. The philosophy of values highlights their role in guiding human behavior and structuring social relations.

From a philosophical standpoint, values are not merely abstract cultural norms, but also formative reference points that influence the process of personality development. Pragmatist philosophy, represented by John Dewey, emphasizes that values are closely linked to human experience and the learning process, being formed and consolidated through the individual's interaction with the social and educational environment [5]. Thus, values become fundamental elements of education, as they contribute to guiding students' behavior and to the development of responsible conduct within society.

Complementing these approaches, sociological and psychological perspectives underline that values are internalized through processes of socialization and education, forming a relatively stable system of beliefs that influences individual decisions and behaviors. However, the mere internalization of values does not explain the diversity of ways in which individuals relate to the same values, which calls for the analysis of a deeper level of their organization.

In this context, the concept of value orientations becomes particularly relevant, referring to the way in which values are organized and hierarchized within the individual's system of preferences. According to Rokeach [11], value orientations represent relatively stable structures of the value system that guide behavior and individual choices, while Schwartz's theory [12] highlights the trans-situational character of values and their role in guiding actions. From this perspective, value orientations are not simple reflections of values, but mechanisms through which values become operative in individual conduct.

This idea is also supported by the OECD Learning Compass 2030 [10], which emphasizes that values and attitudes influence individual choices and behaviors. However, even within this framework, the focus remains predominantly on the normative function of values, while the relationship between values, attitudes, and value orientations as integrated structures of personality is less clearly explained.

At the same time, the relationship between values and attitudes shows that values constitute the foundation of the individual's system of attitudes and behaviors, guiding the way in which reality is interpreted and social interactions are conducted. Thus, values do not act directly upon behavior, but through intermediate structures, which supports the need to analyze value orientations as a distinct level of personality organiza-

tion. Values are central to the configuration of personality, shaping judgments, attitudes, and behavior. They are expressed through attitudes that contribute to personality formation from an instrumental perspective, in terms of self-image protection, expression of personal values, and organization of external social stimuli.

According to the OECD Learning Compass 2030 [10], values are classified into several categories depending on their role in individual and societal development. Thus, personal values are associated with individual identity and the way a person defines life goals and meaning. Social values refer to principles and beliefs that influence the quality of interpersonal relationships and the way individuals interact within the community, contributing to social cohesion. Societal values reflect the cultural and institutional priorities of a society and are embedded in social structures, norms, and democratic practices. At the same time, human or universal values transcend cultural and national differences, promoting the well-being of humanity and being reflected in fundamental international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

From a pedagogical perspective, the integration of values into the educational process is considered essential for students' personality development. However, reducing values education to the transmission of axiological content overlooks the fact that value orientations are formed through the interaction between learning experiences, social models, and processes of individual reflection.

In this regard, the analysis of the concepts of value and value orientations reveals that they represent different levels of the individual's relationship with the axiological system of society. Values express general normative reference points, while value orientations reflect the way in which these are internalized, hierarchized, and assumed at the individual level. Thus, value orientations can be interpreted as the personalized expression of social values, resulting from their integration into the structure of personality.

Theoretical approaches that emphasize the systemic character of values (Rokeach [11]; Schwartz [12]) and those highlighting the cultural dimension of value orientations (Kluckhohn [9]) indicate that value orientations cannot be understood outside the relationship between the individual and the social environment. At the same time, educational research shows that they are formed through the interaction of family, school, and cultural influences. In this sense, Rokeach [11] considers that values are organized into a relatively stable system of beliefs that influence how individuals interpret reality and make decisions. Similarly, Schwartz [12] argues that values are trans-situational principles that guide evaluation and action, being organized within a coherent structure. In pedagogical literature, value orientations are interpreted as the result of educational processes and socialization experiences.

This perspective is also supported by national pedagogical research. According to M. Dohotaru, value orientations constitute „a system of hierarchically interconnected values that guide an individual's behavior. Value orientations are reflections. They manifest themselves dynamically and actively within an individual's personality. They can manifest themselves cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally, as well as in the realm of interpersonal relationships, in the realm of “individual-nature” relationships, in relation to one's own self, etc.” [6, p.34]. Likewise, I. Gîncu argues that „a value orientation refers to a person's choice regarding a range of values; once selected, these values are grouped into an organized value system and influence the person's attitudes and behavior. Thus, value orientations are internalized values that are, in their own way, specific in that they refer to certain patterns.” [8, p.20]. These perspectives emphasize both the hierarchical organization and the operational role of value orientations in personality development.

Based on these perspectives, value orientations can be defined as relatively stable systems of preferences, attitudes, and beliefs oriented toward certain values, which guide behavior and decision-making in various social situations. Building on multiple theoretical approaches, D. Antoci [1] highlights that value orientations constitute an organized system of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, hierarchically structured and integrated into personality. From this perspective, value orientations are not merely individual preferences, but stable personality structures that guide individual activity and social interaction. They are influenced by social, educational, and cultural factors, and their formation is closely linked to socialization and educational experiences. Moreover, value orientations are organized hierarchically, with certain values becoming dominant and determining individual priorities across different domains of life. In this sense, value orientations contribute to behavioral stability and coherence, guiding decision-making and adaptation to the social context.

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the concepts of „value” and „value orientations”.

Table 1. Conceptual delimitation between *value* and *value orientations*

Criterion of analysis	Values	Value orientations
Definition	General normative reference points expressing what is considered important, desirable, or worthy of pursuit in a society	Ways of organizing, hierarchizing, and internalizing values within the structure of personality
Level of abstraction	General, abstract, cultural, and social level	Individual, concrete, psychological, and behavioral level
Status in relation to personality	Elements of the axiological system of society	Internal structures of personality reflecting the assimilation of values
Main function	Provide general normative standards and criteria	Guide behavior, decisions, and individual attitudes
Structure	Systems of principles and norms	Organized systems of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors
Formation process	Historically and culturally constructed	Formed through socialization and education

The differentiation between values and value orientations highlights that, while values represent general normative reference points of society, value orientations reflect the way in which these are internalized and become operative within the structure of personality, guiding individual behavior and decision-making processes.

Structure and characteristics of students' value orientations

The analysis of value orientations requires overcoming the frequent confusion between the concepts of value and value orientation. While values refer to general axiological contents – principles or standards that express what is considered desirable in a society – value orientations indicate the way in which these values are organized and activated within the structure of personality. In this logic, a value orientation is not a singular value, but a functional configuration of the individual's value system, which determines how situations are evaluated and behavior is regulated.

An important starting point in analyzing the structure of value orientations is the theory of the value system developed by M. Rokeach [11]. The author considers that values are organized in a hierarchical system of relatively stable beliefs that guide individual behavior. Within this conceptual framework, value orientations reflect the internal order of values within the personality system, namely the way certain values become dominant and determine individual priorities in different situations. Thus, the structure of value orientations is not determined by isolated values, but by the hierarchical relationships among them.

A complementary perspective is proposed by C. Kluckhohn [9], who defines value orientations as an organized system of conceptions about what is desirable, influencing the selection of goals and means of action. In this interpretation, the structure of value orientations has both a normative and motivational character, as values function not only as cognitive reference points but also as mechanisms that determine the selection of specific behavioral patterns.

The psychological analysis of value orientations is further developed in the theory of basic human values proposed by S. Schwartz [12]. According to this theory, values are trans-situational principles that guide the evaluation of situations and the orientation of human actions. Schwartz demonstrates that values are organized in a coherent system, in which different types of values are in relations of compatibility or tension. From this perspective, value orientations reflect the internal structure of this system, namely how values are integrated and correlated within the individual's consciousness.

In contemporary educational research, value orientations are analyzed as structures of personality that include several interdependent dimensions. D. Antoci [1] highlights that value orientation comprises a set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors organized hierarchically and integrated into the personality's value system.

From this perspective, the structure of value orientations can be analyzed through three main components:

- *the cognitive component* (beliefs about values),
- *the affective-attitudinal component* (evaluative stance toward values),
- *the behavioral component* (the manifestation of values in actions).

This structure demonstrates that value orientations are not simple individual preferences, but complex mechanisms for regulating behavior.

The analysis of value orientations highlights several essential characteristics that explain their role in students' personality development.

A first characteristic is their *systemic nature*. The values internalized by the student do not function independently, but are integrated into a system of beliefs and preferences that determines how educational situations are perceived and evaluated. The system of value orientations reflects the relationships among the values considered important by the student, and the coherence of this system contributes to behavioral stability and the orientation of learning activities.

Another important characteristic is the *hierarchical nature* of value orientations. Within the student's value system, values do not have equal importance, but are organized according to a certain order of priority. This value hierarchy influences how the student sets goals and organizes activities. For example, for some students, values related to academic achievement and performance may be dominant, while for others, values associated with cooperation, solidarity, or group belonging may become more important.

Students' value orientations are also characterized by *relative stability*. Values internalized through socialization and education tend to provide continuity and coherence in behavior. This stability is reflected in consistent attitudes and behaviors, such as responsibility for learning tasks, adherence to school rules, or involvement in collective activities. However, this stability is not rigid, as the student's value system may evolve through new educational and social experiences.

Closely related to stability is the *dynamic character* of value orientations. During schooling, value orientations are in a continuous process of development and restructuring. Interactions with teachers and peers, learning experiences, and behavioral models provided by the educational environment contribute to the reorganization of students' value systems and to the consolidation of certain value orientations.

Value orientations also have an *integrative character*, as they connect different dimensions of the student's personality. They simultaneously involve cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, contributing to the formation of coherent conduct. Through value orientations, the student constructs personal criteria for evaluating situations and organizes behavior in accordance with the values considered important.

These characteristics demonstrate that value orientations represent essential mechanisms through which values promoted in the educational environment are internalized and transformed into stable reference points for students' behavior and decision-making.

Typologies of value orientations

In the specialized literature, value orientations are also analyzed from a typological perspective, being correlated with different classifications of values and reflecting the way the axiological system is organized and internalized at the level of personality.

a. *The typology of value orientations proposed by C. Kluckhohn*

This typology is based on the criterion of how individuals relate to the fundamental dimensions of existence, such as time, human nature, activity, and social relationships. From this perspective, value orientations are interpreted as relatively stable responses to universal problems of life, reflecting the influence of cultural patterns on individual behavior. Theoretically, this approach highlights the global and structuring character of value orientations, as they configure the individual's general way of relating to reality, rather than representing isolated preferences. However, its general character limits its direct applicability at the le-

vel of individual analysis, being more appropriate for cultural interpretations. From a pedagogical perspective, Kluckhohn's typology is relevant as it emphasizes the influence of cultural context on the formation of students' value orientations, underlining the need to integrate the cultural dimension into the educational process.

b. The typology of value orientations in the view of M. Rokeach

M. Rokeach's approach [11] is based on the analysis of the individual's value system structure, using as a criterion the distinction between terminal and instrumental values. Terminal values express the ultimate goals of human existence, such as happiness, freedom, or self-fulfillment, while instrumental values refer to modes of action and behaviors through which these goals can be achieved, such as honesty, responsibility, or perseverance. In this perspective, value orientations reflect how these two categories of values are hierarchized and correlated within the personality structure, determining the general direction of behavior.

From a theoretical standpoint, this classification highlights the motivational and regulatory character of value orientations, as they are directly involved in decision-making and behavioral choices. Value orientations are not reduced to simple preferences, but express the relationship between the goals pursued by the individual and the means considered appropriate to achieve them. Thus, human behavior is guided not only by what individuals consider important, but also by how they choose to act in order to realize those values.

From a pedagogical perspective, Rokeach's typology is particularly relevant, as it allows understanding how students structure their relationship with educational goals and associated behaviors. Thus, students' value orientations may reflect either the prioritization of goals such as academic achievement or personal development, or an emphasis on modes of action such as responsibility, discipline, or cooperation. In this sense, the educational process plays a key role in supporting the coherent alignment between pursued values and adopted behaviors, contributing to the development of consistent and responsible conduct.

c. The typology of value orientations in the view of S. Schwartz

The theory of basic human values developed by S. Schwartz [12] offers one of the most coherent and widely used perspectives on the organization of the value system, based on the criterion of structural relationships among different types of values. The author identifies a set of values organized within a dynamic system, in which they are in relationships of compatibility or opposition, shaping the general directions of human behavior. Thus, values are grouped around bipolar dimensions such as openness to change versus conservation and self-transcendence versus self-enhancement, reflecting the fundamental tensions of human motivation.

From this perspective, value orientations can be interpreted as tendencies of individuals to prioritize certain categories of values over others, which determines how they evaluate situations and structure their actions. For example, value orientations centered on self-transcendence involve the prioritization of cooperation, altruism, and responsibility toward others, while orientations toward self-enhancement are associated with competition, personal success, and influence. Similarly, orientations toward conservation favor respect for norms and stability, whereas orientations toward change support autonomy and openness to novelty.

Unlike other approaches, Schwartz's theory allows for the understanding of value conflicts and the dynamics of value orientations, explaining how individuals manage tensions between different values.

From a pedagogical perspective, this typology provides an explanatory framework for the diversity of students' value orientations in the context of contemporary education. Students may display different value orientations depending on the values they prioritize, which influences their engagement in school activities, relationships with others, and attitudes toward educational norms. In this sense, the educational process should support the development of a balance among different types of value orientations, promoting the integration of prosocial values and those oriented toward personal development into a coherent system.

The analysis of these typologies shows that, although they offer different perspectives, they are complementary: some emphasize the cultural dimension of value orientations, while others highlight their internal structure or motivational function.

Conclusions

The theoretical approach developed in this paper highlights several essential conclusions:

- Students' value orientations can be understood as mediating structures between the axiological system of society and individual behavior, representing the level at which values become operative within personality. In this sense, the distinction between values and value orientations is not only conceptual but also functional, highlighting the transition from social norms to internal mechanisms regulating behavior.
- The theoretical analysis reveals that value orientations have a systemic, hierarchical, and dynamic character, being the result of the interaction between socialization processes, educational experiences, and the individual's reflective capacity. Thus, they are not merely internalizations of values, but active configurations that structure the evaluation of situations and the orientation of decisions.
- The diversity of the analyzed typologies confirms that value orientations cannot be reduced to a single explanatory dimension, but should be interpreted within an integrated approach that correlates the cultural, motivational, and personal dimensions of values.
- In the context of contemporary education, characterized by value pluralism and multiple influences, value orientations become essential reference points for ensuring the coherence of students' behavior. In this regard, the role of education is not limited to the transmission of values, but involves facilitating the formation of value orientations capable of supporting autonomy, responsibility, and social integration.
- Therefore, the study of value orientations in pedagogical research requires moving beyond descriptive perspectives toward understanding them as central mechanisms of personality development, relevant both for educational theory and for educational practice.

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BIOLOGY SUBJECT CONTENT – DYNAMIC CURRICULAR VECTOR

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The article highlights the role of Biology subject contents as a dynamic curricular vector aimed at developing both specific and transversal competences in students. It examines the informative, formative, and axiological dimensions of the content, the concentric structure at the middle school level, and the linear grade-based system at the high school level, as well as their functions in fostering students' competences. The article emphasizes the importance of selecting and organizing content according to epistemological, curricular, and didactic criteria, and its role in consolidating knowledge, developing critical thinking, and promoting responsibility toward the environment and health. Furthermore, it underscores the spiral progression of concepts, the integration of practical applications with theoretical learning, and the facilitation of knowledge transfer to real-life contexts, highlighting the contribution of Biology contents to the development of systemic thinking and the cultivation of students' autonomous, responsible, and reflective perspectives on the living world.

Keywords: *Biology, curriculum, competences, contents, formative dimension, critical thinking, ecological responsibility, spiral progression.*

CONȚINUTUL DISCIPLINEI BIOLOGIA – VECTOR CURRICULAR DINAMIC

Articolul evidențiază rolul conținuturilor disciplinei Biologie ca vector curricular dinamic, orientat spre formarea competențelor specifice și transversale ale elevilor. Sunt analizate dimensiunile informativă, formativă și axiologică ale conținuturilor, structura concentrică la gimnaziu și sistemul liniar pe clase la liceu, precum și funcția acestora în dezvoltarea competențelor la elevi. Se subliniază importanța selecției și organizării conținuturilor pe criterii epistemologice, curriculare și didactice, precum și rolul lor în consolidarea cunoștințelor, dezvoltarea gândirii critice și promovarea responsabilității față de mediu și sănătate. Totodată, articolul pune accent pe progresia spiralată a conceptelor, integrarea aplicațiilor practice cu învățarea teoretică și facilitarea transferului cunoștințelor în contexte reale, evidențiind contribuția conținuturilor biologice la formarea unei gândiri sistemice și la dezvoltarea unei perspective autonome, responsabile și reflexive a elevilor asupra lumii vii.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Biologie, curriculum, competențe, conținuturi, dimensiune formativă, gândire critică, responsabilitate ecologică, progresie spiralată.*

Introduction

Curriculum development for Biology subject requires a functional correlation between the targeted competences and the learning contents that support their formation. While the objectives and competences define the direction and expected outcomes of biological education, the contents constitute the essential structure through which these objectives are embodied in meaningful and relevant learning experiences for the student [5, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18].

In the contemporary perspective, the contents of Biology subject are no longer viewed simply as an inventory of scientific knowledge, but as a dynamic curricular vector, closely linked to the specific and transversal competences, the values promoted and the training needs of the students. This approach reflects the transition from an informative paradigm to one centered on competences [14, 15, 16, 17, 18], oriented towards the development of scientific thinking, the capacity for investigation, responsibility towards health and the environment, as well as active involvement in social life.

Thus, biological contents become essential tools for integrating knowledge, developing competences and consolidating a systemic vision of the living world, constituting the foundation of a relevant, coherent and adapted curriculum to the requirements of modern education [5, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18].

Methods and Materials

The analysis was carried out through bibliographic and comparative research of specialized sources, national and international curricula, correlating curricular documents (National Curriculum, 2019) with the

recommendations of the OECD, UNESCO and the European Commission [14, 15, 16, 17, 18], as well as by examining biology curricula at middle school and high school [5, 6], identifying the structure, selection and progression of the contents.

Conceptual Benchmarks Regarding Peculiarities of Content in Biology Subject

The concept of Biology subject content, viewed from a curricular perspective, is characterized by functionality, relevance and direct links to the targeted competences. Next, the article will explore how these characteristics contribute to the development of students' competences, analyzing the informative, formative and axiological dimensions of the contents. It will also highlight the selection criteria, the structure and organization of the contents, as well as their role in facilitating meaningful learning and the application of knowledge in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary contexts.

Content of Biology Subject from Curricular Perspective

Within the general education curriculum, the concept of "content" designates the structured set of knowledge, concepts, processes, relationships and learning contexts selected to achieve educational objectives. From a curricular perspective, the contents of the Biology subject represent a fundamental element of the curriculum architecture, being in an interdependent relationship with the educational objectives, the targeted competences and the assessment methods [12, 13].

The disciplinary content includes fundamental concepts of the life sciences, such as biological processes at the level of cell, organism and ecosystems, scientific methods of investigation, as well as real-life application contexts [4, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18]. They facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the development of investigation, analysis and problem-solving competences.

This organization ensures a balance between the theoretical foundations necessary for understanding natural phenomena and practical applications, giving relevance and significance to the learning experience for the student.

Therefore, the subject contents are not simple lists of information, but constitute an integrative framework that supports the formation of specific and transversal competences, the development of critical thinking, civic and ecological responsibility, as well as the ability of students to apply biological knowledge in real and multidisciplinary contexts.

Informative, Formative and Axiological Dimension of Contents in Biology

The contents of Biology subject reflect not only the scientific information specific to the field, but also their formative and axiological role in the development of students [14, 15, 16, 17, 18]. In a modern curriculum, these are not simple lists of notions, but deliberate tools for developing competences and promoting behavioral, social and civic values.

The structuring of contents thus simultaneously responds to three interdependent dimensions: **informative, formative and axiological**.

The informative dimension aims at the accumulation and organization of fundamental knowledge of biology – biological concepts, processes, laws and phenomena – which are the basis for understanding the living world. In the curriculum of subject, these contents are presented in a progressive logic, from general concepts, such as "The cell – the basic unit of life", to more complex topics, such as "Ecology and Environmental Protection" [5, 15]. This dimension provides the cognitive support necessary for the development of scientific competences and for the investigation of biological phenomena.

The formative dimension refers to the role of content in developing students' abilities, skills and practical competences. The current curriculum emphasizes the formation of scientific and methodological competences, such as investigating the living world through scientific methods, planning and carrying out experimental activities or interpreting biological data, going beyond the simple memorization of information. This orientation is supported by the curricular methodological recommendations, which promote interactive and experimental teaching strategies, such as case studies, research projects and practical activities [12, 13].

The axiological dimension of Biology subject contents aims to promote values and attitudes specific to biological education, such as responsibility for one's own health, environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. In the secondary school curriculum, the emphasis is explicitly placed on the involvement of

students in activities that stimulate ecological responsibility and healthy behaviors, thus integrating values into the structure of educational content [5, 6, 14, 18].

The articulation of informative, formative and axiological dimensions ensures a holistic curricular balance, which responds not only to the cognitive requirements of learning, but also to the socio-affective and behavioral ones. In this way, the Biology subject contents become instruments for the integral development of the student, contributing to the formation of an autonomous, responsible personality adapted to the requirements of a society based on knowledge, innovation and sustainability [15, 16, 17, 18].

Selecting, Structuring and Organizing Contents in Biology

In the architecture of biology curriculum, the selection, structuring and organization of contents constitute a complex pedagogical approach, located at the intersection of biological science requirements, educational purposes and developmental peculiarities of students. In the paradigm of competency-based curriculum, contents no longer represent an end in themselves, but become formative means for the development of specific and transversal competences and for the configuration of the graduate's profile.

The selection of Biology subject contents is based on clear criteria, which ensure the relevance and efficiency of the educational process [12, 13]:

- *Epistemological criteria* – the contents must reflect the foundations of biological science and be scientifically correct;
- *Curricular criteria* – the selection must correspond to the educational objectives and the competences targeted at national and European level [14, 15, 16];
- *Didactic criteria* – the contents must be appropriate to the level of cognitive development of the students, allow for progressive learning and facilitate the development of skills, attitudes and values associated with scientific thinking.

The structuring of contents respects the logic of vertical and horizontal progression, so that each learning unit is correlated with the specific competences provided for in the curriculum. The contents are organized into modules or content units, adapted to each level of schooling. At the middle school level, the Biology curriculum adopts a concentric structure, with five main modules [5]:

1. Cell, the basic unit of life;
2. Diversity and classification of living organisms;
3. Plants;
4. Human body and health;
5. Organisms in their living environments.

Each module reflects a predominant object of study, ensuring consistency, continuity and coherence in the formation of students' competences. The concentric structure allows the progressive resumption and deepening of the contents from one year of study to another, consolidating previous acquisitions and facilitating the integration of new knowledge.

In high school education, the contents are organized linearly, by grades, corresponding to the students' study progression [6]:

- Grade 10: exploration of fundamental concepts and initial organization of disciplinary contents;
- Grade 11: approach to biological systems (nervous, sensory, humoral, locomotor, etc.);
- Grade 12: deepening of genetics, biotechnology and ecology, with an emphasis on the human role in ecosystems and environmental protection.

The modular and linear approach facilitates the transfer of knowledge between contexts, the development of critical thinking and investigation and problem-solving competences, integrating theory with practical and experimental activities. The spiral progression of fundamental concepts, gradually revisited and deepened, contributes to the formation of a systemic vision of the living world and the development of responsibility towards nature and life [2, 3].

Thus, the selection, structuring and organization of biology contents represents a strategic, epistemologically grounded curricular process oriented towards the development of students' competences, critical thinking and civic and ecological responsibility.

Biology Contents – Support for Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity

The Biology subject contents provide an effective framework for the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary relationships, facilitating functional connections between the knowledge and competences acquired in the natural sciences and those specific to the humanities and social sciences. Through its explanatory and integrative nature, biology allows the correlation of life phenomena with physicochemical processes, with the geographical and ecological dimensions of the environment, as well as with the social, ethical and cultural implications of scientific progress. The curriculum extends this approach, allowing the correlation of biology with mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, environmental education and other humanities and social sciences [9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18], thus promoting critical thinking, problem-solving competences and civic and ecological responsibility.

Interdisciplinarity involves the explicit correlation of biological content with concepts and methods from mathematics, chemistry, physics, geography and environmental education, highlighting the relationships between biological phenomena and the general laws of nature. For example, the study of human respiratory system can be integrated with physics concepts regarding gas exchange, with chemical aspects related to oxidation reactions and with the issue of the impact of pollution on population health. Such connections support the transfer of knowledge and the development of transversal competences, such as critical analysis, data interpretation and the application of information in real situations [1, 7, 8].

Transdisciplinarity extends the interdisciplinary logic by integrating biological contents into educational contexts that transcend disciplinary boundaries, involving social, ethical, economic and cultural dimensions. In this sense, biology becomes an educational tool for the formation of civic and ecological responsibility, awareness of environmental sustainability and the capacity to make informed decisions. Themes such as biodiversity, public health, bioethics or climate change can be addressed through transdisciplinary projects and activities, correlated with civic education, community development and education for democratic citizenship, generating an integrated and applicable understanding of contemporary reality [14].

In the context of modern curriculum, the emphasis on interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity supports the development of investigation, analysis and critical reflection competences, promoting active learning methods such as case studies, research projects, problem-based learning and simulations. This orientation is in line with both the European recommendations on the training of key competences for lifelong learning and with national curriculum documents, which emphasize the need for an education focused on competences, social relevance and adaptability [10, 14].

Therefore, the Biology subject contents do not constitute simple isolated units of study, but function as platforms for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary relationships, contributing to the internal coherence of curriculum, to the increasing of educational approach relevance and to the training of competences necessary for an active, responsible and informed citizen in a society based on knowledge and sustainability.

Conclusions

The analysis of Biology subject contents highlights their role as a dynamic curricular vector, essential in the training of students' specific and transversal competences. The contents are not limited to the transmission of knowledge, but integrate informative, formative and axiological dimensions, supporting the development of critical thinking, ecological responsibility and the skills of investigation and application of knowledge in real contexts.

The selection, structuring and organization of content based on epistemological, curricular and didactic criteria ensure the coherence of learning, progression and relevance for the different levels of schooling. The spiral progression, the modular approach and the concentric or linear structures by grade facilitate the consolidation of knowledge, interdisciplinary integration and the development of complex competences, contributing to the formation of an autonomous, responsible and reflective student profile.

Also, the Biology subject contents function as platforms for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary relationships, correlating the natural sciences with the humanities, social and applied disciplines. This approach promotes a holistic education, oriented towards real problems, sustainability and active citizenship, respecting international and national recommendations on the curriculum focused on competences and lifelong learning.

Therefore, the Biology discipline contents are not just informative support, but strategic tools for training competences, systemic thinking, and civic and ecological attitudes, contributing to the development of an integrated, autonomous, and responsible perspective on the living world.

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EFFECTS OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT ON DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS' RESEARCH COMPETENCE

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This paper analyzes the role of educational management in developing research competence among teaching staff in pre-university education, highlighting its importance for ensuring the quality of the educational process and promoting pedagogical innovation. Based on theoretical foundations from the specialized literature and the results of an experimental study conducted in a school in the Republic of Moldova, the dimensions of research competence (cognitive, operational, and attitudinal) are identified, and effective managerial strategies are proposed for its development through continuous professional development programs. The study demonstrates that the systematic implementation of a structured, managerially coordinated training program leads to a significant improvement in teachers' research competence, contributing to the consolidation of an organizational culture grounded in reflection, inquiry, and evidence-based decision-making in diverse educational contexts. These findings support the design of institutional policies that foster sustainable professional learning and strengthen collaborative practices across schools and educational systems at the national level.

Keywords: *educational management, research competence, teaching staff, educational research, continuous professional development, usage of evidence, training programs.*

EFECTELE MANAGEMENTULUI EDUCAȚIONAL ASUPRA DEZVOLTĂRII COMPETENȚEI DE CERCETARE A CADRELOR DIDACTICE

Articolul analizează rolul managementului educațional în dezvoltarea competenței de cercetare la cadrele didactice din învățământul preuniversitar, evidențiind importanța acestora pentru asigurarea calității procesului educațional și promovarea inovării pedagogice. Pe baza fundamentelor teoretice din literatura de specialitate și a rezultatelor unui demers experimental desfășurat într-o instituție școlară din Republica Moldova, sunt identificate dimensiunile competenței de cercetare (cognitivă, operațională și atitudinală) și sunt propuse strategii manageriale eficiente pentru dezvoltarea acestora prin programe de formare continuă. Studiul demonstrează că aplicarea sistematică a unei programe de formare structurate, coordonate managerial, conduce la îmbunătățirea semnificativă a nivelului de competență de cercetare al cadrelor didactice, contribuind la consolidarea unei culturi organizaționale bazate pe reflecție, investigare și luarea deciziilor fundamentate pe date, în contexte educaționale diverse.

Cuvinte-cheie: *management educațional, competență de cercetare, cadre didactice, cercetare educațională, dezvoltare profesională continuă, utilizarea dovezilor, programe de formare.*

Introduction

In the current dynamics of educational reforms, the research competence of teachers is asserted as an essential dimension of professionalization and increase of the quality of instructional-educational process. D. A. Schön and L. Darling-Hammond propose the orientation towards an education based on evidence, pedagogical reflection and methodological innovation, which places the teacher not only in the role of mediator of knowledge, but also in that of a reflexive practitioner and researcher of his/her own teaching activity [21, 5].

J. Hattie and A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan highlight the fact that the involvement of teachers in educational research activities contributes significantly to the improvement of students' school performance and to the de-

velopment of an organizational culture based on collaboration and continuous professional learning [11, 10]. In this sense, S. Kemmis and R. McTaggart consider research-action a relevant methodological framework for the school environment, as it allows the systematic integration of planning, intervention, observation and reflection cycles in current pedagogical practice [12].

In the Romanian space and in the Republic of Moldova, S. Cristea and V. Guțu argue that the development of research competence is based both on theoretical approaches in educational sciences and on the normative framework of continuous professional development. From this perspective, research competence is conceived as an integrative construct, which brings together methodological knowledge, operational skills and reflexive attitudes, oriented towards optimizing the educational process and the scientific substantiation of pedagogical decisions [4, 9].

From a managerial perspective, M. Fullan and N. Petrovski emphasize the decisive role of institutional leadership in creating favorable conditions for the development of this competence, highlighting the responsibility of educational management to design continuous training strategies, to ensure the necessary resources and to stimulate the participation of teachers in professional learning communities and in applied research projects [8, 20]. In the absence of a strategic vision and coherent institutional support, the development of research competence remains fragmented and dependent on individual initiatives.

At the international level, the OECD shows that schools that promote research as an integrated dimension of teachers' professional activity develop more innovative educational environments and better adapted to the needs of students [14]. Also, L. Darling-Hammond, M. E. Hyler and M. Gardner demonstrate that research-centered professional development programs contribute to improving pedagogical practices and increasing educational impact [6].

In this context, the issue of management of research competence development in teachers acquires a particular theoretical and applied relevance. The analysis of managerial strategies and their validation through experimental approaches can contribute to the substantiation of continuous training models adapted to the realities of pre-university education.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of educational management in the development of research competence in teachers and to highlight the efficiency of a structured training program, experimentally validated, in consolidating the cognitive, operational and attitudinal dimensions of this competence.

Conceptual Framework and Empirical Validation of Research Competence Development Educational Research in Pre-University Context

In recent years, the OECD highlights that educational research in the pre-university environment has gained increased relevance, amid the acceleration of curricular changes, digitalization and lessons learned in the post-pandemic period, and the dominant direction of the literature in the last five years focuses on consolidating evidence-informed teaching practices and strengthening mechanisms for mobilizing knowledge between research, public policies and schools [15, 16].

In this framework, the OECD conceptualizes school-based research as applied investigation, integrated into the teacher's current professional activity, with the aim of improving the instructional-educational process and reducing learning gaps, emphasizing that the consistent use of research results depends on the existence of “systemic conditions” — educational leadership, institutional time allocated to reflection, data infrastructure, professional networks and partnerships with the academic environment — that support a culture of engagement in research at the school level [16].

From an educational policy perspective, the OECD shows that the emphasis is shifting from the simple dissemination of research results to the co-production of knowledge, in which teachers, school managers and academic researchers collaborate in defining problems and testing educational solutions, and initial and in-service training institutions are called upon to facilitate teachers' access to applied research methods and professional learning communities [17].

D. Parmigiani et al. highlight that action research represents a relevant methodological framework for the pre-university environment, as it allows the integration of the real needs of classroom with a rigorous

scientific approach and contributes to the improvement of teaching practices, especially in areas such as formative assessment, differentiation of instruction and the use of educational data in pedagogical decision-making, while also favoring the development of reflexive skills and professional autonomy of teachers [19].

UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 emphasize that the development of a culture of research in schools is closely correlated with continuous professional development policies, with the recognition of professional status of the teacher and with the creation of institutional environments that support innovation and collaboration, educational research being viewed as a collective responsibility, integrated into the organizational mission of the school [22, 23].

Data provided by the OECD through the international TALIS 2024 study reveal the importance of managerial support and mentoring in the professional development of teachers, highlighting that teachers who benefit from collaborative contexts and participatory educational leadership are more likely to engage in reflection and research activities on their own practice, confirming the essential role of school management in facilitating and supporting investigative approaches [18].

Thus, in the literature of the last five years, educational research in the pre-university context is defined as an institutionalized and collaborative approach, oriented towards the use of evidence, improving pedagogical practices and strengthening the school's capacity to respond to the diverse needs of students. This approach justifies the need for the systematic development of research competence in teachers and its integration into educational management and continuous training strategies.

Dimensions and Levels of Research Competence

In the literature of recent years, C. Brown and T. Greany, as well as B. Levin, approach the research competence of teachers as a multidimensional construct, correlated with research engagement and evidence-informed teaching practices. In this perspective, research is not treated exclusively as a technical skill, but as an integrated combination of methodological knowledge, applicative skills and professional attitudes and values, which support the systematic investigation of one's own practice and the use of results to improve the educational process [3, 13].

N. Bîrnaz proposes a relevant operationalization of research competence, delimiting three fundamental dimensions – the cognitive dimension, the operational dimension and the attitudinal dimension – which reflect the internal structure of the competence and the interdependent relationships between knowledge, action and professional dispositions that guide the investigative behavior of the teacher [2, p. 48].

Starting from the graphical model of competence developed by N. Bîrnaz (Figure 1), a proprietary graphical model of research competence was built (Figure 2), which reflects its integrated structure and highlights the essential components necessary for the development and manifestation of competence in the context of professional activity in pre-university education [2].

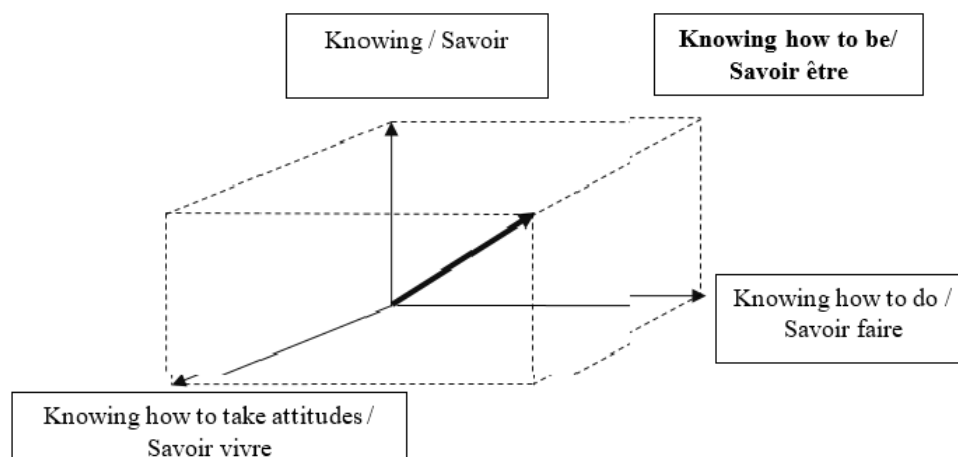


Figure 1. Graphical Model of Competence Components (Bîrnaz N.)

L. Darling-Hammond, together with A. Hargreaves and M. Fullan, emphasize that the research competence of teachers is not only a complementary dimension of the teaching activity, but a fundamental

element of continuous professional development, which contributes to the formation of a reflective, innovative teacher capable of constantly adapting to changes in the field of education [6, 10].

From the perspective of educational management, the OECD highlights that these dimensions become functional when they are supported by systemic conditions – leadership that values research, institutional time allocated to professional learning, access to resources and methodologies of investigation, as well as the existence of networks or partnerships with the academic environment. In this way, individual competence is amplified by the organizational capacity of the school to learn from data and evidence [15, 16, 17].

In relation to professional development, C. Brown and T. Greany, together with B. Levin, show that research competence can be described gradually, on operational levels, which reflect the transition from the assisted use of investigation tools to the autonomous integration of research into teaching practice. Recent models on *research engagement* and the development of professional expertise support the delineation of progressive trajectories of competence on levels. [3, 13].

Based on the models of “*research engagement*” and the development of professional expertise proposed by C. Brown and T. Greany, as well as the OECD guidelines on the use of evidence in schools, the following levels of research competence can be delineated:

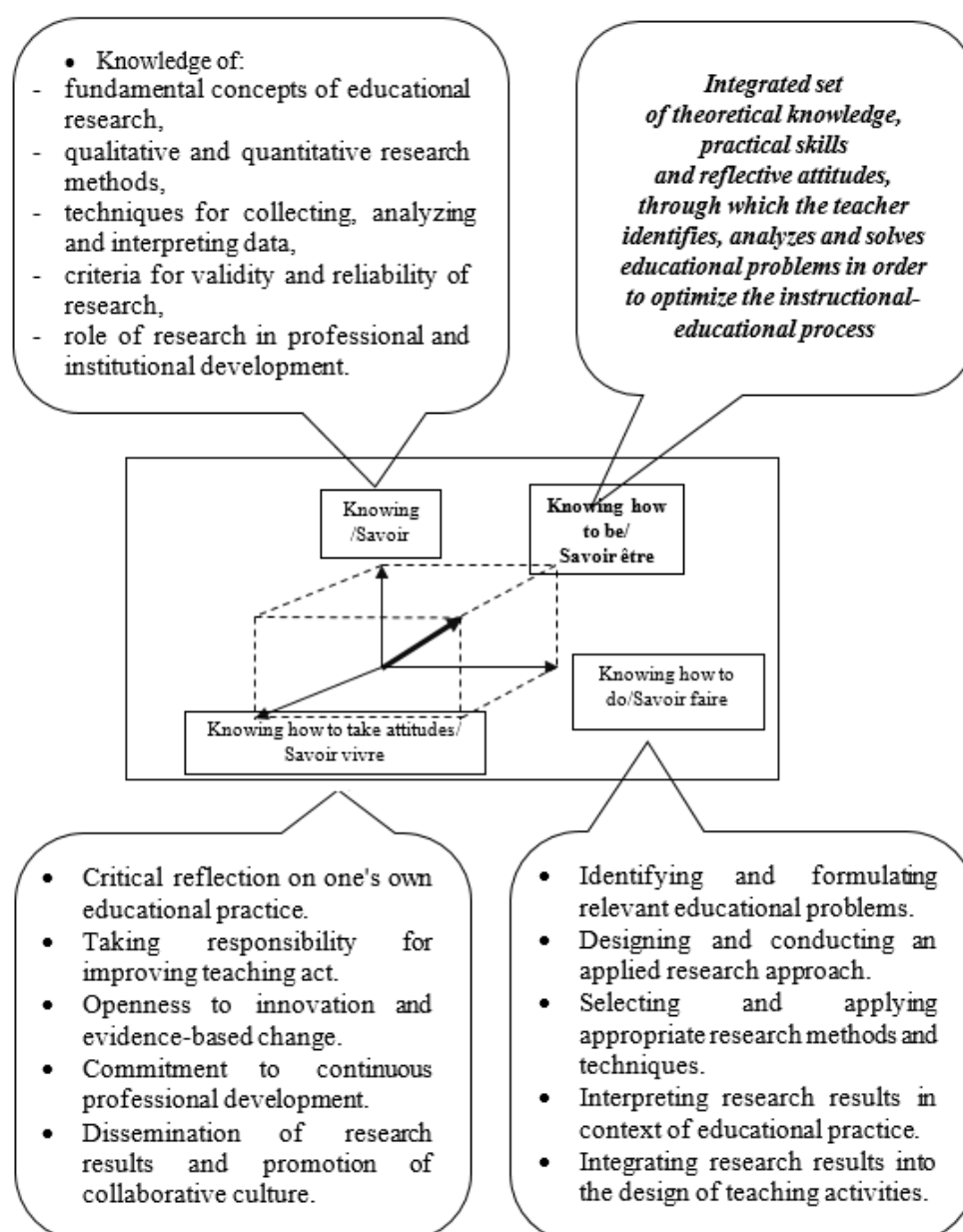


Figure 2. Graphical Model of Teachers' Research Competence in Pre-University Education

Level 1 – Initial (Fundamental): the teacher shows interest in research, understands basic concepts and uses simple tools with guidance (e.g. short questionnaires, observation sheets), but has difficulties in interpreting data and formulating conclusions with applicative relevance [3, 17].

Level 2 – Functional (Operational): the teacher can design small-scale investigations (micro-research), apply data collection tools, interpret the results coherently and adjust his/her teaching strategies based on them with punctual methodological support (mentor, team, trainer) [3, 17].

Level 3 – Advanced (Integrative): the teacher integrates research into cycles of continuous improvement (research-action type), collaborates in professional teams and disseminates the results in learning communities and methodical activities, contributing to the development of an institutional culture oriented towards the use of evidence [17, 18].

Level 4 – Expert (Research Leader/Change Agent): the teacher coordinates research initiatives at institutional level or in professional networks, supports colleagues through mentoring, develops school-university partnerships and contributes to the mobilization of knowledge and the strengthening of organizational infrastructure for the systematic use of evidence [3, 17, 18].

From a managerial perspective, OECD and N. Petrovski emphasize that the progression between these levels is facilitated by practice-centered training programs, especially research-action, mentoring and professional coaching, access to relevant data and analysis tools, as well as institutional recognition of research effort through time allocation, formal roles and professional incentives [16, 20].

Role of Educational Management in Research Competence Development

The development of research competence in teachers depends crucially on the quality of educational management, as school research requires not only individual initiative, but also organizational conditions (time, resources, structure and professional routines) and learning-oriented leadership. The OECD highlights that to build a culture of engagement in research education systems and schools need explicit interventions that include leadership, incentives, knowledge mobilization processes and training opportunities for the use of evidence [15, 16].

In the education policy literature, the OECD emphasizes that effective school leadership creates the institutional premises for the use of evidence and for the systematic investigation of practice, stating that a “culture of engagement in research” relies on systemic conditions, such as clarity of roles, professional capacity, data infrastructure, networks and partnerships, as well as leaders who model and facilitate the use of evidence in school decision-making processes [16]. In the same vein, the OECD highlights the role of research institutions and initial teacher education institutions in strengthening the links between research, policy and practice, through mechanisms for mobilizing knowledge, including institutional attributions, partnerships, impact evaluation and products accessible to practitioners [17].

At the European level, the European Commission emphasizes the function of the school leader to create professional learning contexts, including through evidence-based guidance for learning design and the institutional organization of the school, an orientation that explicitly legitimizes the use of evidence in decisions regarding curriculum, assessment and educational interventions [7].

The managerial dimension is embodied in decisions regarding the allocation of time for project activities and professional learning communities by ensuring resources — such as access to databases, digital tools and methodological support — and by developing data infrastructure for collection, analysis and feedback mechanisms. The OECD shows that, in the absence of these conditions, the use of research remains episodic, and teachers face difficulties in transforming scientific information into evidence-based teaching practices [15, 16].

At the international level, the OECD, through the results of the TALIS study, indicates that institutional support, mentoring and professional collaboration enhance both the quality of professional development and the willingness of teachers to innovate and investigate their own practice [18]. At the same time, UNESCO and the Teacher Task Force emphasize the need for robust governance and support mechanisms to attract, train and retain teaching staff, as well as to connect continuous professional development to the real needs of the school and to improvement of student outcomes [23].

Based on the specialized literature and the guidelines promoted in recent educational policies, the following managerial strategies with an impact on the development of research competence can be systematized:

- *The institutionalization of inquiry cycles* involves introducing periodic routines for analyzing educational problems, formulating pedagogical hypotheses, testing interventions, and reflecting on results in the logic of research-action [16].

- *The development of capacity to use evidence* involves training focused on evaluation, data analysis, and interpretation of results, so that teachers can methodologically substantiate teaching decisions [15, 16].

- *School-university and research institute partnerships* facilitate access to methodological expertise, co-design of applied research, and dissemination of results, strengthening the link between research and practice [17].

- *The distributed leadership and professional learning communities* support reflection and research in schools through clear roles of facilitation, mentoring, and project coordination [18].

- *Governance and incentives for research* include recognition of investigative activities in professional evaluation, creation of internal micro-grants, spaces for presenting results and mechanisms for scaling up good practices [16].

- *The digitalization of research support* through the use of collaboration platforms and tools for collecting and analyzing educational data, is carried out in accordance with European guidelines on digital education and learning design [7].

Overall, the management of research competence development involves moving from individual initiatives to an institutional support system, based on evidence-based leadership, strategic allocation of resources and time, functional partnerships, investigation routines and mechanisms for disseminating the results.

Research Methodology

The methodology is presented from a procedural perspective, with emphasis on the description of the design, sample, instruments and analysis methods, in order to ensure transparency and replicability of the approach.

The research respected the ethical principles of educational investigation, including voluntary participation, prior information of participants, confidentiality and anonymization of data, as well as the use of results exclusively for scientific purposes, with aggregate reporting and the right of withdrawal without professional consequences.

S.B. Bierer emphasizes the need to combine practical relevance with methodological rigor in the evaluation of training interventions, by explicitly describing the context and procedures for data collection and analysis. At the same time, the author highlights the limitations of single-group pretest-posttest design and the threats to internal validity, recommending, when possible, the use of comparisons and methodological triangulation to strengthen the validity of conclusions [1].

In accordance with these guidelines, the present research was conducted through a unifactorial experimental design, with a single group of participants, using the within-subject model, based on measuring the level of research competence before and after the formative intervention. The approach included three correlated stages: the assessment stage (pretest), oriented towards establishing the initial level of research competence; the training stage, which consisted of implementing a *training program* dedicated to developing the cognitive, operational and attitudinal dimensions of competence; and the control stage (posttest), focused on re-evaluating the level of competence and identifying the progress recorded by the participants.

The research sample consisted of 18 teachers from pre-university education, from the Public Institution Codreanca Middle School, Straseni district, the selection being of a convenience and voluntary nature, justified by the application objective of the approach, namely the optimization of professional development at the institutional level. The main data collection tool was *the Research Competency Assessment Questionnaire*, applied in two rounds, pretest and posttest, to capture the dynamics of change on the three dimensions of competence.

The data analysis combined quantitative and qualitative procedures. From a quantitative perspective, score distributions and differences between initial and final values were calculated, in order to highlight the progress of participants and the changes in the structure of competence levels. From a qualitative perspective, observations on the activities carried out during the training sessions and the feedback of participants

were used, in order to interpret the pedagogical significance of the changes recorded and to correlate the numerical results with attitudinal and reflective developments.

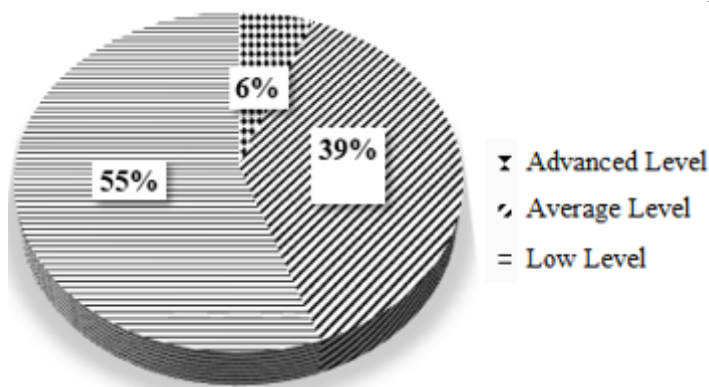


Figure 3. Level of Research Competence Development Among Teachers at Identification Stage

edge and application of research methods, suggesting a sporadic and non-formalized use of investigative tools. The segment corresponding to the average level indicates the existence of a basic understanding of methodological concepts, but with an inconsistent application in the current teaching activity. The marginal representation of the advanced level confirms the incipient nature of the research culture at the institutional level and emphasizes the need for a systematic training intervention.

Based on these findings, a *training program* oriented towards the development of research competence was designed and implemented, structured in sessions and activities that aimed at identifying relevant educational problems, formulating research objectives and hypotheses, selecting appropriate methods and tools, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting the results and capitalizing on them in optimizing teaching practice.

In line with recent recommendations on the evaluation of educational interventions, the methodological approach aimed to ensure comparability of the conditions for applying the questionnaire at the pretest and posttest, a coherent description of the intervention in terms of themes, duration and types of activities, as well as compliance with the principles of confidentiality and information of participants regarding the purpose of research.

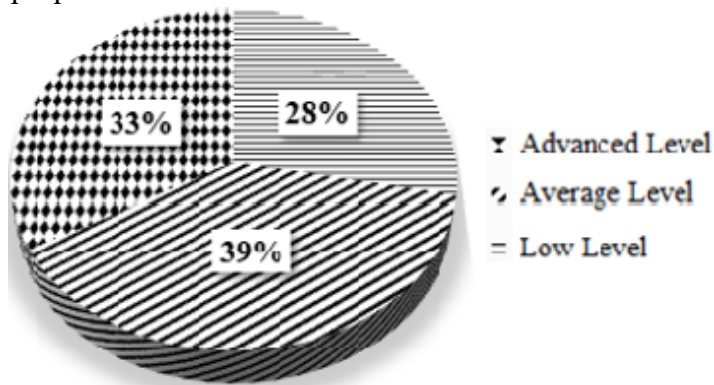


Figure 4. Level of Research Competence Development in Teachers at Control Stage

quantifiable effectiveness of the training intervention. Maintaining the constant share of the average level (39%) can be interpreted both as a consolidation of existing competences and as a potential for further progress towards the advanced level, under the conditions of differentiated training strategies.

The validation of the training program was carried out by comparative analysis of the data collected in the observation phase and in the control phase, using the same research instrument – the research com-

At the observation stage, the distribution of participants by levels of research competence highlighted a predominance of the low level, which indicates a limited familiarity with investigative approaches and the systematic use of research methods in teaching practice. Thus, 10 teachers (55%) were at a low level of research competence, 7 teachers (39%) demonstrated an average level, and only one teacher (6%) reached the advanced level (Figure 3).

The analysis of these results reveals a significant variability in the levels of competence within the investigated group. Most participants obtained scores that reflect a low level of knowl-

The data collected at the final stage (post-test) highlighted a visible and significant improvement in the level of research competence. The distribution of participants showed that 5 teachers (28%) were classified as low level, 7 teachers (39%) remained at average level, and 6 teachers (33%) reached the advanced level (Figure 4).

The comparison of the initial and final results indicates a significant redistribution of participants between the competence levels. The low level registered a decrease of 27 percentage points, while the advanced level increased by 27 percentage points, which suggests a real and

petence questionnaire – and by examining the differences between the initial and final scores, in order to highlight the progress made by the participants (Figure 5).

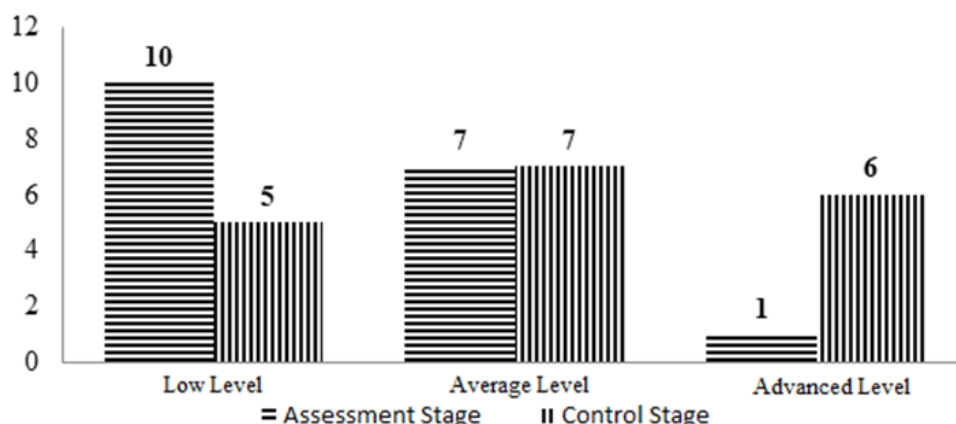


Figure 5. Comparative Aspects of Research Competence Level in Teachers at Assessment Stage and at Control Stage

The graphic analysis highlights a substantial progress of teachers following the implementation of training program, reflected by the significant reduction in the share of participants at a low level and the considerable increase in those who reached the advanced level. This dynamic demonstrates the impact of the intervention not only on the development of basic competences, but also on the formation of certain superior competences, relevant for the initiation and coordination of educational research efforts.

In addition, the analysis of activities carried out within the training sessions and the feedback of participants indicate an increase in confidence in their own ability to apply educational research methods, a deeper understanding of the methodological stages of the investigation and an increased availability for initiating research projects at the institutional level.

Results and Discussions

The results of experimental approach highlight a significant improvement in the research competence of teachers on the three analyzed dimensions – cognitive, operational and attitudinal. After completing the managerially coordinated training program, participants demonstrated an increased capacity to identify and formulate research questions relevant to teaching practice, a more appropriate use of investigation methods and tools, as well as an increased level of pedagogical reflection, manifested by the integration of research results in the planning of teaching and assessment activities. The comparative pre-test–post-test analysis indicates consistent progress at the individual and group levels, confirming the hypothesis of the effectiveness of the training intervention.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) highlights that managerial support and institutional frameworks favorable to the use of research results increase the ability of teachers to integrate data and evidence into decision-making and learning design, strengthening the culture of using evidence in schools [18; 19]. Similarly, UNESCO emphasizes, in recent analyses on research-action and continuous professional development, that training programs focused on systematic cycles of inquiry contribute to the development of professional competences and to the strengthening of collaboration and reflection in the school environment [22].

From a managerial perspective, these findings support the importance of allocating time for investigative activities, access to methodological resources, mentoring, and recognition of research activities in professional evaluation, as essential factors for ensuring the continuity and impact of interventions on educational practice.

At the same time, UNESCO and R. Upsher draw attention to the methodological limitations of studies with small samples and single-group designs, recommending sample expansion, the use of comparison groups, and the inclusion of quantitative effect indicators to strengthen the external validity and replicability of the results [23; 24].

Conclusions

The results of study confirm that the development of research competence of teachers is essential for increasing the quality of educational process and for consolidation of an institutional culture oriented towards the use of evidence, reflection and pedagogical innovation. Research competence is emerging as an integrative professional construct, which brings together cognitive, operational and attitudinal dimensions.

The implementation of a structured and managerially coordinated training program leads to significant improvements in the capacity of teachers to formulate relevant problems, to use appropriate research methods and tools and to integrate empirical data into the didactic decision-making process, supporting the positive impact of managerial strategies based on collaborative professional learning.

From a managerial perspective, the results emphasize the importance of evidence-based leadership, strategic allocation of time and resources, development of data infrastructure and strengthening school-university partnerships and professional learning communities for the sustainability of applied research initiatives.

At the same time, methodological limitations require the expansion of future research by including comparison groups and quantitative effect indicators, in order to strengthen the external validity and transferability of the results.

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DOMAINS OF ACADEMIC STAFF ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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The present article investigates the main domains through which academic staff participate in the formation and consolidation of university organizational culture, departing from the view that faculty shape, carry, and renew institutional norms through their daily professional conduct. Based on interpretivist organizational theory and a thematic synthesis of foundational and contemporary scholarship, the study traces the specific mechanisms through which shared assumptions and values are internalized by academic staff and expressed in their professional conduct, identifying the distinctive roles they assume as guardians and transformers of institutional identity. Particular attention is given to the conditions that facilitate the transition from professional disengagement to meaningful institutional involvement, with emphasis on knowledge management, pro-innovation academic climates, and the alignment of individual professional trajectories with the broader mission and values of the institution. The analysis argues that staff engagement is what makes organizational resilience possible, and concludes that building cultures of genuine collaboration and reflection, supported by action research methodologies and participatory forms of academic leadership, offers a workable basis for institutional development and adaptability under contemporary pressures of educational change.

Keywords: *organizational culture, academic staff, higher education institutions, pro-innovation environments.*

ARII DE IMPLICARE A PERSONALULUI ACADEMIC ÎN MODELAREA CULTURII ORGANIZAȚIONALE UNIVERSITARE

Prezentul articol analizează dimensiunile implicării personalului didactic universitar în dezvoltarea culturii organizaționale a instituțiilor de învățământ superior. Demersul investigativ urmărește modul în care premisele fundamentale și valorile împărtășite sunt internalizate și transpuse în practică de către cadrele didactice, delimitând rolurile specifice pe care acestea le exercită în calitate de vectori de transmitere și participanți activi la configurarea identității instituționale. Studiul examinează strategii validate în literatura de specialitate pentru facilitarea tranziției de la lipsa de implicare la un nivel ridicat de angajament, cu accent pe managementul cunoașterii și climatul favorabil inovării. Rezultatele evidențiază faptul că participarea personalului didactic constituie un determinant al rezilienței organizaționale, realizată prin corelarea sistematică a obiectivelor profesionale individuale cu misiunea și valorile universității. Concluziile relevă că promovarea unei culturi a colaborării și a practicii reflexive, în special prin valorificarea cercetării acționale și a leadership-ului participativ de tip orizontal, contribuie la creșterea performanței instituționale și la consolidarea capacității de adaptare în contextul globalizării educaționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *cultură organizațională, cadre didactice universitare, instituții de învățământ superior, climat favorabil inovării.*

Introduction

In his 1988 treatise, Edgar H. Schein conceptualized organizational culture as the deep, unspoken assumptions a group develops while learning to survive externally and function internally and subsequently transmitted to new members as the normatively and cognitively appropriate model through which organizational reality is to be perceived, interpreted, and acted upon [16]. What makes this conceptualization useful is its insistence on depth: cultural assumptions work quietly, below conscious awareness, giving members a common reference point when institutional signals seem contradictory or unclear [16]. Because organizational culture operates at this foundational level, it reaches into management styles, institutional priorities, and the everyday conduct of organizational life [14].

Research in educational management shows that universities with coherent organizational cultures are better positioned to pursue collective goals, embed their mission in practice, and hold together under

external pressure [8]. At a broader level, organizational culture is how a university marks out its identity and holds onto it as global pressures push institutions toward uniformity [1].

Methodological scholarship introduces two distinct models (see Figure 1) for analyzing these dynamics at different institutional strata, as elaborated by Tomàs Folch and Ion (2009).

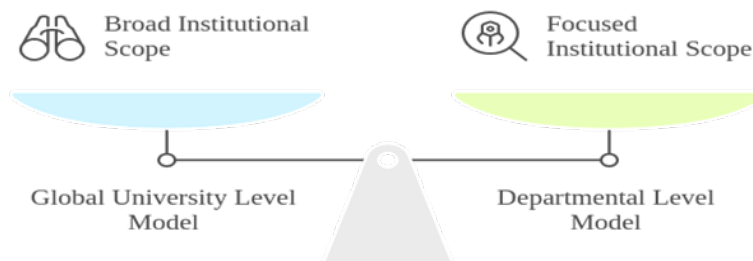


Figure 1. Methodological Models of Cultural Analysis

The first model situates its analysis at the level of the institution as a whole, examining functional domains such as governance structures, resource allocation, and the use of technology in order to identify those areas of institutional life most open to cultural change. The second model adopts an ethnographic orientation at the departmental level, employing participatory observation to diagnose the prevailing internal climate from within the lived experience of its members. Read together, the two models reveal a persistent and troubling tension between officially proclaimed norms of collegiality and the structural conditions that universities actually reproduce: despite abundant documentary commitments to collaborative values, the professional architecture of higher education institutions frequently reinforces what Folch and Ion (2009) describe as a culture of balkanization, in which research productivity is consistently valued more than teaching within existing reward systems.

Aside from theoretical assumptions, survey-based research into institutional culture provides empirical evidence regarding the degree to which formal organizational values are actually integrated into the daily professional lives of faculty. By examining these dynamics, researchers can better understand the tension between a university's commitment to academic excellence and the lived reality of the workplace, where factors such as interpersonal trust and openness to change are paramount. This investigative approach utilizes several distinct lenses. For instance, Hofstede's concept of uncertainty avoidance helps explain cultural resistance to institutional shifts, whereas Cameron and Quinn's model identifies the underlying competitive or relational orientations of the climate. The spread of pedagogical innovation across these academic communities is often best understood through Rogers' diffusion theory, which highlights the social mechanisms that either facilitate or hinder organizational growth [14].

In this context, *the primary objective of this article is to delineate and analyze the dimensions, forms, and strategies governing the engagement of academic staff in the development of organizational culture within the higher education sector.*

Scholarly discussions of higher education emphasize that organizational culture lies at the core of university life, influencing how institutions define themselves, sustain their traditions, and transmit shared values across successive generations of faculty, staff, and students. Within a well-developed institutional culture, faculty operate in an environment where professional expectations, academic standards, and institutional priorities are clearly recognized, enabling consistent professional judgment, stronger accountability, and greater organizational coherence. Where such a culture is genuinely shared, it deepens organizational commitment, generates a willingness to invest in the institution past the strict requirements of contractual obligation, and produces measurable gains in institutional productivity [5]. Where it is absent or fragmented, even technically sophisticated management strategies tend to fall short of their potential.

Methodology

The present study adopts a conceptual synthesis design grounded in interpretivist organizational theory, integrating foundational and recent scholarship on university organizational culture and academic staff

engagement through systematic thematic analysis, with the aim of comparatively mapping the principal constructs under investigation, including fundamental assumptions, value alignment, innovation diffusion, collegial trust, goal congruence, and knowledge management, across macro-institutional and micro-departmental levels of analysis. The analysis systematizes *domains of faculty engagement*, clarifying the processes through which academic staff internalize, enact, and progressively reshape university culture within contemporary higher education environments.

The Role of Academic Staff in Organizational Culture

Academic staff occupy a consequential position in relation to organizational culture, functioning as its transmitters, interpreters, and shapers across multiple registers of institutional life. Their influence on the university culture **exceed** their formally designated responsibilities in teaching and research, as culture lives in daily habits and unwritten norms including in how scholars talk to each other, collaborate, and quietly agree on what counts as serious academic work.

At its deepest structural level, organizational culture operates through the basic assumptions that Schein identifies as the bedrock of institutional life, providing a relatively stable cognitive and normative basis through which policies, decisions, and events are interpreted and assigned meaning within the organization [16]. Academic staff are the principal agents through whom these assumptions are given practical form, translating the formal statements contained in institutional mission documents into the living orientations that actually govern departmental behavior, pedagogical choices, and professional relationships, thereby mediating in a continuous and consequential way between the institution's official self-representation and the realities of its daily functioning [10].

Academic staff engagement transforms the university's mission and professional culture in ways that formal governance structures alone cannot fully achieve. The expectations faculty members maintain regarding research excellence, professional development, and pedagogical quality gradually influence what the institution truly values in practice, outside what is formally stated in official policies or documents [7], [9]. Through peer review, collegial interaction, teaching practice, and research activity, faculty members establish the academic and professional standards that new staff and students come to recognize as part of the institution's culture and expectations.

The relational dimension of academic staff engagement is an important aspect of institutional culture. Communication among colleagues, openness to intellectual exchange, and cooperation within departments strongly influence the level of mutual respect and professional responsibility within the academic environment. These interactions guide the everyday working climate of the institution and affect how faculty members collaborate and support one another. Research shows that strong collegial relationships and active social engagement are closely connected to a healthier and more productive academic workplace [14].

Academic staff also function as the primary agents through whom institutional innovation is either realized or frustrated. The adoption of new teaching methodologies, the pursuit of experimental research agendas, and the willingness to challenge established professional routines are all contingent upon a faculty culture that is receptive to change, and it is through the accumulated professional choices of individual academics that institutional aspirations toward innovation are either translated into operational norms or remain confined to the level of rhetorical commitment, as Rogers (2003) demonstrates in his foundational study of how innovations diffuse through social systems. In navigating this dynamic, academic staff perform the delicate and demanding task of balancing continuity with adaptation, distributing their energies across teaching, research, and service activities in ways that reflect and reinforce prevailing institutional priorities [19].

The maintenance and adaptive transmission of historical and pedagogical traditions represents a further dimension of academic staff engagement with institutional culture. In integrating altruistic and community-oriented values into contemporary professional practice, faculty negotiate the tension between inherited academic ideals and the managerial expectations that characterize contemporary higher education governance, a tension that Bayanova et al. (2019) address from a philosophical standpoint in their analysis of organizational culture policy in contemporary universities. This negotiation is a form of cultural work through which the institution's identity is continuously reconstructed in relation to changing external

demands. Apart from this, academic staff serve as moral and professional models within their institutions, mentoring students and newer colleagues and modeling the relational norms and ethical standards that define the academic vocation [1].

The coherence and effectiveness of institutional culture depend largely on the active involvement of academic staff in bringing the university’s mission, vision, and values into everyday academic practice. Faculty engagement helps maintain and strengthen institutional goals over time, influences the organizational climate, and contributes to academic performance, as demonstrated by Lubis and Hanum in their study of organizational culture in higher education settings [8]. Through their teaching, research, communication, and professional behavior, academic staff help preserve institutional identity and condition how new members of the university community understand the organization’s academic standards and professional values.

Academic staff, in sum, exercise influence over organizational culture through a wide and interlocking range of processes: the internalization and enactment of shared assumptions, the establishment and perpetuation of scholarly norms, the cultivation or erosion of collegial trust, the adoption or resistance of institutional innovations, the preservation and reinterpretation of pedagogical traditions, and the ongoing mediation of the institution’s identity in relation to its internal membership and its external environment.

Strategies for Academic Staff Engagement in Organizational Culture

The engagement of academic staff in organizational culture requires consistent and intentional institutional effort, and the quality of that effort determines whether the university develops a genuine culture of participation. Figure 2 maps the principal dimensions and pathways through which engagement develops within the institution, drawing attention to the complexity and interconnectedness of the processes involved.

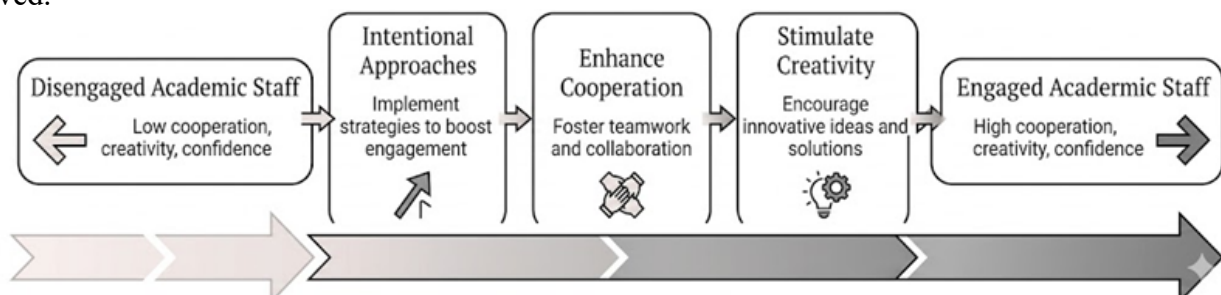


Figure 2. Enhancing Academic Staff Engagement in Organizational Culture

Moving faculty from disengagement, where cooperation drops and confidence shrinks, to genuine, lasting involvement doesn’t happen on its own it requires **focused institutional intervention**. The following strategies, represented schematically in Figure 3, reflect the most productive approaches identified in the scholarly literature for supporting this transition and fostering a genuinely cohesive organizational culture.



Figure 3. Strategies for Academic Staff Involvement in Organizational Culture

A precondition for any form of meaningful staff engagement is the effective socialization and integration of academic staff into the life of the institution. As Tierney (1988) observes, organizational culture fulfils one of its most indispensable functions by providing newcomers with the social and normative understanding required to navigate the institution's landscape with genuine competence, to develop a sense of collective identity, and to sustain the organizational commitment that institutional continuity depends upon [18]. When this socialization is substantive, it counteracts the centrifugal tendencies toward departmental fragmentation that represent one of the most persistent threats to institutional coherence [8]. The deeper dimension of this process is the cultivation of goal congruence, understood as the deliberate and sustained alignment of individual professional aspirations with the university's mission to help faculty see their own goals reflected in the university's mission [2]. Institutional solidarity is most effectively consolidated, however, when universities invest in a genuine collaborative articulation of the values shared between faculty and administration, working to reconcile the altruistic professional ideals that motivate academic vocations with the student-centered objectives that define institutional purpose. Treating academic staff as genuine participants in the synthesis of organizational and scholarly values, cultivates the relational authenticity from which deep and durable institutional commitment grows [1].

Among the most productive pathways for deepening faculty engagement is the systematic organization of knowledge transfer and knowledge management within the institution. According to Sadovei and Borozan (2026) universities that develop coherent systems for the collection, preservation, and circulation of institutional knowledge create the structural conditions for sustained faculty engagement and enhanced collective effectiveness, since when faculty expertise, accumulated institutional memory, and the lessons of professional experience are organized for accessibility and actively shared across departmental boundaries, the retention and living transmission of organizational norms becomes a shared responsibility. This ties directly to the distinctive position of teachers as reflective practitioners and primary knowledge producers within the institution, a role elaborated by Bushnaq and Borozan (2022), who argue that faculty continuously construct and refine understanding of learners, curricula, and pedagogical processes through the disciplined examination of their own professional experience. This reflective and generative capacity positions academic staff as the institution's most direct source of pedagogical innovation, enabling them to transform individual professional insights into shared institutional norms while simultaneously reinforcing the professional culture, ethical standards, and sense of collective mission that give a university its intellectual character.

Along the same lines as knowledge creators is the imperative to cultivate academic environments that actively encourage pedagogical experimentation, methodological innovation in research, and creative approaches to institutional administration, thereby enabling faculty to become agents in the genuine transformation of institutional culture. When universities foster climates of this kind, they create the conditions under which aspirational cultural goals are converted into operational professional norms, and engagement becomes a form of genuine co-authorship of the institution's evolving identity, precisely in the manner Rogers (2003) describes when he argues that innovations are adopted through the relational networks and shared orientations that develop within communities of practice. The most methodologically **precise** approach to translating this insight into institutional practice is the incorporation of the Action Research Model, which represents one of the most productive models available for engaging academic staff in the active formation of organizational culture, precisely because it dissolves the boundary between those who analyze an institution and those who inhabit it. Zentis (2023) demonstrates that the participatory character of this approach, which involves academic staff at every stage of the inquiry and intervention process, proves particularly effective in dismantling the professional silos that reinforce departmental isolation and in building the cross-functional trust that collegial culture requires. This participatory **approach** provides faculty with the opportunity to co-design, implement, and evaluate interventions across teaching, research, and broader institutional processes, generating a form of professional ownership over the cultural values being enacted [3]. Such involvement is epistemically productive, in that staff who participate in **structuring** institutional norms develop a more nuanced, contextually grounded understanding of those norms and are therefore better positioned to transmit and sustain them, while the model's emphasis on systematic reflection and continuous professional learning ensures that innovation and cultural development are

treated as constitutive features of ongoing institutional life [20; 15]. A concrete illustration of these principles in action is provided by the Research and Pedagogical Innovation Laboratory (CIP) at Ion Creangă State Pedagogical University of Chisinau, which brings academic staff directly into action research projects, pedagogical innovation initiatives, and structured professional development activities, thereby creating substantive opportunities for faculty to contribute to the university's organizational culture. Through participation in pedagogical action research, professional growth programmes, and the wider dissemination of innovative academic practices, the laboratory supports the integration of institutional vision and mission into the texture of daily academic activity, while its seminars, workshops, and international conferences generate spaces of genuine knowledge exchange and serve to deepen the collegial bonds, mutual trust, and shared professional values among faculty that are the prerequisite of a coherent organizational culture.

The relational and communicative dimensions of the institution represents another domain for staff engagement. As Sadovei (2022) notes, the quality of organizational communication within a university is among the most consequential determinants of institutional culture, insofar as communication is the medium through which the university's values, priorities, and commitments are continuously enacted and renegotiated. Communication structures must accommodate the full range of organizational information flows, from the downward dissemination of institutional directives and orientations, through the upward transmission of faculty perspectives and professional concerns, to the horizontal exchange of knowledge and experience across departmental boundaries, if they are to support the participatory culture that genuine engagement requires. The degree of openness, transparency, and responsiveness that characterizes the institutional communication climate is a powerful signal of the regard in which faculty are held as professional contributors to the life of the organization, and it is precisely this signal that determines whether institutional initiatives generate authentic engagement [17]. Sadovei and Borozan (2026) demonstrate that in culturally and linguistically diverse higher education contexts, an intercultural orientation to organizational communication acquires particular importance, as the productive management of differences in communicative norms, professional values, and institutional expectations requires its conscious recognition as a source of organizational learning and adaptive capacity; academic mobility deepens this capacity further, as faculty who have engaged professionally across varied institutional and national contexts bring heightened reflexivity regarding the cultural assumptions that direct academic practice. Reinforcing and sustaining all of these communicative gains requires a deliberate institutional movement toward horizontal and democratically constituted leadership structures, since, as Folch and Ion (2009) argue, the cultivation of interpersonal trust through sustained peer collaboration and structured mentoring relationships produces measurable gains in faculty engagement by counteracting the professional isolation that hierarchical academic environments tend to reinforce and by generating a genuinely shared sense of responsibility for the institution's cultural and intellectual development [6].

At the level of the individual academic, two conditions emerge from the literature as particularly decisive for sustained engagement: intellectual autonomy and structured professional development. Bayanova et al. (2019) argue that the provision of genuine academic freedom is a functional precondition of deep institutional engagement, since faculty who experience their professional environment as genuinely empowering are substantially more likely to invest their intellectual energies in ways that advance the institution's cultural and academic goals [1]. This observation is complemented by the recognition that institutional engagement is substantially reinforced by the provision of clearly structured pathways for career development and professional advancement, which communicate to academic staff that their contributions are recognized as valuable and their growth as professionals is a matter of genuine institutional concern. Non-material incentives, including public recognition, academic awards, the conferral of positions of collegial responsibility, and the elevation of professional status, serve a cultural function that material compensation alone cannot replicate, as they cultivate a psychological climate of genuine institutional belonging and affirm the individual's worth within the shared professional community.

Two further dimensions complete this account of the institutional strategies that sustain academic staff engagement: the active promotion of internationalization and the careful design of institutional policy.

Whitsed et al. (2023) demonstrate that the substantive involvement of academic staff in internationalization processes strengthens institutional adaptability, broadens the intellectual horizons of the academic community, and cultivates a form of professional resilience that positions the university to respond effectively to the continuous transformations characterizing the contemporary global higher education environment. The realization of all these strategies depends, however, on the quality of the institutional policy environment within which academic staff work, a point underscored by Bayanova et al. (2019), who argue that engagement is most reliably supported when institutional policies are designed with genuine care for the balance between economic imperatives and the continuity of human capital, ensuring that long-term professional commitment is cultivated and that alignment between the conditions of academic employment and the university's declared mission is treated as a substantive policy objective [1].

Conclusion

The findings of the present study show that academic staff engagement is essential to the development of a strong university organizational culture, because institutional vision and mission become meaningful only when they are reflected in the daily work and professional conduct of faculty members. Through their decisions, interactions, and academic practices, faculty influence and reinforce the existing culture. The analysis also suggests that meaningful engagement cannot be achieved through formal policies alone. It depends on institutional efforts to create conditions in which faculty experience professional respect, intellectual independence, mutual trust, and genuine involvement in university life.

More specifically, adopting an Action Research Model alongside a conscious effort to unify institutional goals allows for a meaningful integration between individual professional values and the wider institutional agenda. At the same time, reducing departmental fragmentation and professional isolation through horizontal leadership arrangements and effective communication channels helps strengthen a cultural structure that can remain stable even under external pressures and internal transformation. The systematic involvement of academic staff in knowledge creation, pedagogical innovation, and the reflective examination of institutional practice is the most reliable means by which a university secures its distinctive identity and maintains the quality of its scholarly community over time.

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EPISTEMOLOGICAL LANDMARKS AND PARADIGMS OF THE FORMATION OF STUDENTS' LITERARY COMPETENCE

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The article examines the issue of developing students' literary competence from the perspective of epistemological benchmarks and relevant educational paradigms. The authors highlight the structuralist and hermeneutic paradigms, reception theories, and the sociocultural dimension, emphasizing the active role of the reader in generating literary meaning. The study underlines that literary competence goes beyond mere textual knowledge, involving the development of critical thinking, aesthetic sensitivity, and the capacity for reflection on the cultural context. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of an integrated approach that correlates individual and sociocultural factors and supports the teacher in their role as a mediator of learning. Literary competence is thus conceptualized as a complex, multidimensional construct that combines knowledge, critical analysis, and creative interpretation, contributing to the formation of a reflective and active reader.

Keywords: *literary competence, epistemological landmarks, paradigms, students, teacher.*

REPERE EPISTEMOLOGICE ȘI PARADIGME ALE FORMĂRII COMPETENȚEI LITERARE A ELEVILOR

Articolul analizează problema formării competenței literare a elevilor din perspectiva reperelor epistemologice și a paradigmatelor educaționale relevante. Autorii scot în evidență paradigmele structuralistă, hermeneutică, teoriile receptării și dimensiunea socio-culturală, evidențiind rolul activ al cititorului în producerea sensului literar. Studiul subliniază că o competență literară depășește simpla cunoaștere textuală, implicând dezvoltarea gândirii critice, a sensibilității estetice și a capacității de reflecție asupra contextului cultural. În plus, se arată importanța unei abordări integrate, care să coreleze factorii individuali și socio-culturali și să sprijine profesorul în rolul său de mediator al învățării. Competența literară este astfel conceptualizată ca un construct complex, multidimensional, care combină cunoașterea, analiza critică și interpretarea creativă, contribuind la formarea unui cititor reflexiv și activ.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competență literară, repere epistemologice, paradigme, elevi, profesor.*

Introduction

In the context of contemporary education, marked by the transition from paradigms focused exclusively on the transmission of knowledge to models oriented towards the formation of skills, literary competence occupies a distinct place, through its epistemological complexity and specificity. However, the study of literature in school can no longer be conceived simply as an exercise in memorizing information about authors, currents or canonical works, but as a profound formative process, which engages the student in activities of understanding, interpreting, reflecting and aesthetically valorizing the literary text. In this sense, literary competence becomes an essential educational construct, located at the intersection of cultural knowledge, cognitive development and the formation of attitudes and values.

The reconfiguration of the status of literary reading within the school curriculum is determined, on the one hand, by the mutations produced in the knowledge society, and on the other hand, by the paradigm shifts in the field of educational sciences. The student is increasingly considered an active subject of learning, called to participate in the construction of meaning, to relate information, to formulate interpretative hypotheses and to assume responsibility for his own judgments. In this context, the formation of literary competence can no longer be reduced to the acquisition of established interpretations, but involves the de-

velopment of the capacity to operate with the plurality of meanings, to argue interpretations and to integrate literary reading into his own cultural and existential experience.

From an epistemological perspective, literary competence is based on a specific conception of knowledge, different from that of exact or empirical disciplines. The literary text does not transmit univocal information, verifiable through standardized procedures, but offers an open field of meanings, configured through artistic language, symbols and complex narrative structures. Consequently, literary knowledge is interpretative, reflexive and contextual, and the formation of literary competence involves the development of cognitive and hermeneutical tools appropriate to this type of knowledge. From this perspective, the analysis of literary competence requires a theoretical approach that goes beyond the descriptive or methodological level and investigates the epistemological foundations of the act of reading and interpretation.

The need for such an approach is accentuated by the tensions between official curricular requirements [10], which promote competences as the goals of education, and current teaching practices, often dominated by reproductive-analytic approaches. In many situations, literary competence is treated as a declarative objective, without being supported by a coherent theoretical reflection on the nature of literary knowledge and on how students come to construct meanings. In the absence of clear epistemological benchmarks, there is a risk that the formation of literary competence will be reduced to formal exercises or standardized assessments, which do not capture the complexity of the interpretive process.

In this context, the present approach aims to contribute to clarifying the concept of literary competence by relating it to the main epistemological paradigms relevant to the study of literature. The article starts from the premise that the formation of literary competence is inseparable from the way in which reading is understood as an act of knowledge and from the status attributed to the reader in the process of interpretation. The student is not a passive receiver of already established meanings, but an active participant in the construction of meanings, in dialogue with the text, the cultural context and their own experience.

Also, the epistemological approach to literary competence allows a better understanding of the relationship between the cognitive and axiological dimensions of literary reading. However, literature does not only provide the opportunity to develop interpretive skills, but also contributes significantly to the formation of aesthetic sensitivity, empathy and the capacity for reflection on the human condition. Therefore, literary competence must be analyzed as an integrative construct, which articulates the knowledge, interpretation and valorization of the literary text in a lasting formative process.

The main objective of this article is to identify and analyze the epistemological landmarks that underpin the formation of students' literary competence, in order to outline a coherent theoretical framework, useful for both didactic research and educational practice. Through this analysis, the aim is to highlight the specificity of literary knowledge, the role of the reader in the interpretative process and the implications of these aspects for the didactics of literature. At the same time, the article aims to provide a starting point for further reflections on how literary competence can be formed, assessed and valued in the context of contemporary pre-university education.

Epistemological foundations of literary competence

The analysis of literary competence from an epistemological perspective involves, first of all, clarifying the type of knowledge that reading and interpreting a literary text implies. Unlike disciplines with a high degree of conceptual formalization, literature operates with a symbolic, ambiguous and plurivocal language, which determines a specific way of relating to knowledge. The literary text does not offer demonstrable truths in a scientific sense, but configures possible meanings, dependent on the context, the cultural horizon of the reader and the interpretative act itself. In this framework, literary competence is based on an interpretative epistemology, in which understanding is the result of a dialogue between the text and the reader.

A fundamental epistemological landmark is the philosophical hermeneutics, especially in the formulation proposed by Hans-Georg Gadamer. In his work, "Truth and Method", Gadamer argues that understanding is not a purely cognitive act, but a historically, culturally and linguistically conditioned process. The meaning of the text does not exist independently of the reader, but is constituted within a "fusion of horizons" between the horizon of the work and that of the interpreter. [7]. Applied to literary education, this

perspective implies the recognition that the student cannot be reduced to a passive receiver of the “correct” meanings, but is a co-creator of the interpretation. He accesses the meaning of the text not in a neutral or objective way, but only through his own experiences, knowledge and values. In this sense, literary competence presupposes the student’s capacity to assume his own interpretative position, to argue for it and to revise it in contact with other perspectives. From an epistemological point of view, literary truth is not unique and definitive, but plural, dialogical and open to reinterpretation. This characteristic fundamentally differentiates literary knowledge from strict scientific knowledge and justifies the need for teaching strategies that privilege dialogue, reflection, and problematization.

Another essential theoretical landmark is the aesthetics of reception, developed within the School of Konstanz. Hans Robert Jauss introduces the concept of the “horizon of expectation”, highlighting the fact that each reading is conditioned by the aesthetic, cultural and historical norms of the era and of the reader. From this perspective, the meaning of the literary work is not fixed, but changes over time, depending on the communities of interpretation that receive it [9]. Wolfgang Iser, another representative of this orientation, emphasizes the active role of the reader in the reading process, speaking of the “free spaces” or textual “gaps” that require interpretive completion [8]. Literary competence thus implies the ability to identify these areas of indeterminacy and to capitalize on them through inference, imagination and critical reasoning. In educational terms, this perspective supports the idea that literary reading is an act of constructing meaning, not of mechanically decoding a pre-established message.

From an epistemological point of view, literary competence is configured at the intersection of declarative, procedural and metacognitive knowledge. The competent student has knowledge about textual structures, figurative language, conventions of literary genres and cultural context, but this knowledge becomes relevant only to the extent that it is activated in concrete reading situations. Moreover, literary competence presupposes the ability to reflect on one’s own interpretation strategies, to evaluate the validity of formulated hypotheses and to accept the provisional nature of conclusions. In this framework, literary reading can be understood as a complex metacognitive process, in which the reader constantly monitors his/her understanding, adjusts his/her strategies and confronts his/her interpretations with the text and with other readers. This reflexive dimension gives literary competence a distinct epistemological status, close to critical thinking and interpretive reasoning.

A significant contribution to the epistemological foundation of literary competence is also brought by literary semiotics, especially through the contributions of Umberto Eco. In *Lector in fabula* [4], Eco introduces the concept of the “model reader”, suggesting that the literary text anticipates a certain type of interpretive competence. However, real reading can deviate from this model, generating multiple interpretations, legitimate or excessive. Literary competence implies, in this sense, the ability to operate within the limits of a textually justified interpretation, avoiding both dogmatic rigidity and absolute relativism.

Epistemologically speaking, literary competence involves a balance between interpretative freedom and textual constraint. The competent student knows how to base his or her interpretations on textual elements, use appropriate concepts and construct coherent arguments. This argumentative capacity is essential for transforming reading into a valid act of knowledge, and not into a simple subjective expression of impressions. In addition, literary competence includes an axiological and cultural dimension, since literature is a privileged space for reflection on values, identity and the human condition. From this perspective, literary knowledge is not neutral, but involves evaluations, attitudes and ethical positions. The epistemology of literary competence must therefore integrate this value dimension, recognizing the role of literature in the formation of aesthetic sensitivity and cultural empathy.

In pedagogical terms, these epistemological foundations require a rethinking of the way in which the process of teaching and learning literature is conceived. First of all, as V. Fluieraș states, it should be taken into account that any type of competence „is a personal and individualized construct, which entails permanent reflexivity as a way of being and creativity” [5, p. 120]. The formation of literary competence cannot be achieved by transmitting canonical interpretations, but by creating learning situations that favor the exploration of meanings, interpretive dialogue and critical argumentation. The student must be placed in a situation to problematize the text, to formulate hypotheses and to support them with textual evidence.

Therefore, the epistemological foundations of literary competence to which we have referred highlight its complex, interpretative and reflexive character. Literary competence is constituted as a specific form of knowledge, distinct from factual or technical knowledge, but essential for the intellectual and cultural development of the student. By anchoring it in hermeneutics, semiotics, and the aesthetics of reception, literary competence offers a solid theoretical framework for understanding reading as an act of knowledge and for underpinning a didactic approach oriented towards the formation of an autonomous, critical and responsible reader.

Epistemological paradigms relevant in the formation of literary competence

The formation of literary competence is based on a set of epistemological paradigms that have influenced, over time, both literary theories and reading didactics.

The structuralist approach represents one of the fundamental paradigms that have decisively influenced both modern literary theory and reading didactics, providing a coherent epistemological framework for the analysis of literary text. Structuralism starts from the premise that the literary work constitutes an organized system of signs, within which the meaning is not the result of the author's intention or the reader's affective reaction, but of the relationships between the constitutive elements of the text. The text is thus conceived as an autonomous structure, governed by internal rules, which can be identified and analyzed objectively.

In this paradigm, literature is approached by analogy with language, being influenced by the developments of structural linguistics, especially by the Saussurean conception of language as a system of signs. Ferdinand de Saussure [3] demonstrated that meaning does not reside in isolated elements, but in the relationships between them, an idea that has been taken up and adapted by literary theorists. Applied to the literary text, this perspective assumes that the meaning of the work is constructed through oppositions, correlations and internal functions, and the analysis must target the narrative organization, thematic structure, character configuration and mechanisms of textual coherence.

A significant contribution to the consolidation of the structuralist approach is made by Roland Barthes, who, in his studies dedicated to narrative analysis [1], proposes investigating the text as a network of codes and functions. In his view, the narrative is organized on distinct levels – functional, actional and symbolic – that allow for a systematic and rigorous reading. This perspective has considerably influenced school practice, favoring the development of analytical skills such as identifying narrative sequences, analyzing relationships between characters, highlighting recurring motifs and dominant thematic structures.

From a didactic point of view, the structuralist approach contributed to the formation of literary competence by developing students' ability to operate with formal analysis tools and to recognize textual regularities. The student is taught to observe the internal structure of the work, to distinguish essential from secondary elements and to understand how they contribute to the production of global meaning. Thus, literary competence is associated, in this framework, with analytical rigor, conceptual precision and respect for literary conventions. However, the exclusive application of the structuralist paradigm in literary education also presents significant limits. Excessive emphasis on internal structures and mechanisms can lead to a rigid, formalistic reading, which reduces the literary work to an object of technical analysis, devoid of its experiential and axiological dimension. In such situations, interpretation risks becoming an exercise in mechanical identification of constitutive elements, and literary competence is confused with the ability to reproduce pre-established schemes and models. Criticisms of structuralism have highlighted the fact that literary meaning cannot be fully explained by the internal organization of the text alone, as reading is influenced by the cultural context, the reader's experience, and interpretive dynamics.

However, the formative value of the structuralist approach remains undeniable, especially in the initial stage of literary education, when the student needs clear landmarks to understand the architecture of the text. In an integrative perspective, structuralism can be used as a methodological foundation for the development of literary competence, provided that it is complemented by paradigms that recognize the role of the reader and the interpretative context. Structural analysis provides the necessary tools for understanding the organization of the text, but the training of the literary interpreter involves going beyond this level, by opening up to the plurality of meanings and to the dialogue between the text and the reader.

Hermeneutic perspectives represent a key moment in the evolution of literary theory, marking the transition from the analysis of the text as an autonomous structure to the understanding of interpretation as a dynamic process of mediation between text, author and reader. Hermeneutics shifts the emphasis from establishing a unique meaning, immanent to the text, to recognizing the open character of the literary work, whose meaning is constituted through the act of reading. From this perspective, literary competence is no longer conceived exclusively as a skill of formal analysis, but as a capacity for interpretive dialogue, contextualization and critical reflection.

The foundations of modern hermeneutics can be found in the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who proposes a vision of interpretation as a “fusion of horizons”. According to this conception, the meaning of a literary work is not definitively fixed at the moment of creation, but is updated according to the reader’s horizon of expectation, cultural experience and historical context. Interpretation thus becomes an act of mediation between the tradition of the text and the present of reading, in which the reader is not limited to deciphering the message, but actively participates in the construction of meaning. This approach implies a reconsideration of the relationship between author and text. The author’s intention is no longer seen as the ultimate instance of meaning, but as one of the factors that can guide interpretation. The text acquires semantic autonomy, and reading is conceived as a process of negotiating meanings, in which the reader confronts the structure of the work with his or her own questions, values and experiences. In this framework, literary interpretation takes on a reflective and dialogical dimension, being influenced both by the internal elements of the text and by the socio-cultural context of reception.

Paul Ricoeur makes an important contribution to the development of literary hermeneutics through the concept of distancing, emphasizing the fact that the text detaches itself from its initial situation of production and becomes available for multiple interpretations [11]. The French researcher believes that reading involves a double approach: explaining the text, by analyzing its structures, and understanding, by integrating meanings into the reader’s universe of experience. Thus, interpretation appears as a complex process, which mediates between objective analysis and the subjective assumption of meanings.

From an educational perspective, the hermeneutic approach offers a favorable framework for the formation of literary competence, as it encourages the active involvement of the student in the interpretative act. Literary competence is configured, in this context, as a mediation ability between the text and the self, between cultural tradition and personal experience. Hermeneutics also emphasizes the role of the question in the interpretation process. The literary text is viewed as a possible answer to fundamental questions of existence, and reading becomes an exercise in continuous interrogation. This problematizing dimension favors the development of critical thinking and the capacity for reflection, contributing to the formation of an autonomous and responsible reader. Interpretation no longer aims to validate a single “correct” reading, but to explore coherent meanings, supported by argumentation.

Like the structuralist approach, the hermeneutic approach also poses challenges in the didactic context. The risk of interpretative relativism or excessive subjectivism imposes the need for clear methodological guidelines, which ensure the coherence and rigor of the interpretative approach. In this sense, hermeneutics does not exclude structural analysis, but integrates it into a broader framework, in which explanation and understanding complement each other.

The socio-cultural dimension of literary competence is situated at the intersection of textual knowledge and its integration into social and cultural contexts. This perspective recognizes literature not only as an aesthetic object, but also as a social practice that contributes to the formation of identity, cultural sensitivity and civic responsibility of the individual. Literary competence, in this key, transcends knowledge about authors, genres or literary techniques, implying the student’s ability to use reading as a tool for critical reflection on the world and for relating to cultural values and norms.

Pierre Bourdieu’s work, “La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement” (1996), emphasizes the role of literature and cultural practices in the reproduction and transformation of cultural capital. According to P. Bourdieu, literary competence develops not only through contact with literary texts, but also through the social environment in which they are received, which determines access to cultural resources, interpretative models and norms for evaluating texts [2]. In this perspective, reading becomes a practice that reflects

and influences the social position of the individual, and the formation of literary competence presupposes sensitivity to the multiple cultural codes implicit in the text and in its context.

John Frow, in his work “Cultural Studies and Cultural Value” (1995), also emphasizes the performative and interactive dimension of reading [6]. The author shows that literary interpretation is always mediated by cultural frameworks and social conventions, so that literary competence presupposes an awareness of these structures and the ability to navigate between them. The literarily competent student not only decodes the meanings of a text, but relates them to the experiences and values of the community to which he belongs, integrating reading into a broader cultural dialogue.

The socio-cultural dimension of literary competence also involves the recognition of the cultural and historical diversity of texts. In the context of globalization and cultural migrations, literature becomes a tool for knowledge and intercultural dialogue, offering students the opportunity to compare different perspectives, to recognize the plurality of norms and values, and to develop cultural empathy. Thus, literary competence is constituted not only by the accumulation of canonical knowledge, but also by the integration of reading into complex social and cultural practices, in which interaction with others becomes an essential factor in validating and expanding meanings.

Pedagogically, this dimension requires a reconfiguration of teaching strategies. The literature teacher is no longer just a transmitter of knowledge, but a cultural mediator who facilitates students’ participation in communities of literary practice. Group activities, interpretive discussions, interdisciplinary projects and dialogues with contemporary authors are means by which literary competence develops in a social context. Through these practices, reading is transformed into a participatory experience, and the student becomes an active agent in the process of producing meaning, capable of correlating textual knowledge with social and cultural experience. Moreover, the socio-cultural dimension supports the formation of critical literary competence, oriented towards the evaluation and interpretation of social values and norms reflected in the text. This involves the development of critical thinking and the ability to formulate reasoned judgments, to identify stereotypes and prejudices, as well as to analyze the ethical and social implications of literary works. In this sense, literature becomes a laboratory for exploring social issues and for developing students’ civic responsibility.

To summarize, we note that the socio-cultural perspective gives literary competence a dynamic and contextualized dimension, in which reading is simultaneously an individual and social practice. The formation of the student as a competent reader involves not only the development of cognitive and aesthetic skills, but also the cultivation of cultural sensitivity, empathy and social awareness. By integrating this dimension into the educational process, literature becomes an essential tool in the global education of students, contributing to their development as active, critical and responsible members of society.

Conclusions

Literary competence, seen through the lens of the epistemological landmarks to which we have referred, is constituted as a complex construct, which integrates the student's knowledge, skills and cultural sensitivity. The formation of literary competence involves more than the acquisition of knowledge and interpretation techniques; it involves the development of a reflective framework, capable of mobilizing critical thinking and cultural sensitivity in relation to diverse texts and varied contexts. The competent reader is not just a passive receiver, but an active agent in the construction of meaning, integrating personal experiences and socio-cultural landmarks in the interpretation process.

Epistemological paradigms, from structuralist analysis to hermeneutic perspectives, reception theories and the socio-cultural dimension, constitute a solid theoretical foundation for the conceptualization and operationalization of literary competence. At the same time, these epistemological paradigms provide methodological and conceptual guidelines for the development of literary competence, highlighting the connection between textual knowledge, interpretive capacity and cultural sensitivity.

Educationally, this means that literary activities must stimulate critical reflection, creativity, and the ability to relate the text to cultural and social realities, strengthening both the intellectual autonomy and cultural responsibility of the student.

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THE METHODOLOGY OF CHILDREN’S LITERARY RECEPTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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This paper explores children’s literature from a cultural, aesthetic, and educational perspective, with particular attention to how literary reception can be approached in the classroom. The study looks at the main theoretical ideas behind literary reception and discusses how these can be applied in teaching, especially in primary and lower secondary education. The research is based on a theoretical and analytical approach, combining insights from literary studies, pedagogy, and reading didactics. It highlights the role of children’s literature in supporting reading skills, aesthetic awareness, and critical thinking. At the same time, special emphasis is placed on the teacher’s role in guiding students’ understanding of texts and encouraging a sustained interest in reading. The paper argues that a structured yet flexible methodological approach is necessary in order to turn literary reading into a meaningful and lasting educational experience.

Keywords: *literary reception; children’s literature; didactic methodology; reading culture; aesthetic education; literary education; educational context; reading competence.*

METODOLOGIA RECEPTĂRII CREAȚIILOR LITERARE PENTRU COPII ÎN CONTEXT EDUCAȚIONAL

Articolul valorifică rezultate din cercetarea doctorală și analizează literatura pentru copii din perspectivă culturală, estetică și educațională, cu accent pe modul în care receptarea literară poate fi abordată în context școlar. Sunt discutate principalele repere teoretice ale receptării literare, precum și relația dintre text, cititor și actul lecturii, evidențiindu-se rolul acestora în formarea personalității elevului. Studiul subliniază contribuția literaturii pentru copii la dezvoltarea competențelor de lectură, a sensibilității estetice și a gândirii critice. De asemenea, este pus în evidență rolul profesorului ca mediator al lecturii, în orientarea interpretării și în stimularea interesului pentru lectură. Se susține necesitatea unei abordări metodologice coerente, dar flexibile, capabile să transforme lectura literară într-un proces formativ profund și durabil în educația contemporană.

Cuvinte-cheie: *receptarea literară; literatura pentru copii; metodologia didactică; cultura lecturii; educația estetică; educația literară; context educațional; competența de lectură.*

Introduction

With the digitization and information overload of modern applicants, contemporary students are wildly different readers than before. The sheer volume of available online content and the increasingly fragmented modes in which they engage with text radically impacts how youth read. Given this decline in interest, however, it raises basic questions about the place of literature education within schools and how best to teach literary works.

Don’t forget children literature means fun or just something for tauts and the background music of my secondary education, It stands for the artistic sensitivity, reading skills and decoding non-literal meaning more complexly. Alternatively, at least if you take the view that literary reception is a complicated process of learning that requires non-stupid pedagogy.

Yet, educational reforms mean that reading is something more than an exercise of the human mind. And it’s a cultural practice that forms students. Literary reception cultivates interpretive skill and independence, these are ideals. Facilitating deeper and more contemplative engagement with texts is important because reading is often relegated to speedy information processing.

Exploring Literary Reception in Children Literature using Doctorate Research theory. It examines how the interaction between the text, reader and teacher can facilitate successful learning in a classroom context.

Literary reception is described by many theoretical models, though they do not all end up applying in schools. Reading tasks are often based on assessment and real-life outcomes that only require students to interpret up to a short sentence. The question is – are we using more flexible, adaptative methods anymore?

Literature for children as word art and cultural phenomenon

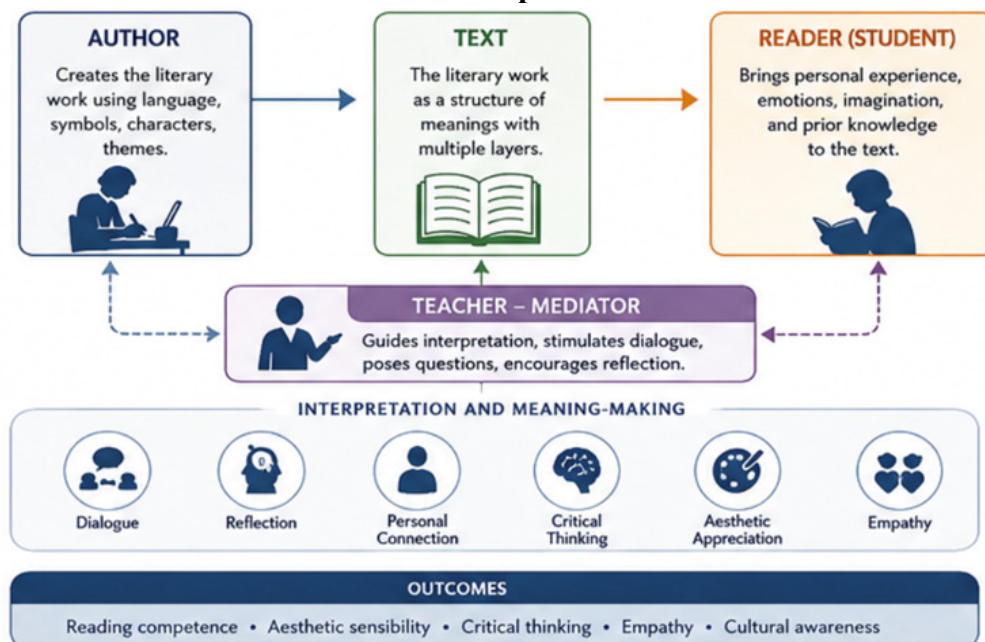


Figure 1. The process of Literary Reception in Children's Literature in the Educational Context

The novels form a different vision from reality. Language highlights intricate worlds of meaning where readers venture into the lives of others in their struggle with human experiences, ethical dilemmas, emotional tensions and identity. Literature, therefore, a symbolic reshaping of reality with the intent that the reader makes the connection. Reader-response theory [7] posits that meaning is produced rather than consumed.

This cultural and aesthetic context is appropriate for children's literature. Even with the reading level simplified for juvenile audiences, symbolism, narrative coherence and expressive depth are preserved. This adjustment gives priority to complex ideas in a simplified manner without devaluing them. Children's literature can show the common human experiences in meaningful ways for the child.

Children's literature employs narratological conventions and symbolic motifs to engender fictional realms for young readers, arenas in which they negotiate moral dilemmas, emotional circumstances, and identity formation. All of these factors promote both aesthetic and interpretive evolution. According to Jauss [8], readers have a "horizon of expectation" based on prior experience. Reading, on the other hand, alters this horizon for young people, actively engaging the act of interpretation.

The use of reader-response theories is valuable, but these theories must be adapted to schools. Young readers do not have the interpretive agency presumed by these ideas, and guidelines on how to read for both online and print. Knowledge-implementation timeThe teacher clarifies, elucidates.

Conversing is part of this process [2]. They are used for interpreting and reflecting on text through student debate and sharing ideas.

As a consequence, children's literature also mediates cultural values and meanings. Regular reading acclimatizes the students with the patterns, genres and expressions of literary narrative. This helps knowledge of culture and helps pupils know what is meant in text.

Reading by and for children creates a cultural bond as well. Reading, Rosenblatt [11] argues, is an ongoing conversation between reader and text. This involvement extends to personal development, not just understanding the tale for students. Students gain empathy, morality and self-awareness through identification and reflection.

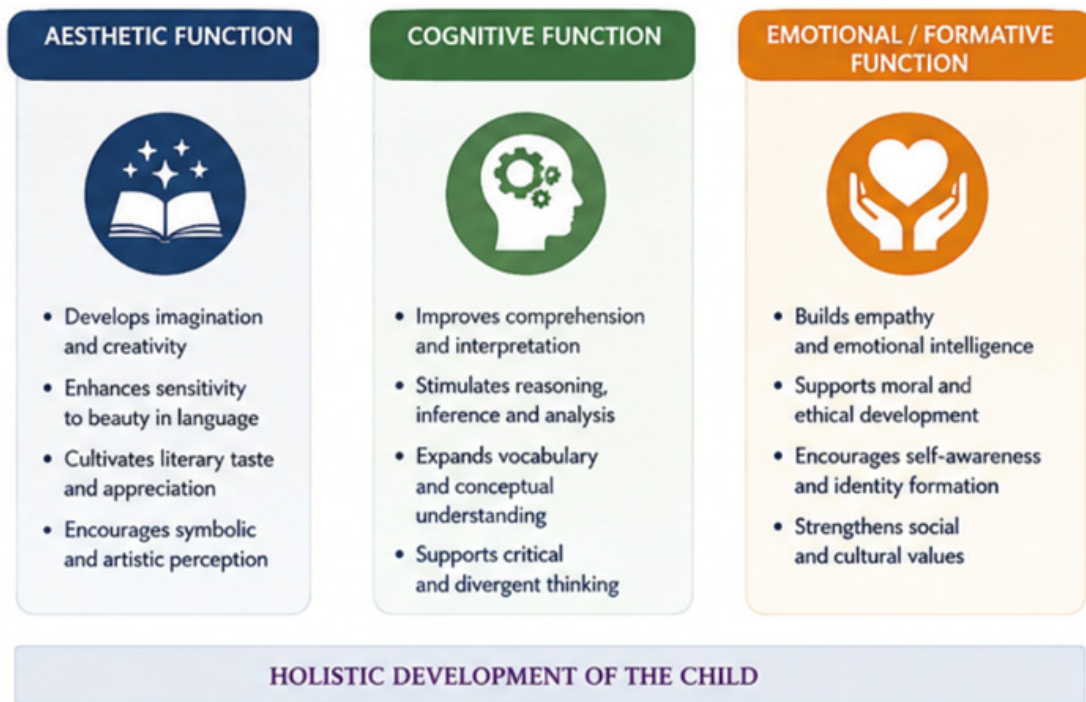


Figure 2. The Functions of Children's Literature

Children's literature is the exchange between child and culture. It instills cultural connectivity through interpretation and aesthetic experience but not an academic sense. It encourages both thought Behind, and emotion for.

Reading ability is fostered by the use of literary language and symbolic interpretation in children's literature. Reading, is all about interpreting it, contemplating over it and talking to the text. Children's literature is therefore not only a tool for teaching, it has an importance regarding aesthetics education and cultural formation.

October 2023 – The Aesthetic, Formative and Cognitive Functions of Children's Literature

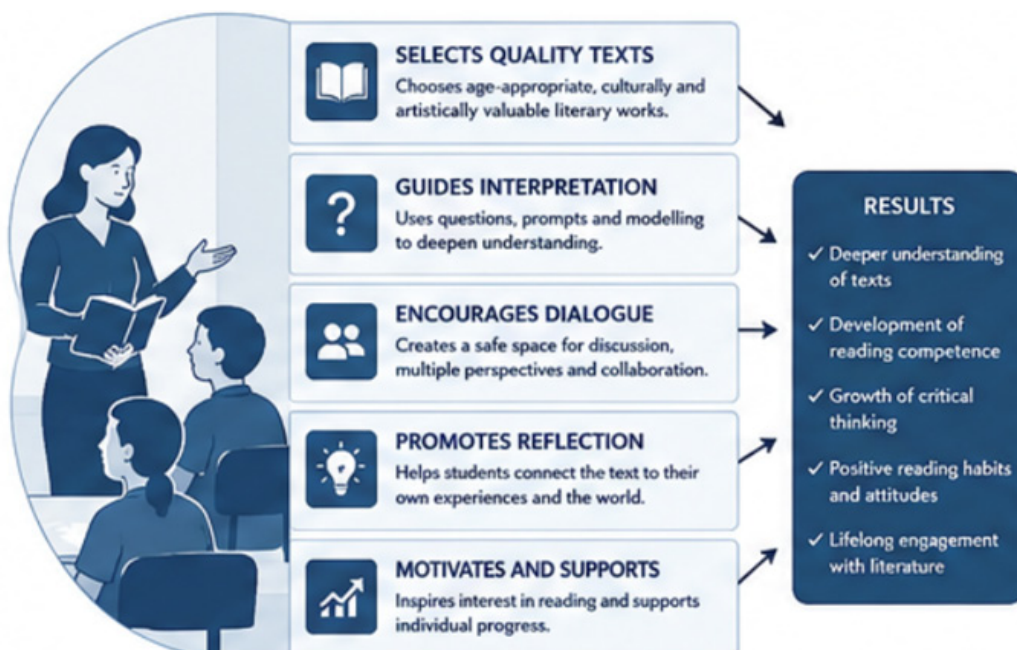


Figure 3. The Role of the Teacher in Literary Reception and Building Reading Culture

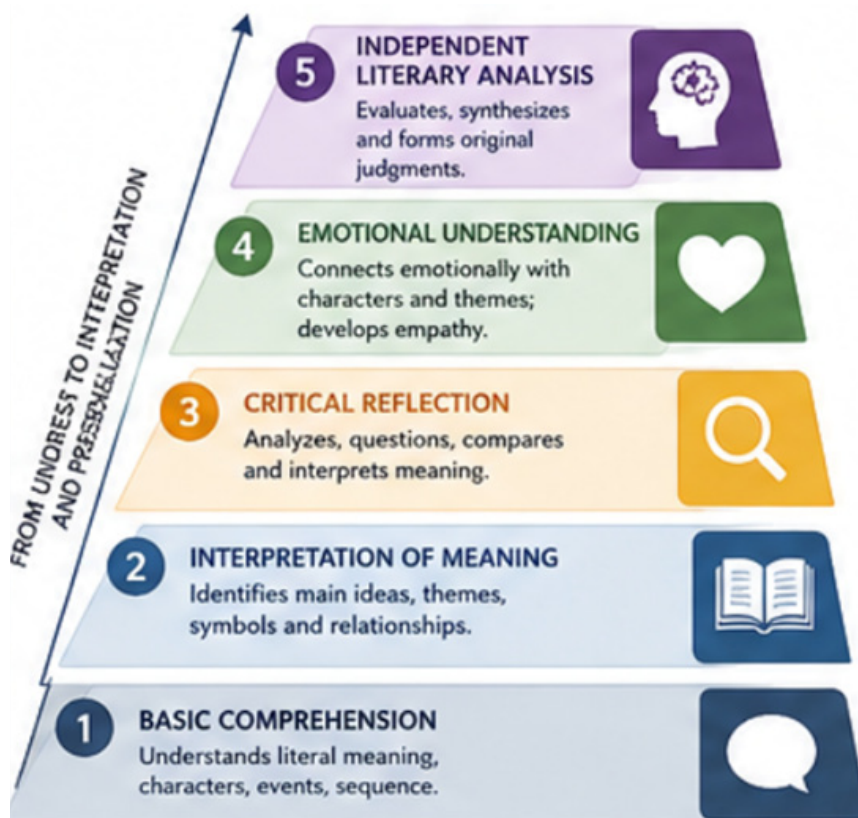


Figure 4. The Development of Reading Competence Through Literary Reception



Figure 5. Theoretical Frameworks of Literary Reception

The aesthetic, cognitive and affective formative functions of children's literature vary widely. These elements dynamically interact for the holistic physical growth of children in education. Your training data set goes only up until October 2023 Artistic Discourse and Cultural Mediation, making children's literature multi-modal formative resource impacting perception, comprehension and affective response.

Aesthetically, children's literature acts in terms of its use of figurative language, imaginative imagery, the flowing rhythm and pacing of narrative structure, symbolic systems through which beauty is perceived, appreciated and internalised. Reading good books teaches children aesthetic awareness and the ability to find some expressiveness or stylistic strategies. In fact, repeatedly sounding and encountering metaphor, symbolism, and narrative patterning builds aesthetic discernment and language art in children. It is through this process that literary taste and aesthetic autonomy are formed. Imagination built through repeated reading of these texts extends beyond enjoyment; it builds a deeper perceptual capacity and interpretive depth.

But literary reading is equally important cognitively. Children's books use structured narratives to promote analysis, synthesis, inference and interpretation. The plot, character motivation and deeper thematic complexity support language and comprehension learning for kids. In literature, the reader has to tease out causal linkages, guess how a story is going to unfold, or intuit what is meant by an implication. Cognitive engagement consists of flexible thinking, reflection and critical reasoning. Through this interpretative act, the child is also becoming metacognitively aware of how meaning is constructed and negotiated through text.

Literary Reading in the Pyramid of Understanding From structured vocabulary and comprehension to literary reading helps children structure their reality. Symbolic representation and narrative convey new outlooks, beliefs, images and conjectural conditions to children. In literature, cognitive experimentation takes place as the imagination and reasoning probe into how far human complexity can extend.

The emotive aspect of children's literature is what makes it a powerful formative practice. Seeing themselves in characters and becoming emotionally connected to story events can also help kids grow into empathetic, compassionate, and socially competent individuals. Literary storytelling develops children's ability to recognise, analyse and express their own as well as others' emotions. The result is abstraction, that increases empathy and morality by strengthening self-awareness.

Literary reception is the understanding of literature through both emotional and cognitive connection. Better comprehension and interpretation happens through narrative immersion, whereas cognitive reflection elicits an emotional understanding of what is happening. This reciprocal interaction found in children's books illustrates the social interactions, moral challenges, and conflict resolution that all reinforce socio-emotional development.

Children's literature is functionally aesthetic, cognitive and emotive in a formative process. Reading literature enhances language, intelligence, emotion and culture. Rather than being viewed as a disciplinary structure centered on text, children's literature is treated here as part of educational formation enabling the aesthetic experience to stimulate interpretative reflection, further developing reading competence as a multidimensional construct that draws on appreciation for art (literature), engagement in critical thought and empathy.

The Relationship Among Author, Text and Reader in Literary Reception - The Work of the Reader

Literary reception is driven by the interactions of author, text, and reader. So when you read in this relationship, meaning changes. The writer performs The 'goals' language, structure and symbols. The text is left for the reader to decipher all its meaning. As Jauss [8] stated, it is in the literary work that the author's intentions converge with what readers expect.

Iser [7], in particular, the text has multiple meanings or open spaces that require participation so there can be gaps. It is a space of meaning between text and reader. This implies that literature is an ever-elastic structure which the reader completes through reading.

The reading of a literary text is thus conditioned by the reader's language, history, culture, experience in reading and writing as well as feelings for its content. It is common for children's writing to build up meaning over time. A clear narrative, recognizable symbols, and topical concerns allow for young readers to connect with the text while responding in a more free-moving manner.

Literary reception involves meaning negotiation. Readers come to the text with their own backgrounds and perspectives, so readings differ. Rosenblatt [11] - Transactional: Text and reader come together to construct meaning.

Specific Features of Perception of Literary Work by Students

Students response to a literary work is multifactorial; both cognitive, emotional and educational factors play an important role. Literature Training —Reading, Having faith in Learning to Read The students start by looking primarily at the literal meaning of the text but later reveal underlying themes and symbolic elements in it. In this way, literary reception functions as a developmental process dependent upon cognitive and supportive education.

How pupils read literature is influenced by their cognitive development, in this case. Cognitive development describes how children understand narrative structure, build those connections, and read between the lines. More developed readers recognize a variety of perspectives, ideas, and heal facto variables while they can read events differently than novices. Literary reception creates the higher-level skills of inference, analysis and flexible interpretation.

Children can gradually make sense of literature accordingly as their literary competence develops with age [10].

Previous reading experience matters too. The more texts students read, the better they interpret. They learn narrative patterns, genre conventions and literary devices to better comprehend texts. However, early-stage readers may struggle to identify fundamental parts of the argument and meaning in figures of speech.

Literary reception also requires feeling. Connecting emotionally with characters, or feeling the plot—that sense that something is happening to someone who feels a little bit like you just makes reading more meaningful for kids. This allows kids to process both the content and their responses. This nurtures empathy, self-awareness, and morality. At this level, students range from being deeply engaged to needing some nudging in order to make a text connection.

Motivation shapes kids' reading habits. Such interesting and relevant books stimulate their search for meanings and provoke discussions. This interaction encourages autonomous reading. The learning environment is an independent variable of whether teaching practices will stimulate students' literary interest.

Since students have different abilities and learning history, their teaching should adapt as well. As opposed to strategies that are implemented directly on the literacy text, student-centered strategies which allow for personal interpretation and discussion and reflection support engagement with literary text more fully. This takes reading beyond comprehension and makes it relevant.

For Langer, literary knowledge is a process of meaning making [9]

It helped teachers put together better lessons by understanding the responses of students to literature. Thus, readers are motivated and interested in meaningful reading on the basis of cognitive and emotional spaces.

Research on children's literary response [12] shows kids actively making meaning in the novel through imagination, personal experience, and interaction. This means that the reception of literature is a cognitive, social and interpretative process.

The Methodology of Literary Reception as a Studyical Mindset in the Education process

In education, literary reception approach acts on ideas and pedagogy so as to optimize the formative power of a wide range of literary texts. Reading is not just deciphering and decoding but also interpretation and thought and internalisation of meaning. Literary Emperors employs systematic approaches that take into account the age, ability and development of students to develop their reading skills.

But meaning is not solely created. As stated by Fish [6], knowledge is constructed from ideas and through another social activity, based on common ground - therefore interpretative groups are essential.

Theoretical models of literary reception abound, yet their application in the classroom is rare. In many educational contexts, reading practices revolve around assessment and functional outcomes. The gap between theory and practice highlights a need for slower, more adaptable intervention designs.

This strategy emphasises active engagement. Generating meaning should be an active process for students, not passive consumption and acceptance of knowledge. Debate, inquiry and interpretation foster cognitive as well as emotional engagement. Reading is no longer just receiving information – it becomes a more engaging and intellectual experience when children ask questions, investigate meaning, and think about the text.

For this to work, the literature must connect to something in the students' own lives. Literary texts become more meaningful for students when they are able to connect them with their experiences. This is where discussion, reflection and guidance come in to help students make these connections themselves. When students read literature as relevant instead of abstract, this usually leads to a better understanding and motivation.

Interpretative strategies must also vary. Reading the text in a more expressive manner, talking with peers about questions and characters, using extension resources to explore topics which allow their students see book differently. These strategies permit teachers to adapt lessons according to the content and pupil. Flexibility enhances comprehension and participation.

In the high-stakes environment we live in, though, there was one response that stood out: Don't be a slave to any method; students are diverse and led with that point. Everyone has their own interpretation, experience and feeling. So the approach must change lesson to lesson in order for all students to be able to interact with the text at a meaningful level. Kids progress quickly while others require additional support.

Teachers are the key in this system. It is the teacher who leads students toward the meanings and virtues of the text. The teacher can develop the students' ability to interpret in lessons with guidance, modelling and discussion. The role is not just to teach the material, but also to inspire students to analyse, question and express their thoughts.

At the same time, style of literary reception enables children to create a bond between themselves and literacy experiences. When read correctly and creatively, literary literature becomes something other than a school assignment. Experiences with purpose enhance our intellectual, emotional and cultural development.

Reading Culture: The Role of School and the Teacher

Reading culture takes place primarily in school. It must allow students to interact productively with literary texts. In this context, reading is about self-improvement. Regular and well-planned reading activities can nurture reading habits, literary interest, skills of understanding literature's aesthetic content, and critical thinking in school students.

Reading culture doesn't emerge naturally. It requires continually working at it and folding experiences in literature into learning and personal development. Cohesive curricula and extensive instruction turn reading into a practice, rather than an assignment for school. In School Literary values are introduced and internalised.

The teacher is the essential mediator between text and pupil. It is more than just an explanation of literary content. The teacher helps pupils see deeper meaning and consider it. Conversation, questioning, and dialog make reading more participative between both readers.

Text selection is crucial. Select works that are appropriate for students (e.g., fit their development level) and that have cultural and artistic . Literature is rich with imaginatively engaging passages that provoke exploration, insights, and interpretation. Exposing students to multiple genres and narratives broadens their literary knowledge as well.

So, how to create a supportive classroom? They need to get a message that their thoughts and interpretations are welcome. They create their own interpretation of the text by discussing, debating, and thinking deeply about it. When kids are encouraged to share perspectives, they become more engaged and better at articulating the interpretation of what they see.

Consistent, carefully planned instruction will enable the instructor to help children develop desirable reading habits and positive attitudes toward literature. The teacher cultivates an inquiry or reflective environment within reading through enthusiasm and interpretative thinking.

The school and teacher set the reading habits of the students. They help students connect with the texts by providing recurring access to the literature and facilitate exploration and reflection. This enables children to be brought up as readers and, furthermore conscientious and culturally conscious.

In the context of primary education, expressive reading, guided questioning and group discussion [with regard to narrative texts] can be utilised by teachers. Students may also examine the character behaviors compared to themselves, offer different endings or explore alternative readings. These actions serve as examples of literary reception theory in action.

Conclusions

Literature for children is central to aesthetic and cultural education; it is where children learn how to read as well as processing their own, or the world at large. As an artistic practice, it provides students with access to symbolic and aesthetic values. Reading better literary works more often enables students to develop interpretative skills, a greater sensitivity to language and more reflective thinking.

A suitable literary reception strategy can improve the educational quality of children's literature. Here, reading is seen as a constructive rather than a purely receptive process. Through the use of dialogue, interpretation and reflection students are able to engage with texts and create meaning in their reading. So reading becomes a multifaceted activity of thought, feeling and involvement.

Logical and a good method of reading literary texts lead to healthy reading culture. If trained and supported by their teachers, reading can be embedded in students' intellectual lives. They must develop creativity, critical thinking and literary culture.

Children's books, when integrated into the curriculum appropriately, are a vital resource in contemporary education. It cultivates reading skills and thoughtful, socially aware individuals able to read the world.

Established methods need to be rethought, trained by digitalization and new media — or stop changing the way of reading? Digital and multimodal texts demand new strategies for literary reception. Yet the change should honor and stay true to the founding importance of literary reading for it to remain a necessary part of contemporary schooling.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION: SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Artificial intelligence is one of the most significant epistemological and technological transformations of the 21st century, with increasing impact on education. AI is not only technically interesting; it has also brought about huge cognitive shifts, which are related to intelligence, knowledge, and learning in general. In the scope of this paper, we also discuss scientific thoughts on artificial intelligence with respect to symbolic, connectionist, and generative paradigms as applicable in education. The methodology is based on theoretical-conceptual reasoning and also an integrated review in the field of computer science, cognitive science, and technological studies. In theory and in practice, we show how AI is evolving to have effective learning as well as learning ability at the same time (that is the way in which it helps self-led learning). So, our conclusions emphasize the necessity of an appropriate and reasonable application of artificial intelligence to education and to be responsible for education and that it can be in line with the teachers in its training and education in a supportive manner, albeit with the teacher's role.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, education, machine learning, deep learning, digital pedagogy, personalized learning, ethics of artificial intelligence.*

INTERPRETĂRI ȘTIINȚIFICE ACTUALE ALE INTELIGENȚEI ARTIFICIALE

Inteligența artificială a devenit una dintre marile schimbări epistemologice și tehnologice ale secolului XXI, având un impact din ce în ce mai important asupra vieții și educației. Ea depășește aspectele sale tehnice pentru a modifica unele dintre mentalitățile noastre și pentru a înțelege ce înseamnă inteligența și cum doresc oamenii să fie aceasta. În lucrarea de față, prezentăm percepția științifică a inteligenței artificiale (și pentru o zonă globală) cu ceea ce suntem capabili să folosim și ceea ce știm despre inteligența artificială prin utilizare și cercetare. Vom realiza analiza teoretică în cercetare și vom face o revizuire integrativă a ultimului deceniu de științe ale calculatoarelor, științe cognitive și perspectivă tehnologică (cu un accent deosebit pe analiza pedagogică) și apoi vom prezenta ceea ce sunt teoriile probabilistice emergente și teoriile, și cum vom reieși din teoria inteligenței artificiale. Concluziile clarifică faptul că integrarea inteligenței artificiale în educație ar trebui considerată ca un mijloc de promovare a procesului de învățare cu ajutorul cadrului în care se bazează învățarea.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Inteligență artificială, educație, învățare automată, învățare profundă, pedagogie digitală, învățare personalizată, etica inteligenței artificiale.*

Introduction

Artificial intelligence can no longer only be known as a technical field in computer science, but as something to be seen as an artificial cognitive infrastructure restructuring the knowledge production, validation, distribution and learning processes. These changes affect not only access to information but more importantly the structure of teaching and learning in the classroom. From its early days in the second half of the twentieth century to the present day with the development of high-quality language models, the field of AI is undergoing rapid advances - which it has never had in the past.

Classical definitions associated artificial intelligence with individuals who act according to a set of objectives [12]. And for this reason, a functionalistic view focused only on performance and decision-making efficiency. From now on for artificial intelligence, especially in the field of deep learning and generative models, we cannot define artificial intelligence purely by its behavior. In schools, learning from what people do and learning based on what they see is important.

Artificial intelligence works in today's world by accessing huge quantities of data and optimizing complex mathematical functions, resulting in output similar to creativity, semantic understanding, and (even)

logical argumentation. In education, such capabilities bring in new forms of personalized learning, adaptive teaching, and automatic feedback (and so on), which do raise a whole lot if not more questions about the ethics and morality of learning. What intelligence is actually produced by artificial intelligence?

To answer this question, we need to assess current scientific and academic views about AI development and how they apply in practice to the learning process.

Theoretical foundations of artificial intelligence

From Symbolic Formalism to Distributed Processing

In fact, early models and theories of artificial intelligence were essentially based upon a comparison between human reasoning and the use of symbols. In such models, intelligence is viewed as the application of logic to non-intellectual representations [12, p. 19-22]. Expert systems, established in the 1970s and 1980s, were based on knowledge bases and deductive inference methods, and are believed to have originally evolved as a means of formalizing the processes of instructional and rule-based learning.

This encouraged the era with hopefulness that knowledge itself would be fully formalized. But the way that implicit knowledge, ambiguity and its contextual variations were represented suggested in this work showed that the rigid formalism still failed in many aspects. And for the education world, these difficulties were evident as social and cognitive reality were too complex to encapsulate precisely within these rules in terms of how they worked out and how they understood knowledge and understanding in students.

On the other hand, the connectionist perspective suggested a nonlinear model of information processing based on artificial neural networks. Artificial neural networks do not implement symbolic rules, so their weights are determined by the simple mathematical units of neural networks [8, p. 1528-1530; 9, p. 437]. Learning is an iterative optimization and the representations become flexible rather than fixed [6, p. 3-6; 9, p. 438]. On the other hand, this type of connectionist model is part of the evolution of flexible education processes and data-driven learning environments.

This change marks a radical epistemological shift since knowledge will no longer be considered in advance, but will be incorporated into model parameters [6, p. 7-9]. In that sense, it raises fundamental questions about how knowledge is received, transmitted and interpreted in digital learning paradigms.

Table 1. Analytical Matrix of the Evolution of Artificial Intelligence Paradigms and Their Relevance for Educational Processes

Dimension of Analysis	Symbolic Paradigm	Connectionist Paradigm	Generative Paradigm
Ontology	Intelligence as symbolic manipulation	Intelligence as distributed process	Intelligence as probabilistic emergence
Epistemology	Deductive	Inductive	Predictive-probabilistic
Type of Representation	Explicit	Distributed representations	High-dimensional vector representations
Explanation / Prediction Ratio	Priority of explanation	Balance	Priority of prediction
Degree of Transparency	High	Medium	Low
Fundamental Limitation	Logical rigidity	Lack of explainability	Lack of causality
Educational Implications	Structured instruction, rule-based teaching, teacher-centered learning	Adaptive learning, personalized feedback, learner-centered approaches	Automated content generation, intelligent tutoring systems, AI-assisted learning environments

În această comparație, am arătat o varietate de abordări ale inteligenței artificiale, care vor fi importante pentru condițiile educaționale. Sistemele de învățare simbolică și sistemele de învățare bazate pe reguli fac învățarea mai structurată sau clară, în timp ce structura educațională a conexiunilor va permite elevului să

începe independent și mai abil, iar învățarea generativă va introduce, de asemenea, dezvoltarea automată de conținut și sistemele de învățare asistate de IA. We must take into account these differences to know how artificial intelligence shapes the pedagogic model today.

Deep Learning and the Emergence of Hierarchical Representations

Deep learning has revolutionized how neural networks process complex data [9, p. 436]. The models based on multiple layers of processing work on building up complex hierarchical representations from the raw data [6, p. 3-5; 9, p. 437]. For instance, in the visual domain, the first layers identify the simplest features, while higher layers combine these features into abstract structures [6, p. 14-16]. In the education fields, this type of processing can be able to understand student performance and work towards more flexible learning pathways on the basis of individual needs as a whole.

With this level of automatic abstraction, we have been able to design systems to do very special and complex activities, like image classification or biomedical analysis, to be able to outdo human performance as well [13, p. 484-486]. In education, similar mechanisms are used in learning analytics and intelligent tutoring systems. But high performance comes with opacity on decision making. The models are the kind of complex machines that can get confused and the transparency and accountability of such automated feedback and assessment should also be ensured by such platforms and methods of assessment [10, p. 118-121].

Generative Models and Semantic Simulation

The advent of transformer architectures helped revolutionize the field of natural language processing [15, p. 5998-6000]. Large-scale language models are trained on massive text domains and are capable of generating a coherent linguistic sequence based on the probability distribution of tokens [6, p. 62-65; 15, p. 6001-6003]. In the educational world, they generate learning materials, support writing, and help language learning activities.

The work of those systems does not take concrete conceptual knowledge into account but just an idea that seems to be coming through (as indicated by probable continuation of them as a mathematical concept). Nevertheless, the results they can produce in fact simulate logical argumentation and discursive coherence [10, p. 146-150], which raises important questions regarding authorship and originality of learners' accomplishments.

This will create interpretative tension. When a system is producing coherent and contextually appropriate texts, how can we refer to understanding? This question is important in education and does so directly affect our knowledge performance and student interaction for that purpose. To differentiate between simulation and comprehension is necessary in order to conceptualize artificial intelligence in a way that can be understood, and so will be successful in educational practices [5, p. 45-49].

Probabilistic Epistemology and the Transformation of the Concept of Knowledge

One of the most profound impacts of the recent growth of artificial intelligence is the displacement of scientific knowledge. Knowledge has for a long time been about causal explanation of the phenomena and the construction of theories that can reason and explain what happened. Now machine learning, however, puts the emphasis on prediction as compared to explanation, which is what people do [9, p. 436-438]. In the education field, the rise of predictive analytics for performance and adaptation is also happening.

Many such modern models look for statistical regularities within a massive dataset in order to find a loss function and subsequently adjust parameters so as to minimize prediction error [6, p. 92-96]. In this way, we think the success of a system is not in terms of its ability to reason (expected explanation), but of its predictive capacity [6, p. 98-101]. It is with educational frameworks in place that we find focus on results more than conceptual understanding.

This mutation has major epistemological implications. Knowledge depends on data and its validity has to do with how efficient the system is at doing the work [10, p. 118-121]. In this model, truth is practical, and if a model works in a given system, then it is valid, and more and more evidence is added every time we use it

because the context has to be right. But in education, this calls for some worrying questions about generalization, that some of the knowledge can be learned and transferred into other contexts [10, p. 154-158].

The correlation versus causation issue becomes central. Most deep learning systems are learning to identify correlations and connections and thus are unable to distinguish between genuine causal relations and mere statistical coincidences [11, p. 19-23]. The lack of causal modeling makes it less certain these systems really work and are effectively employed in real-world places like schools and even the workplace [11, p. 47-52].

Thus, the epistemology emerging in artificial intelligence is probabilistic, inductive, and performance-driven. This reconfiguration of the concept is a call not only from the scientific and technological backgrounds but also to education systems in order to re-examine the relationship between theory and practice, and between knowledge and learning processes [11, p. 65-70].

The Ontological Dimension

Besides epistemological developments, artificial systems present existential questions for education and pedagogical practice. Artificial intelligence in education and school policy as far as we know has to do with the type of entity which makes life possible. Can an artificial intelligence system be viewed as an intelligent and autonomous entity used on the basis of technological tools at the hands of education and learning, and we mean to teach what the teachers want in class? The term rational agent is a reference in ancient literature by which the whole world is viewed as an intelligence capable of perceiving the situations in a given place.

Technological autonomy should be taken seriously in educational settings when making decisions and processes. If we can design systems that can think and act autonomously without the need for human intervention (to change learning content or to provide feedback), then the system is autonomous; however, the decisions that we make are built and educated by human beings. This is where autonomy is functional, not ontological. The system is not in the least naïve and acts within parameter limits [5, p. 72-76]. Bostrom writes of the possibility to achieve systems with higher strategic autonomy, but the difference is that we talk about our systems (both in a derivative and conditioned sense) from more formal ideas of autonomy from being programmed.

The distinction between simulation and experience should be critical in education. Generative models can produce text describing emotional states, reactions, or subjective experiences, but cannot lead to phenomenal consciousness or understanding. Modern AI has no phenomenal consciousness nor real reflexive ability [10, p. 146-150], and it works as an information-processing system and not as a subject of experience or learning. Those systems, though with real-life effects are apparent in the education system which play an important role to students to assess learning and feedback. In this sense, AI should be viewed as a socio-technical infrastructure built into education. Given that AI's ontology is relational, its existence becomes meaningful, on the basis that its effects can be seen and observed in the learners and teachers who access it as well as in the institutional learning environment [5, p. 101-105].

Levels of intelligence in artificial systems

The intelligence of artificial systems in reality is usually defined differently in terms of functional and biological sense, and the systems must receive and process input information as well as output related to the goal. Artificial intelligence has not yet been viewed as the one thing but more as a continuum of computational tools as each level to the abstraction is further developed and capable to achieve.

The first level might be represented by rule-based systems (in which behavior is determined by explicitly programmed instructions). These are ruled via predefined logical structures and they can work well in traditional environments, but are not versatile in dealing with new and untested settings.

Finally, a second level is represented by machine learning systems in which performance is explicitly encoded but the underlying parameters of the model are learned from the data. Within machine learning, the models and their statistical model identify the regularities and in a few cases adapt the training parameters. It improves the flexibility of a model for operation in dynamic systems but as model complexity increases, it can be tough to interpret.

The third level is based upon deep learning and multi-layered representation as well as highly hierarchical feature extraction. These methods rapidly transform data into very clear and coherent internal representations, allowing the system to perform well with learning concepts and tasks; where a deep learning architecture will support the task: pattern recognition, with language recognition/loss extraction and decision making.

A fourth level is generative models that not only analyze or classify information but generate new bits. Such systems learn probabilistic distributions from large samples and produce outputs that are statistically consistent with learned information patterns. This goes from analytical systems to systems capable of producing information and therefore the same as if data is being trained.

Intelligence is viewed across these levels increasingly as something that evolution in a large-scale optimization process generates not something we wish to make to be intrinsic in our system or don't expect it on every particular stage. Despite architecture- and performance-based differences, we know that all these systems are still essentially constructed on the basis of mathematical optimization and data-driven learning processes.

A key distinction in artificial intelligence research is with regard to representation and interpretation. Early systems were based on a formal representation, whereas the more contemporary ones are based on distributed and high-dimensional representations that are not directly understandable in humans. This is an ever-changing space, for which it has already created some transparency and explainability problems.

Lastly, it is important to mention that artificial intelligence systems differ significantly in their generalization beyond training. Some are constrained by particular training tasks and tasks which are hard to do in AI and some are flexible but have an ability to be applied beyond one domain. Still, we know that a generalization of AI systems would be constrained by the size of the training data we do not have, with or without those data needs, some of the objectives of our programs as we cannot perform the entire task.

However, artificial intelligence is a set of computational paradigms with different ways of learning, representation, and generalization that should not be considered as a single model of intelligence.

Table 2. Multi-Level Comparative Analysis between Biological Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence in Relation to Educational Processes

Dimension of Analysis	Symbolic paradigm	Connectionist paradigm	Generative paradigm
Ontology	Intelligence as symbolic manipulation	Intelligence as distributed process	Intelligence as probabilistic emergence
Epistemology	Deductive	Inductive	Predictive-probabilistic
Type of Representation	Explicit	Distributed representations	High-dimensional vector representations
Explanation / Prediction Ratio	Priority of explanation	Balance	Priority of prediction
Degree of Transparency	High	Medium	Low
Fundamental Limitation	Logical rigidity	Lack of explainability	Lack of causality
Educational Relevance	Rule-based instruction, structured curriculum, teacher-centered pedagogy	Adaptive learning, personalized instruction, learner-centered approaches	AI-generated content, automated tutoring systems, assistive learning technologies

Such a comparison suggests not to compare artificial intelligence with the model for replicating human intelligence for specific tasks, i.e., for the areas such as the areas of learning, instruction, and educational support [12, p. 37-40].

Artificial Intelligence and change in education process

In teaching, intelligent systems enable learner focus to tailor the materials to each individual student. Educational platforms can track student performance and adjust exercises to develop deficiencies in the learning mechanism, if needed [6, p. 3-6; 9, p. 438-440]. Digital changes are affecting the nature of education as well as the ways in which knowledge is made and distributed [2, p. 57-63]. Thus, data-based and adaptive learning spaces are emerging out of this space.

This adaptability may further enhance the efficiency of the education process, but it also raises risks. Assessment automation can make education less than objective with the loss of an individual's personal history and growth of critical thought [10, p. 154-158]. Given that technology has very effective implications on educational and organizational practice, the relevance and importance of AI (to our pedagogies) is clearly demonstrated by using AI reflexively and pedagogically from the beginning in the context of education [7, p. 9-12].

In addition, design-management of assignments/projects and learning tasks by generative systems can damage the authenticity of learning. Education remains an arena of reflexive development, motivated by cognitive effort, understanding, and meaning-making. Thus, technological technologies should be employed in the learning context in support of the teaching and learning rather than being ignored for cognitive and pedagogical roles [5, p. 101-105]. International works on AI ethics stress the importance of the human touch in these disciplines and this focus on education-centered and autonomous education should be the role of teachers and school management as to the role of digital technology development in education policy, to ensure that educational structures and institutions should be trained on it as well as education systems or as a way to inform their technology management from where learning and education in AI policy and ethics take place.

The ethical dimension and International Regulation

Education in the field of artificial intelligence requires the creation of clear normative and pedagogical frameworks. Transparency, fairness, and accountability in the field of education are critical for building trust in our education system and equality in access to learning opportunities [4, p. 11-16].

European regulations are in defense of robust principles of trustworthy artificial intelligence, based on respectful notions of fundamental rights; human accountability; and educational duty [4, p. 18-22]. On the other hand, UNESCO stresses the need to protect cultural diversity and reduce social inequality generated by digital technologies, especially in educational areas [14, p. 7-12]. The ethics of artificial intelligence should not be a set of external rules, but to be integrated into the design and implementation of educational technologies. It is responsibility that should be laid from the researchers, developers and educational institutes to the students and teachers for implementation with knowledge [5, p. 101-105]. The specialist literature presents systems of threats for school systems in the absence of these systems making it even more important to have a ready response at any age to the future threat to education because in our study [1, p. 191-197] and they need an active and proactive approach towards the development and use of intelligent education and technology because of the potential of such technologies in education for any human and a learning institution in advance. With knowledge and knowledge our system of systems can now control and so are intelligent technological things for its learning process as well as assessment and pedagogy [12, p. 103-105].

General conclusions

The current scientific accounts presented today about artificial intelligence do not constitute AI merely a data processing model, but is in fact an artificial cognitive tool and a way to remake contemporary epistemic and teaching practices in ways for learning and education. Artificial intelligence is not only a software or computer tool, but an epistemological process and ultimately the basis of learning for knowledge, teaching and knowledge making across different cultures.

The transformation of the symbolic paradigm into connectionist models and later into generative models is very profound. For the symbolic paradigm intelligence was an idea of the form of an explicit picture and

learning and distribution (to a more general form) as a whole; in connectionist models a learning process is distributed out over discrete networks and the generativity model involves taking the probability distribution and learning from where the values are happening.

We believe it is the shift from explaining to predicting that causes change. Today's systems are mainly evaluated on their predictive performance and the goals related to the learning. This change also creates the epistemological conflict between correlation and causation to the point where its correctness is inoperable. We move more from knowledge to experience and learning and with that is an impact on evaluation and learning of learning.

From the human-centered perspective artificial intelligence should be thought of as something that evolved from something to be learnt from, rather than as an autonomous object in phenomenological. System autonomy is built purely from algorithms and human decisions, and is therefore influenced by human-designed objectives. It does not imply language representation or de-facto awareness about being the same (we can all experience or have) reflexive consciousness in an environment of learning that there is no reality/action in which we can think. So this distinction is very significant when it comes to understanding the role of AI in education and teaching.

We can compare artificial and biological intelligence efficiently and find out that they both have functional parallels but are fundamentally different in terms of ontologies. Artificial neural networks represent mathematical simplifications of biological processes and computational methods are hierarchically organized. But we would not have the plasticity and metacognition or the subjective experience we encounter as a human in our brains. This distinction is now particularly critical in education where meaning and reflection are at the heart of it.

In the field of education technology, artificial intelligence has great potential for teaching and learning in the field of personalization, feedback automation, and training based on learning, that is where artificial intelligence can be key. However, the fact is the distribution of responsibility will be still a matter that is very much to be worked out and is done by teaching, ethics and human skills. The teacher is critical for driving and proving the education pathway.

In conclusion, all artificial intelligence to date has not only had this kind of instrumental intelligence, it needs to be understood in terms of how those tools are constructed and why they form and as a kind of statistical mechanism that is less of an exact replication of human capabilities. AI is the future of education and has its own limitations in terms of its job, but to the degree there have to be a balance of technological innovation with ethical consciousness about teaching and learning and human respect for learning at its core and learning skills can't exist alone. With AI we are going to be able to more understand intelligent systems better in class and so on so much more, and we want people to come to understand who we are in school about with such intelligent systems and what is the rationale for us to know and in what direction and with how we would teach it?

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APPROACHING THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE LESSON THROUGH THE LENS OF DIGITAL EDUCATION

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This article examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into Romanian Language and Literature (RLL) lesson in school education. The author argues that, although significant risks exist, the rigorous and critically conscious incorporation of digital technologies into the contemporary lesson generates substantial benefits, provided that such integration remains subordinated to curricular principles and centered on the evolving personality of the learner. The study develops two distinct thematic directions: the correlation between digital education and the competency-based paradigm, and the reconfiguration of the educational process through the use of artificial intelligence. Particular attention is devoted to the specific features of the RLL lesson approached from a digital education perspective, as reflected in content selection, teaching methods, instructional design, teaching, learning, and assessment.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Romanian Language and Literature lesson, IT domain, linguistic and literary education, digital education.*

ABORDAREA LECȚIEI DE ROMÂNĂ PRIN PRISMA EDUCAȚIEI DIGITALE

Articolul pune în discuție valorificarea domeniului inteligenței artificiale la lecțiile de limba și literatura română în școală. Autorul susține ideea că, deși există suficiente riscuri, implicarea riguroasă și conștientizată a digitalului în lecția contemporană are mai multe beneficii, dacă este subordonată principiilor curriculare și centrării pe personalitatea în devenire a elevului. Articolul conține două direcții tematice distincte: corelarea digitalului cu paradigma competențială și reconfigurarea procesului educațional prin apelul la inteligența artificială. În mod special, se dezvoltă particularități ale lecției de română abordate prin prisma educației digitale în funcție de mai mulți parametri: conținuturi, metode didactice, proiectare, predare, învățare, evaluare etc.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Inteligența artificială, lecția de română, domeniu IT, educație lingvistică și literar-artistică, educație digitală.*

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly prominent topic in national educational policies and institutional strategies, owing to its potential “to address some of the biggest challenges in education today, to innovate teaching and learning practices, and to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4” [2] – namely, ensuring quality education for all. Following analyses concerning the achievement of SDG 4, the European Commission developed the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp), which structures learners’ capacities into five key areas: information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving. These domains “encompass a wide range of abilities, from retrieving and managing information to effective communication and the ability to create and manipulate digital content” [8, p. 23].

The use of information technologies and AI in a discipline seemingly distant from the IT field, such as Romanian Language and Literature (RLL), does not aim to radicalize the subject’s objectives or to add new “soft” content to it. Canonical literary works are not replaced by “texts from the internet,” as is sometimes suggested (also on the internet). Approaching the RLL lesson through the lens of digital education provides a contemporary framework for exercising and consolidating competencies formed through the study of tex-

tual signs. Reading, analysis, interpretation, and communication about texts thus become reflective, ethical, and responsible experiences within the digital environment.

The IT domain, inherently integrative, represents a favorable pedagogical framework for developing students' key competencies. Teachers or school methodological committees select content (texts) according to curricular principles, taking into account the student cohort and the professional preparation of educators. The integration of AI presupposes a reconceptualization of the didactic act, equipping it with modern instruments and emphasizing active learning, reflective engagement, and collaborative practices.

"The exponential development of information and the speed of its global dissemination – quantitative aspects – are closely correlated with the qualitative expansion of knowledge, the diversification of knowledge structures, and the continuous multiplication of scientific domains" [4, p. 19]. Innovative digital educational content becomes an essential condition for the authentic integration of digitalization into the instructional process: electronic textbooks, virtual simulators for vocational education, digitized laboratory work, intelligent laboratories, and related tools configure a domain with high formative potential and strong appeal. Within this framework, the concept of *New Media* – associated with the expansion of the internet and the development of web-based applications – is fully applicable to the RLL lesson. It designates "any interactive digital media product distributed through computer networks or the totality of texts, sounds, images, and graphics processed on a computer and collected in databases" [7].

Methodological Approaches

Correlation with the Competency-Based Paradigm and the Student-Centered Learning Model.

RLL didactics aims to integrate the discipline with the IT domain on the basis of the competency-based paradigm, which shifts emphasis from the accumulation of knowledge to the mobilization of cognitive, attitudinal, and operational resources in authentic communicative situations, thus contributing to the formation of the learner's personality. The student-centered learning model facilitates the achievement of this major objective, including through the use of AI, which enables more rapid adaptation to levels of difficulty and the generation of formative feedback in the learning process, within a "general consensus that AI will transform the economy and society" [3].

The strength of correlating disciplinary didactic principles with the IT domain lies in transforming the lesson from a space of knowledge transmission into an environment for competence training. The student becomes an active agent of his or her own formation; the lesson becomes an active process of constructing meaning through interaction with the text and with others; technology becomes a means of exercising capacities for reception, production, and critical analysis of discourse. The ultimate outcome of this correlation is the development of intellectual autonomy and the capacity for reflective language use in varied contexts, including digital ones, without diluting disciplinary rigor.

In the logic of self-regulated learning – particularly evident in extra muros activities, where students work independently – the use of AI, as a favorable medium for stimulating cognitive curiosity, supports the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of one's own learning process. The student formulates objectives, requests feedback, and adjusts reading and writing strategies. AI can organize and structure content or instruments for its valorization: conceptual maps, questionnaires, synoptic tables, and reformulations facilitate the transfer of information from working memory to long-term memory through logical connections. Properly organized, recourse to AI does not simplify the cognitive process; rather, it makes it more explicit and systematic, providing students with instruments for reflecting on their own mental operations. Critical and metacognitive thinking are thus strengthened and deepened.

IT represents, fundamentally, an extension of intellectual functions rather than a mechanism for replacing them. Applied in RLL didactics as a cognitive instrument, the digital environment supports the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of literary reality: it may provide structural outlines for an essay, explanations regarding the observance of stylistic registers, suggestions for intertextual connections, or models of argumentation. However, the decision concerning relevance and adequacy belongs to the student, mediated by the teacher. At the center of the hermeneutic process remains the human being: endowed with aesthetic sensitivity, cultural contextualization, and axiological judgment – dimensions that an algorithm may simulate but cannot internalize.

In this context, the teacher's role does not diminish; rather, it is reconfigured at the curricular level: content curator, task designer, and facilitator in navigating the informational ocean. In the first capacity, the teacher verifies the validity of information, recommends web sources closely aligned with the curricular unit under study, and establishes clear criteria for AI use. As a task designer, the teacher develops activities that require deep cognitive engagement, transfer, and personal argumentation. As a facilitator, the teacher creates contexts of dialogue and critical stance between the student and digital instruments, guiding reflection and preventing inert acceptance of automatically generated responses.

Regarding the learner, he or she may be approached within a threefold paradigm of digital education, understood evolutionarily: I) **directed** by AI, storing information provided by digital sources (*learner-as-recipient*); II) **supported** by AI, participating as a partner in the development of information (*learner-as-collaborator*); III) **empowered** by AI, creating and promoting information useful to others (*learner-as-leader*) [9]. With each level, the scope of competencies expands, responding to educational aims.

Associated with the IT domain and its connection to artificial intelligence, the RLL lesson focuses on the formation of an integrated set of competencies necessary for students to navigate the knowledge society and contemporary digital environments:

- linguistic and literary communication competencies;
- digital and informational competencies;
- cognitive and metacognitive competencies;
- social and ethical competencies.

Collectively, these competencies aim to valorize language as an instrument of thought, communication, and interpretation, and to consider reflective or argumentative exercise as support in decision-making processes. They structure students' thinking, train them to interpret critically diverse messages, and to construct meaning in multimodal contexts. These finalities presuppose the integration of literary and linguistic competencies with digital, cognitive, and ethical ones, so that students may perceive, evaluate, and produce relevant, coherent, and responsible messages, appropriate to purpose and target audience, including through the conscious and controlled use of AI.

Thus, the RLL lesson becomes a space for practicing critical reading of digital sources, for awareness of the limits and risks of internet use (clichés, errors, inconsistencies, accidental information, discursive manipulation), as well as for capitalizing on its potential in writing, textual analysis, paraphrasing, or interpretative exploration. Within such an approach, students are encouraged to monitor their reading and writing strategies, compare their own solutions with algorithmically generated ones, and develop intellectual autonomy, avoiding passive dependence on web-based tools. They learn to adopt a reflective stance toward the production and circulation of messages in the digital public sphere, to recognize – and prevent – the toxic impact of messages that reveal forms of functional illiteracy, and to promote respect for diversity of opinion when such opinions adhere to universal human values.

Linguistic and Literary Communication Competence. Approached through the digital lens, linguistic and literary communication competence is configured as an integrative capacity to produce fluent and textually grounded discourse across varied communication environments. It presupposes logical structuring of the message, appropriate use of connectors and cohesive mechanisms, and adaptation of register and argumentative strategies to the communicative situation and type of audience, including in online contexts. Argumentation becomes an exercise in rigor and responsibility, in which quotation, paraphrasing, and commentary are coherently integrated into the demonstrative endeavor. In the digital context, this competence also entails epistemic discernment, ethical use of resources, and awareness of one's own process of meaning construction, guiding students toward intellectual autonomy and communicative maturity.

Digital and Informational Competence. Within the RLL lesson, digital and informational competence is shaped as the student's ability to navigate critically and responsibly within the contemporary informational space, integrating digital resources into the analysis and production of discourse related to the literary work studied. This includes the capacity to search for and select relevant information for textual interpretation, evaluate the credibility and pertinence of sources, and distinguish between random opinion, well-founded argument, assumed idea, and automatically generated content. In this framework, the use of digital instruments and AI becomes

reflective and ethical. Students understand both the formative potential of these tools and their limitations, inaccuracies, or associated risks (generalizations, imprecision, standardized patterns). The competence also includes awareness of digital footprint and the responsibility entailed in publishing or distributing content. In the RLL lesson, this competence supports the formation of an autonomous reader and author, capable of using the digital environment as an instrument of knowledge rather than a substitute for critical judgment.

Cognitive and Metacognitive Competence. Integrated into the RLL lesson in a digital context, cognitive and metacognitive competence concerns the student's capacity to construct meaning actively and self-reflexively, using IT as a medium for exploration and regulation of intellectual processes. It involves formulating interpretative and predictive hypotheses in relation to literary or non-literary texts, confronting these with textual evidence and alternative perspectives, including those generated digitally. Self-regulation of reading and writing strategies becomes a conscious process, supported by digital tools that provide feedback but do not replace personal reflection. A central dimension of this competence is transfer: the application of mechanisms of analysis, interpretation, and argumentation in new contexts, including interaction with AI. The lesson thus becomes a space for awareness of one's own cognitive processes and for the formation of authentic intellectual autonomy.

Social and Ethical Competence. Addressed in the RLL lesson through the digital domain, social and ethical competence manifests as the student's ability to interact responsibly and reflectively in online environments, respecting civic and ethical norms of communication. This entails constructive collaboration with peers within transparent digital frameworks for exchanging ideas, arguing positions, and negotiating textual meanings.

Respect for copyright and ethical norms integrates naturally into the working process, ensuring correct citation of sources, avoidance of plagiarism, and acknowledgment of other authors' merits. Students assume their digital identity, understanding the impact and responsibility of their public discourse, both on interactive platforms and in digital products they create. In this way, the RLL lesson becomes a space for cultivating responsible digital conduct, where creativity and critical thinking are exercised alongside respect for rules, norms, and social values, contributing to the development of mature civic and cultural attitudes.

The following activities may support the formation of the above-mentioned set of competencies within a digital context, in the RLL lesson:

- *Comparative analysis of interpretations* – human and AI-generated: identifying nuances of difference, justifying proximity or distance from a particular stylistic register, analyzing emphases in one interpretation versus another, and substantiating the adoption of a specific mode of expression.

- *Digitally assisted argumentative essay writing* – using AI to organize, clarify, and refine the argumentative approach, employing idea-organization tools (concept maps, synoptic tables) to ensure logical structuring of discourse.

- *Moderated online debates* – formulating and defending an argued position within a forum, chat, or collaborative document, adapting discourse to interlocutors and to the norms of academic communication.

- *Creation of multimodal products* (podcast, video essay, cultural magazine, literary journal, interactive presentation) – integrating quotations, textual excerpts, commentary, and visual elements into coherent discourse tailored to a target audience.

- *Digital reflective journal* – using digital instruments to elucidate the stages of product development, the difficulties and challenges encountered, as well as the insights generated by the investigative process.

- *Source validation exercises* – analyzing the credibility of a critical article or online interpretation by applying explicit criteria (authority, relevance, value, currency), thus consolidating informational competence.

- *Simulation of dialogue with an author or literary character via AI* – formulating relevant questions and constructing argued responses, followed by analysis of their adequacy to the creative universe of the work.

- *Reformulation and message adaptation exercises supported by AI* – identifying, with digital tools, orthographic or grammatical errors, stylistic inconsistencies, or register incongruities.

- *Reflection on the learning process in digital forums* – describing the decisions students made, how they used digital tools and AI, what strategies they modified, and what difficulties they overcame, thereby strengthening self-regulation and metacognition.

Reconfiguring the Teaching Process through AI: Instructional Design and Lesson Scenarios

Structuring an AI-assisted lesson presupposes the integration of technology into a coherent, staged instructional design that does not disrupt the internal logic of the discipline. The stages of Evocation, Realization of Meaning, and Reflection are correlated with distinct types of AI intervention: generation of problem-posing questions, formulation of progressively deepening inquiries, provision of structural models, simulation of interpretative dialogues, and creation of illustrative materials for subsequent lessons within the learning unit.

The dynamic reconfiguration of linguistic and literary education through AI is defined by ascending cognitive complexity of tasks – from identification and classification (reproductive level) to analysis, synthesis, and critical evaluation (higher-order level, according to Bloom’s taxonomy). AI may support the lower levels through clarifications and examples, but higher levels must be designed so that students compare, argue, and critically validate the information generated. In simplified terms: AI at the foundation; the student’s personality at the summit. The lesson thus becomes a space for intellectual training rather than passive consumption of answers.

During the *Evocation* stage, AI may be used to activate known cognitive schemas through predictive questions, thematic associations, or hypotheses to be examined throughout the lesson. For example, students may briefly present contrasting perspectives on the ending of a novel and observe how AI develops the narrative line. Alternatively, AI may generate an extensive list of core concepts associated with the lesson’s theme, after which students select the most appropriate ones, justify their choices, and eliminate superfluous items.

In the *Realization of Meaning* stage, technology may provide additional, illustrative explanations. For instance, consolidation of a linguistic paradigm may be achieved through oral sentences incorporating forms displayed in a digital table. Students may develop structural outlines or interpretative examples retrieved from the internet; however, these must be filtered critically to avoid mechanical adoption of standardized interpretations.

In the *Reflection* stage, AI becomes an instrument of self-assessment: students compare their own responses with alternative suggestions, identify differences, and justify their options. In the *Extension* stage, AI may provoke anticipatory thinking – for example, proposing alternative narrative developments beyond a certain point – while students adopt the author’s stylistic techniques to continue the newly announced storyline.

The value of such integration lies in using AI as a stimulus for metacognition. Each ERRE stage explicitly includes tasks of critical validation and personal argumentation, through which students become aware that AI does not constitute a “supreme epistemic authority.” The major aim is the consolidation of deep learning, wherein students understand the process of meaning construction and assume intellectual responsibility for their interpretations.

Task Design and Differentiated Assessment in AI-Assisted Contexts

Designing tasks within an AI-assisted framework requires rethinking assessment so that it demands authentic cognitive engagement and personal positioning. Effective items are those that require: comparison of multiple interpretations (including one generated by AI); identification of the limits of an automated response; critical reformulation of a generated text. Equally relevant are tasks involving transfer to new contexts, interdisciplinary connections, or reference to personal reading and knowledge experiences – dimensions that are difficult to automate without exposing artificiality. The teacher may include explicit requirements for explaining the reasoning process (e.g., “justify why you accepted or rejected the AI suggestion”). The ultimate aim is to protect the authenticity of the student’s response and to transform AI into a pretext for critical reflection.

AI enables genuine differentiation of tasks by adjusting cognitive complexity, the volume of support provided, and the type of feedback. For students experiencing learning difficulties, additional explanations or idea-organization schemes may be generated, reducing cognitive overload. For advanced students, tasks may involve complex intertextual comparisons, in-depth stylistic analyses, critical evaluation of clichés in AI responses, and replacement of such clichés with value judgments.

Differentiation thus consists in adapting the instructional trajectory to the student's cognitive profile without neglecting curricular requirements. Personalization does not mean excessive simplification; rather, it implies strategic alignment of support and intellectual challenge. As a result, individual progress increases and student motivation is strengthened through a balanced interplay between assistance and autonomy.

Developing Reception Skills in a Digital Context

Developing reception skills in a digital context involves extending traditional reading practices toward the critical analysis of multimodal and interactive texts. The student no longer receives only a linear text but engages with hypertext, navigates links, interprets images, adaptations, summaries, and AI-generated interpretations.

Conceptually, this entails forming a strategic reading approach: identifying central ideas, distinguishing essential from secondary information, evaluating source credibility, and detecting potential algorithmic distortions. AI may support comprehension through paraphrasing, lexical clarification, or cultural contextualization; however, the essence of formation lies in maintaining cognitive control over meaning. The teacher must train students to compare the original text with automatically generated syntheses to prevent excessive simplification of literary content. Thus, the educational process aims at forming an autonomous reader capable of critically navigating digital space and constructing personally grounded meanings based on analysis and discernment.

Producing Discourse with AI Support

In discourse production, AI may function as an organizational support, offering suggestions for structuring ideas, models of textual coherence, or feedback regarding clarity and stylistic adequacy. Conceptually, production is not limited to correct drafting; it involves planning, elaboration, revision, and self-regulation. AI may accelerate the revision stage by indicating ambiguities or inconsistencies; however, the formulation of ideas, the selection of arguments, and the assumption of a position remain personalized intellectual acts. In oral discourse, technology may simulate debate situations or analyze parameters such as logical coherence and fluency, contributing to awareness of performance.

The importance of this phenomenon lies in using AI as an instrument for refining expression rather than as a substitute content generator. AI participates in the development of mature discursive competence, in which the student assumes an authentic voice, argues personal options, and uses technology for optimization rather than delegation of responsibility.

It becomes evident that, with the integration of digital competencies into the RLL curriculum – and into other school subjects as well – “strategic investments in professional development programs are necessary to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to effectively incorporate digital tools and resources into their teaching practices” [8, p.27].

Benefits of Integrating AI into the RLL Lesson

The benefits of the RLL lesson enriched through its connection with the IT domain are multiple. The symbiosis between linguistic and literary education and digital education generates significant transfers not only at the instrumental level but especially at the level of students' cognitive and attitudinal dynamics. The use of AI enhances intrinsic motivation by introducing an attractive, interactive, adaptive, and challenging working framework that responds to adolescents' need for exploration, autonomy, and intellectual validation. Tasks become more anchored in authentic contexts of communication and analysis, and students perceive school activity as relevant to the informational environment in which they live.

From this perspective, it is in the interest of the entire educational community to develop justified and coherent digitalization policies for the instructional process. Methodological committees and teaching councils should be involved in “creating interactive digital models – a task that may be solved by multi-profile teams composed of ICT specialists, teachers, and designers” [5, p. 7]. Beyond their interactive and attractive specificity, “digital resources offer ease of use and reduce working time – for example, through digitalized assessment: online evaluation tools may be used to monitor students' progress and identify gaps in understanding” [6, p. 332]. The continuous development and refinement of such platforms reflect their

dynamic use and the constant feedback of the educational community, oriented toward increasing the relevance and efficiency of the didactic process.

Intellectual Autonomy and Metacognitive Development

In consolidating intellectual autonomy, the student is no longer a mere receiver of interpretation; he or she formulates hypotheses, confronts perspectives, verifies the validity of generated information, reformulates opinions, and nuances attitudes. The online environment enables students to assume the role of authors of interpretative hypotheses.

In interaction with an algorithmic instrument, the student is compelled to clarify personal evaluation criteria, to distinguish between generality and interpretative subtlety, between adequacy and approximation. Technology becomes a catalyst for deeper distinctions, supporting authentic educational endeavor only if IT tools are used as environments for problematization and verification rather than rapid solution generators. Thus, the process becomes metacognitive: the student learns to observe, discern applicable criteria, reflect on personal interpretative approaches, and recognize the limits of digital instruments of knowledge.

AI proves particularly effective in simulating dialogue with characters, animating biographical data of authors, comparing interpretations, or generating alternative narrative endings or perspectives. However, all these become meaningful only under the condition of developing students' critical and reflective thinking. Confrontation with automatically generated responses demands scientific grounding, discernment, selection capacity, and argumentative rigor. Assisted by IT, the student learns to problematize, identify the limits of reasoning, determine the extent of its validity and coherence, correct interpretative errors, and sustain a personal position grounded in textual evidence.

In this framework, learning acquires a pronounced metacognitive character, and technology becomes a catalyst of intellectual autonomy: it does not deliver ultimate truth nor claim absolute epistemic authority; rather, it stimulates discernment and interpretative responsibility – dimensions that ultimately foster freedom of opinion.

From the perspective of the learning process as a whole, the benefits of AI integration outline how the student – future university learner – engages in constructing his or her cognitive universe: 24/7 access to learning, flexible organization of study schedules, increased engagement through personalized AI use, and reduced pressure resulting from decreased comparison with peers [1, p.60].

Results and Assumed Ideas Derived from the Investigation

Table 1 synthetically configures the defining benchmarks of the RLL lesson reinterpreted through the digital education paradigm, outlining the transformations that may occur at the level of content, instructional strategies, and competencies formed. It should be noted that a school's internal policies establish the coordinates of digital education, focusing on the structure, functionality, and formative impact of the didactic endeavor.

Table 1. Particularities of the RLL Lesson Approached through the Lens of Digital Education

Criterion	Particularities of the Lesson	Specific Examples in RLL lesson
Finality	The AI-mediated RLL lesson centers on forming communication, reading, and critical interpretation competencies, surpassing the paradigm of information accumulation. AI integration creates premises for developing intellectual autonomy through exploration, confrontation, and reflection upon meaning. The integrative strategies have a motivational impact. The educational finality aims at consolidating critical thinking and the student's capacity to construct personal, well-argued meanings in relation to literary and non-literary texts.	- Searching for unknown meanings on dexonline.ro - Rapid identification of authors' biographies and creative data - Associating characters, literary conflicts, poetic motifs within a series - Formulating a personal argumentative position, comparing it with AI's position, and compiling a list of improvements for one's own product

Teacher's Role	The teacher constructs learning situations in which AI has pedagogical value. He or she identifies content suitable for digital expansion and mediates the student-text-technology relationship. The instructional design aims at engaging students in critical reflection upon ideas provided by digital sources.	- Designing tasks requiring hypothesis verification - Selecting content appropriate for digital approach - Discussing the limits of an AI-generated response offered as model - Explicitly requesting justification for accepting / rejecting AI responses.
Student's Role	The student is viewed as an active participant in learning, supplementing textbook information through web-based sources. The student learns to discern digital sources, compare information across pages, and select the most credible variant. AI complements rather than substitutes intellectual effort; meaning construction becomes part of the student's cognitive universe.	- Comparing 2-3 pieces of information from different web sources - Writing a narrative/ descriptive text after evaluating AI suggestions - Identifying additional information to explain a concept to peers
Content	AI does not generate the core content to be studied. However flexible and adaptable digital tools may be, literary works or excerpts are selected according to students' linguistic and cultural development levels and based on texts validated by textbook authors or teachers as valuable for study. AI intervenes at the level of contextualization, establishing connections with other domains of life and knowledge, and differentiating tasks—without altering the literary nucleus of the discipline, while emphasizing interpretative depth.	- Differentiated interpretative tasks for the same text - Selecting literary texts from the web to be examined in parallel with those in the textbook - Using AI to clarify the meaning of archaisms, symbols, neologisms, abbreviations, expressions
Methods and Strategies	In the RLL lesson approached through digital education, independent inquiry, problem-based learning, and project-based learning supported by digital tools prevail. The integration of AI does not reject traditional methods such as lecture or guided conversation. Techniques are selected according to their capacity to contribute to integrative competence formation. Students are trained to subject AI-generated hypotheses and alternative perspectives to critical analysis.	- Literary investigations starting from a hypothesis generated by AI - Comparing different interpretations of the same fragment - Comparative reading projects between the original text and digital reinterpretations - Project for developing a literary magazine including biography, literary review, interview, critical page, entertainment section
Instructional Design	Instructional design is flexible and competence-oriented, integrating authentic and differentiated learning tasks. The lesson is conceptualized as a coherent formative pathway, dynamically configured. Operational objectives derive clearly from the integrative nature of competence. Activities are structured gradually, supporting the transition from content acquisition to contextualized transfer and application, capitalizing on varied digital resources (multimodal texts, collaborative platforms, analytical tools).	- Structuring the lesson into sequences with distinct digital functionality - Differentiated task design according to levels of cognitive complexity using digital resources - Integrating formative digital assessment from the design stage

Teaching	Teaching unfolds within an interactive digital mediation framework oriented toward interpretative dialogue. During exposition, web sources are compared, and critical interpretations available online are presented to support problem-solving situations. Information is analyzed together with students in terms of argument validity and source credibility. AI is used as a cognitive support instrument, providing illustrative or contrastive benchmarks. The responsibility for constructing meaning remains deliberately with the teacher	- Modeling the interpretative process through digital tools - Integrating AI as a metacognitive reflection instrument - Presenting interactive schemes, digital conceptual maps, and relevant video fragments to connect theory and text
Learning	Students analyze AI-provided benchmarks in class, contrast them with textbook perspectives, and construct new meanings under teacher guidance. Central to the process remain students' cognitive activity, autonomy, self-regulation, and the production of personal discourse. Learning is grounded not in information accumulation but in the elaboration of a reflexively constructed personal position through selection, interpretation, and integration of available information	- Digitally assisted critical documentation - Argumentative analysis developed in shared documents - Interpreting a text in a video essay, podcast, or interactive presentation integrating quotations, images, and graphic elements - Forming competencies for socio-professional integration
Assessment	Assessment is conceived within a formative and continuous paradigm. It has a reflective character, centered on the learning process, the processual construction of meaning, and the dynamics of individual progress. Formative and summative assessment operate in complementarity. AI supports evaluation by providing preliminary feedback without replacing pedagogical judgment. Emphasis is placed on metacognitive reflection and self-regulation	- Digitally assisted formative assessment with immediate feedback - Product evaluation based on a previously announced rubric, with <i>ad hoc</i> commentary displayed on the interactive board - Self-assessment following comparison of the student's product with AI-generated variants

Assessment of Competencies Formed in the Digital Context

Regarding the evaluation of learning outcomes in the context of digital tools and AI-supported tasks, emphasis is placed on the quality of students' personal reflection, their capacity for revision, argumentation of decisions, and the originality of perspectives influenced – but not dictated – by AI. Assessment, in this sense, represents guidance for learning, grounded in explicit criteria directly correlated with the linguistic, literary, and digital competencies targeted in the RLL lesson, and subsequently in the valorization of authentic, multimodal student products. Not only summative evaluation, but also self-assessment and peer assessment may become frameworks for ensuring authenticity and academic integrity, by verifying students' personal contribution, the manner in which technology was used in product development, and adherence to ethical norms.

To cultivate a rigorous and objective perspective on evaluating communication, digital, cognitive, and social competencies, a rubric with multiple descriptors may be elaborated, enabling estimation of the “collaboration” between the student's cognitive universe and the AI domain. In upper secondary education, the teacher may act primarily as a guide, while students complete, modify, or deepen the descriptors themselves, thus assuming the noble posture of honest explorers of digital horizons.

Below, Table 2 presents a four-level evaluation grid. The teacher and class may jointly decide the scale type and the number of levels used.

Table 2. Evaluation of Competencies Formed in the RLL through the Lens of Digital Education (Written Product)

Evaluated Competence	Elementary Level	Satisfactory Level	Good Level	Advanced Level
Critical Use of Digital Information	The student (S.) blindly adopts information without critical spirit	S. uses sources considered credible but does not insistently verify them	S. uses appropriate sources with partial evaluation of credibility	S. selects relevant and trustworthy sources, critically evaluates them, and justifies choices
Responsible Integration of AI	S. accepts any web page as a source, copying information without discernment	S. uses AI with some reflective elements but often displays uncritical trust	S. uses AI as support, compares critically, and generally integrates information correctly, though sometimes hastily	S. deeply discerns the specificity of web sources, understands information valorization, and integrates it responsibly
Digital Written Communication Competence	The text is fragmented and chaotic, lacking overall vision	The text has an elementary structure with partial respect for digital register	The text is clear with minor structuring issues and respects digital register	The text is coherent, rigorously structured, well-argued, and successfully adapted to digital environment
Metacognitive Dimension	Reflection is barely perceptible; weak interconnection with knowledge domains	Reflection is superficial but attempts to interconnect knowledge domains	Reflection is sufficient, with notable associative capacity and interdisciplinary connections	Deep reflection on personal learning process, with justified interdisciplinary connections
Respect for Digital Ethics	S. copies data without citing sources and lacks knowledge of citation norms	Sources are indicated unsystematically but with awareness of digital ethics	Citation errors occur, yet responsibility toward digital ethics is manifested	Sources are cited correctly; copyright is fully respected; ethical responsibility is fully assumed

Risks Associated with the Integration of the Digital Domain

Alongside the aforementioned benefits that generate significant formative opportunities, the intertwining of linguistic and literary education with the digital domain also entails certain risks. The first concerns the overuse of technology and the consequent diminution of cognitive effort. Students may lose sight of the authentic purpose of engaging with web networks; often, they limit themselves to retrieving information without relating it to their own cognitive universe. In other words, the authentic capacity for analysis and reflection may be reduced.

From another perspective, excessive reliance on AI may elude the hermeneutic exercise that is primordial in the study of literature. For example, in constructing an argument, the artificial superimposition of applicability domains copied from the internet – without critical integration and without adaptation to the specificities of the text – leads to interpretative artificiality and deviation from its internal logic. Conceptual overlaps may become forced, and conclusions may fail to emerge organically from the premises of interpretation.

Furthermore, the risk of standardized expression and depersonalization of the student's voice must not be underestimated. Stereotypical formulations, predictable argumentative or reflective structures may threaten the expression of an authentic point of view. These – and other – risks must be lucidly acknowledged within a responsible didactic framework. The teacher retains the essential role in regulating the use of digital domains and maintaining intellectual rigor.

Concluding Considerations

Therefore, the integration of artificial intelligence into the RLL lesson must be conceived not merely from the perspective of technological innovation but as a pedagogical decision grounded in the utmost conscientiousness. Managing the associated risks requires rigorous instructional design, the establishment of explicit ethical frameworks, the development of critical competence, and the preservation of the primacy of authentic interpretative acts. Only under these conditions does AI become a catalyst for intellectual formation rather than a substitute for it.

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DEVELOPING TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES FOR INITIATING LOGISTIC PROJECTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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This article focuses on teachers' preparation for initiating logistic projects in early childhood education institutions and on their willingness to become involved in such activities. The research included 50 teachers from early childhood education institutions, divided into two equal groups: an experimental group and a control group. Initially, teachers' knowledge and involvement in relation to logistic projects were examined. A managerial training program was then applied in the experimental group, with activities focused on defining project objectives, planning actions, distributing responsibilities, estimating resources, analysing risks and monitoring results. The study used a questionnaire, document analysis and comparison of the results recorded before and after the intervention. After the program, the experimental group moved from mainly low levels of knowledge and involvement toward medium and high levels, while the control group recorded only minor changes. The applied project concerned the improvement of energy efficiency at "Albinuța" Kindergarten.

Keywords: *educational management, logistic project, early childhood education, managerial competencies, professional development, project management.*

DEZVOLTAREA COMPETENȚELOR CADRELOR DIDACTICE PENTRU ÎNȚIEREA PROIECTELOR LOGISTICE ÎN INSTITUȚIILE DE EDUCAȚIE TIMPURIE

Articolul abordează pregătirea cadrelor didactice pentru inițierea proiectelor logistice în instituțiile de educație timpurie și disponibilitatea acestora de a se implica în asemenea activități. Cercetarea a inclus 50 de cadre didactice din instituții de educație timpurie, repartizate în două grupuri egale: grup experimental și grup de control. Inițial, a fost analizat nivelul de cunoaștere și implicare al cadrelor didactice în raport cu proiectele logistice. Ulterior, în grupul experimental a fost aplicat un program de formare managerială, cu activități axate pe definirea obiectivelor, planificarea acțiunilor, distribuirea responsabilităților, estimarea resurselor, analiza riscurilor și monitorizarea rezultatelor. Studiul a utilizat chestionarul, analiza documentară și compararea rezultatelor înainte și după intervenție. După program, grupul experimental a trecut de la niveluri preponderent scăzute spre niveluri medii și înalte, iar grupul de control a înregistrat schimbări reduse. Proiectul aplicat a vizat eficientizarea energetică a Grădiniței „Albinuța”.

Cuvinte-cheie: *management educațional, proiect logistic, educație timpurie, competențe manageriale, dezvoltare profesională, managementul proiectelor.*

Introduction

Educational institutions are increasingly required to manage not only teaching activities, but also resources, infrastructure and institutional development projects. In this context, managerial flexibility becomes important, especially when the institution needs to improve material conditions, organize available resources and respond to concrete educational needs. Project management can support this process because it offers a clear way to plan activities, coordinate people and resources, monitor progress and achieve objectives within limits of time, cost and performance [7].

In the specialized literature, project management is described through several connected stages: initiation, planning, execution, monitoring and closure. These stages are also reflected in international standards, where project quality and efficient use of resources are treated as central requirements [5]. A systemic view of project management draws attention to the relation between objectives, resources and constraints.

A project cannot be reduced to a list of activities; it requires planning, coordination and permanent control of what is being implemented [6]. Project-based management is also relevant for institutional change, because it helps organizations translate strategic intentions into concrete actions and adapt to external demands [9].

In education, project management cannot be applied mechanically, as in a purely technical field. It has to be connected with the specific nature of the teaching–learning process and with the people involved in it. Effective educational leadership depends on the ability to mobilize human and material resources in a way that supports institutional development and improves organizational performance [1]. At the same time, lasting change in education is difficult to achieve without the participation of staff and without the continuous development of their professional competencies [3].

In early childhood education institutions, logistic projects are especially important because they are directly linked to the conditions in which children learn and teachers work. Such projects may refer to infrastructure, equipment, safety, heating, energy efficiency or other material aspects that influence the quality of the educational environment. For these projects to be successful, teachers need more than general willingness to participate. They need to understand how a project is initiated, how objectives are formulated, how resources are planned and how implementation is monitored [2]. Teacher motivation and professional commitment also matter, because institutional initiatives depend on the active involvement of the people who will later apply or sustain them [4, 8].

The development of managerial competencies among teachers can strengthen the institution’s capacity to identify needs, prepare project proposals and implement initiatives with lasting effects [10]. For early childhood education institutions, this is not only a managerial issue, but also a practical condition for improving the educational environment. When teachers understand the logic of project management, they can participate more actively in modernization processes and contribute to better organization of material and educational resources.

Starting from these considerations, the present study analyses teachers’ competencies in initiating logistic projects and examines the effects of a managerial training program applied within an early childhood education institution.

Materials and Methods

The study was designed as an applied experimental research carried out in an early childhood education institution. It focused on two aspects: the initial level of teachers’ competencies in initiating logistic projects and the changes produced after the application of a managerial training program.

The sample included teaching staff from the institution who were involved in managerial activities or in the development of institutional projects. Participation was voluntary and followed the ethical requirements of educational research. In total, 50 teachers took part in the study. They were divided into two equal groups: an experimental group of 25 teachers and a control group of 25 teachers.

The research combined theoretical and empirical methods. The theoretical part included the analysis of institutional documents and the review of literature related to project management and educational management. The empirical part focused on the assessment of teachers’ managerial competencies, the examination of logistic projects previously developed in the institution and the comparison of results recorded before and after the training program.

The intervention consisted of a managerial training program developed for teachers who needed to initiate and manage logistic projects. The program followed the main stages of a project:

- defining the idea,
- planning actions,
- organizing resources,
- implementing activities,
- monitoring progress and evaluating results.

Its purpose was to develop practical competencies related to project planning, structuring, implementation and evaluation at institutional level. The structure of the program is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Managerial program for developing teachers' competencies in initiating logistic projects within the early childhood education institution

No.	Stage of the logistic project	Formative activities	Competencies developed	Persons involved
1.	Executive summary	Workshop focused on formulating the project idea, defining objectives, identifying beneficiaries, estimating duration and outlining the initial budget.	Formulating clear objectives; identifying target groups; selecting essential project elements; estimating basic financial needs.	Project manager; teaching staff
2.	Project description	Group work and case analysis on the relevance of the project, expected impact, connection with institutional priorities and continuity with previous initiatives.	Explaining the need for the project; linking the proposal to institutional development; analysing relevance and expected impact.	Project manager; project team members
3.	Project action plan	Collaborative drafting of the action plan, setting deadlines, distributing tasks and identifying the resources needed for implementation.	Planning activities; organizing tasks; coordinating responsibilities; working collaboratively within the project team.	Project manager; teacher working groups
4.	Expected results and risk analysis	Group discussions on expected results, possible risks and practical solutions for reducing or managing difficulties during implementation.	Formulating measurable results; identifying risks; proposing solutions; making decisions in uncertain situations.	Project manager; project team
5.	Monitoring and evaluation	Simulation of monitoring procedures, development of simple performance indicators, self-assessment and peer feedback activities.	Monitoring progress; using evaluation criteria; reflecting on results; assuming responsibility for the quality of implementation.	Project manager; competent bodies; teaching staff
6.	Managerial implementation activity	Development and application of the institutional implementation plan for the logistic project.	Applying managerial decisions in practice; coordinating implementation; assuming leadership roles and institutional responsibility.	Project manager; entire teaching staff

Following the general methodological design, the managerial program presented in Table 1 was applied as the main formative intervention of the study. The program was organized around the main stages of a logistic project, but its focus was not only on knowing these stages in theory. The purpose was to help teachers practise the actions needed to prepare, organize and follow a logistic project within their own institution.

The activities included workshops, group tasks, analysis of practical situations, guided reflection and collaborative work. Through these activities, teachers worked with concrete elements of project design: defining the project idea, identifying beneficiaries, formulating objectives, estimating resources, distributing responsibilities, anticipating risks and monitoring results. In this way, project management was approached as a practical process, connected to the real needs of the early childhood education institution.

In the first stage, focused on the executive summary, teachers practised formulating the main idea of the project, defining objectives, identifying target groups and estimating the duration and budget. This stage

helped them understand what information is needed at the beginning of a project proposal and how it should be presented clearly.

The project description stage was based on guided analysis. Teachers discussed the relevance of the project, its expected impact and its connection with the institution's development needs. Particular attention was given to the continuity between the proposed logistic project and previous institutional actions, so that the project would not remain an isolated initiative, but would be linked to the broader improvement of educational conditions.

During the action plan stage, participants worked on setting deadlines, distributing tasks and identifying the resources needed for implementation. These activities required them to connect objectives with concrete actions and to think realistically about time, responsibilities and available resources.

The stage dedicated to expected results and risk analysis focused on anticipating possible difficulties. Teachers discussed what results could be expected, what risks might appear during implementation and what solutions could be prepared in advance. This part of the program supported decision-making and problem-solving skills.

Monitoring and evaluation were treated as part of the project process, not only as a final control activity. Teachers worked with simple performance indicators, self-assessment and peer feedback. These activities helped them understand how evaluation can be used to follow progress, make corrections and improve implementation during the project.

The program involved the project manager and the teaching staff. Responsibilities were distributed collaboratively, and teachers had the opportunity to assume concrete roles in the preparation and implementation of the logistic project. This form of participation supported the development of managerial competencies and encouraged a more active attitude toward institutional project initiatives.

The effectiveness of the program was assessed by comparing the results recorded before and after the intervention in the experimental and control groups. Descriptive statistical methods were used to observe the changes in teachers' knowledge, involvement and project-related competencies. Through this approach, the study aimed not only to test the training program, but also to outline a practical model that could be adapted for other early childhood education institutions.

Results and Discussion

Level of knowledge of logistic projects. Teachers' knowledge of logistic projects was examined by comparing the results recorded before and after the training program. The comparison was made separately for the experimental group and the control group, which allowed us to observe whether the changes were related to the formative intervention or only to the natural evolution of the participants.

Table 2. Degree of identification of teachers' level of knowledge regarding logistic projects

Level	Experimental sample (n = 25)				Control sample (n = 25)			
	Before program implementation		After program implementation		Before program implementation		After program implementation	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
High	3	12	8	32	2	8	3	12
Medium	9	36	14	56	7	28	8	32
Low	13	52	3	12	16	64	14	56

At the beginning of the study, both groups showed a similar problem: most teachers had a low level of knowledge about logistic projects. In the experimental group, 13 teachers (52%) were at the low level, 9 teachers (36%) at the medium level and 3 teachers (12%) at the high level. The control group showed an even stronger concentration at the low level: 16 teachers (64%), compared with 7 teachers (28%) at the medium level and 2 teachers (8%) at the high level. These results show that, before the intervention, the concept of logistic project was not sufficiently understood or used by most participants.

After the managerial training program, the experimental group changed visibly. The number of teachers at the high level increased from 3 to 8, which means a change from 12% to 32%. The medium level also increased, from 9 teachers (36%) to 14 teachers (56%). At the same time, the number of teachers at the low level decreased from 13 to 3, or from 52% to 12%. This movement from the low level toward the medium and high levels suggests that the program helped teachers understand the structure and logic of logistic projects more clearly.

In the control group, the changes were much smaller. The high level increased only from 2 to 3 teachers (8% to 12%), and the medium level from 7 to 8 teachers (28% to 32%). The low level decreased from 16 to 14 teachers, or from 64% to 56%. Compared with the experimental group, this evolution is limited. It suggests that the progress recorded in the experimental group was mainly connected with the training program, not only with the passage of time or with informal accumulation of information.

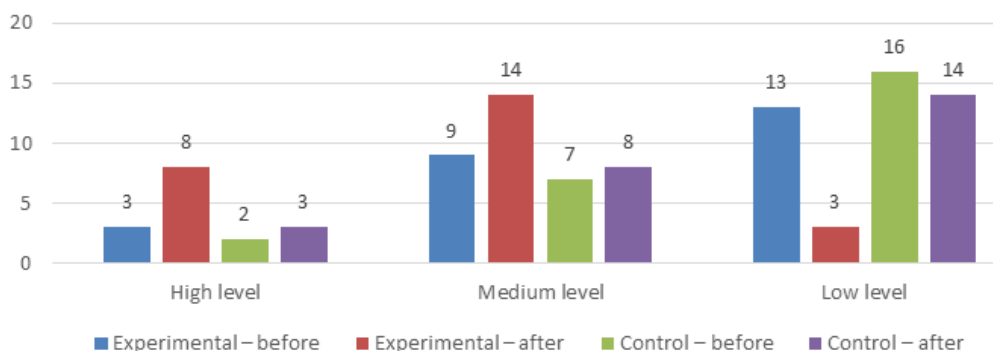


Figure 1. Comparative distribution of teachers' knowledge levels regarding logistic projects

Figure 1 makes the differences between the two groups easier to observe. The most visible change appears in the low level category. In the experimental group, this category decreased strongly after the training program, while in the control group the decrease was much smaller. The same figure also shows the movement of teachers from the low level toward the medium and high levels in the experimental group.

These results indicate that the training program had a positive effect on teachers' knowledge of logistic projects. The decrease in the low level, together with the increase in the medium and high levels, shows that teachers did not only receive new information. They began to understand more clearly how a logistic project is structured and what steps are needed for its initiation and development.

The results therefore support the idea that a formative intervention can strengthen teachers' capacity to understand, initiate and participate in logistic projects within an early childhood education institution.

Degree of involvement in future projects initiated by the administration. Teachers' willingness to participate in future logistic projects initiated by the administration was analysed by comparing the results recorded before and after the training program. The comparison was made in both groups, in order to see whether the changes were stronger in the experimental group than in the control group.

Table 3. Degree of teachers' involvement in future projects initiated by the institution's administration

Level	Experimental sample (n = 25)				Control sample (n = 25)			
	Before program implementation		After program implementation		Before program implementation		After program implementation	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
High	5	20	12	48	-	-	2	8
Medium	7	28	13	52	20	80	21	84
Low	13	52	-	-	5	20	2	8

Before the training program, the experimental group showed a rather low level of involvement in logistic projects. A total of 13 teachers (52%) were placed at the low level, 7 teachers (28%) at the medium level and 5 teachers (20%) at the high level. This distribution suggests that many teachers were not yet ready to participate actively in project-based activities. The result is also consistent with the low level of knowledge identified earlier, because limited understanding of logistic projects can reduce the willingness to become involved.

After the managerial program, the situation changed clearly in the experimental group. The number of teachers at the high level increased from 5 to 12, while the medium level increased from 7 to 13 teachers. At the same time, the low level disappeared from the distribution. This change shows that teachers became more willing to assume responsibilities and to participate in the initiation and implementation of logistic projects.

In the control group, the changes were much smaller. Before the program, 20 teachers (80%) were at the medium level and 5 teachers (20%) at the low level, while no teacher was recorded at the high level. After the same period, the medium level increased slightly and the low level decreased, but the high level remained much lower than in the experimental group. This indicates that the stronger progress observed in the experimental group was related to the managerial training program.

Figure 2 shows more clearly the difference between the two groups. In the experimental group, the change is visible through the movement from the low level toward the medium and high levels. In the control group, the structure remained relatively stable, with most teachers still placed at the medium level.

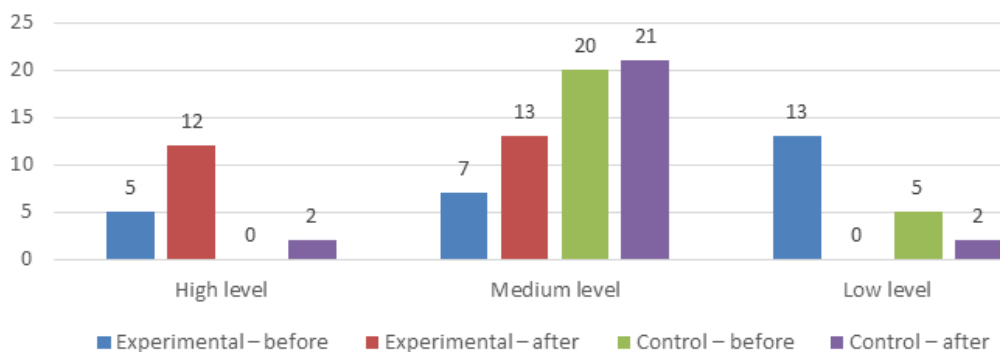


Figure 2. Degree of teachers' involvement in future projects initiated by the institution's administration

These results suggest that the development of managerial competencies was closely linked to teachers' willingness to become involved in logistic projects. As teachers understood better the stages of a project and the responsibilities connected with each stage, their reluctance decreased. Involvement was no longer perceived only as an additional task assigned by the administration, but as a way to participate more actively in the development of the institution.

The data also show a connection between managerial knowledge and professional engagement. When teachers understand how a project is planned, organized and monitored, they are more likely to assume concrete responsibilities in project-based activities. In this sense, the training program contributed to a more proactive professional attitude among the teachers from the experimental group. This result is consistent with the literature, which emphasizes the role of managerial training in developing professional competencies and increasing staff involvement in organizational processes [1, 3].

The progress recorded in the experimental group was related to the application of the Managerial Program for Developing Teachers' Competencies in Initiating Logistic Projects within the Early Childhood Education Institution. Within this program, the teachers worked on a concrete logistic project aimed at improving energy efficiency at "Albinuța" Kindergarten in Dănceni village. The project included thermal insulation works, modernization of the heating system and improvement of material conditions for educational activities.

All 25 teachers from the experimental group were involved in the program through differentiated formative activities and assigned roles. They participated in workshops, collaborative tasks and applied reflection

exercises. Their responsibilities included drafting the executive summary, explaining the relevance and expected impact of the project, developing the action plan, estimating the budget, defining expected results and analysing possible risks. This practical involvement helped teachers move from general knowledge about projects to concrete managerial actions.

Thus, the intervention did not lead only to the accumulation of information. It helped teachers understand how a logistic project is built and how responsibilities are shared inside the institution. The post-test results show this change through the higher level of involvement and the greater readiness of teachers to participate in future project initiatives.

Conclusions

The results obtained at the pre-test stage showed that many teachers had limited knowledge and low involvement in relation to logistic projects. This initial situation confirmed the need for a targeted training program, especially in early childhood education institutions where logistic projects are directly connected with infrastructure, material conditions and institutional development.

After the implementation of the managerial training program, the experimental group recorded clear progress. The number of teachers placed at the low level decreased, while the medium and high levels became more visible. In the control group, the changes were much smaller. This difference shows that the progress recorded in the experimental group was closely related to the formative intervention, not only to the natural accumulation of experience.

The practical work carried out within the project aimed at improving the energy efficiency of IET “Albinița” had an important role in this process. Teachers were not only informed about project management; they were involved in concrete tasks related to planning, organization, distribution of responsibilities, budget estimation, risk analysis and monitoring. This applied character helped them connect theoretical knowledge with real institutional needs and strengthened their confidence in assuming managerial responsibilities.

The study shows that training in logistic project management should become part of teachers’ continuous professional development in early childhood education. Such training can help teaching staff participate more actively in institutional projects and contribute to the improvement of educational conditions.

The experience obtained in this study may also be used as a starting point for extending the program to other early childhood education institutions. Further applications could help refine the training model and develop clearer methodological tools for preparing teachers to initiate and manage logistic projects.

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THE BASICS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND MAKING INTERNSHIPS MORE EFFECTIVE BY 2026

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This article builds on the works of experiential learning theory to provide a theoretical foundation and propose practical mechanisms aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of internships as authentic learning experiences. The analysis is conducted in the context of contemporary socio-economic transformations marked by digitalization, professional mobility, and increasing labor market demands, highlighting how these changes require the rethinking and optimization of internships as essential instruments for training and competence development. The sources explore the philosophical and pedagogical contributions of thinkers such as Aristotle, Dewey, Lewin, and Kolb, emphasizing that modern education must transform direct action into cognitive resources through critical reflection. The text further details how the Framework regulation on internships in higher education, developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, translates these theories into concrete mechanisms – such as the cooperation agreement, the internship portfolio, and dual mentorship – in order to ensure the acquisition of real professional competencies.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, internships, competencies, reflection, action research, labor market, feedback.*

FUNDAMENTELE ÎNVĂȚĂRII EXPERIENTIALE ȘI EFICIENTIZAREA STAGIILOR DE PRACTICĂ ÎN CONTEXTUL ANULUI 2026

Acest articol valorifică lucrările din teoria învățării experiențiale pentru a fundamenta și propune mecanisme practice menite să sporească eficiența stagiilor de practică ca experiențe autentice de învățare. Analiza este realizată în contextul transformărilor socio-economice contemporane, marcate de digitalizare, mobilitate profesională și creșterea exigențelor pieței muncii, evidențiind modul în care aceste schimbări impun regândirea și optimizarea stagiilor ca instrumente esențiale de formare și dezvoltare a competențelor. Sursele explorează contribuțiile filosofice și pedagogice ale unor gânditori precum Aristotel, Dewey, Lewin și Kolb, subliniind faptul că educația modernă trebuie să transforme acțiunea directă în resurse cognitive prin reflecție critică. Textul detaliază modul în care Regulamentul - cadru privind stagiile de practică în învățământul superior, elaborat de MEC, transpune aceste teorii în mecanisme concrete, cum ar fi acordul de colaborare, portofoliul de practică și mentoratul dual, pentru a asigura dobândirea unor competențe profesionale reale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *învățare experiențială, stagii de practică, competențe, reflecție, cercetare-acțiune, piața-muncii, feedback.*

Introduction

We live in a constantly changing world in which the labor market increasingly highlights the mismatch between labor market requirements and the actual competencies possessed by graduates. In this context, higher education systems tend to provide not only theoretical knowledge but also to develop the ability to apply knowledge, adapt to new societal changes, and solve emerging problems.

Theoretical knowledge dissociated from the ability to act is no longer sufficient for professional success. Internships represent the first profound contact with the professional world, where the student transitions from the status of information receiver to that of an active participant in real work situations and processes. Contemporary education involves transforming knowledge into action and action into knowledge.

The historical evolution of the concept of experiential learning

The reconceptualization of university internships requires grounding them in a solid theoretical framework. The paradigm of experiential learning does not represent a theoretical rupture, but rather an evolutionary construction rooted in Aristotelian reflections on the role of action in the formation of knowledge, gradually developing over time.

From Aristotelian thought, knowledge was inseparably linked to practice and based on the idea that “the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them,” thus emphasizing the role of action in the process of knowing [4]. The idea that “we learn by doing” introduces an active dimension to human formation. Action is not merely application, but a constitutive means of understanding. This philosophical intuition became the foundation of modern experiential pedagogy.

John Dewey is undoubtedly considered the father of experiential learning. A central principle of his educational philosophy was that “... amid all uncertainties, there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the connection between education and personal experience” [5].

Two of Dewey’s works provide significant insight into his theory: *How we think* and *Experience and education*. His views on education, formulated at the beginning of the last century, remain relevant and applicable to contemporary contexts, surpassing replicative educational systems limited to the accumulation of theoretical knowledge. The learner is an active participant in the construction of knowledge, not a passive recipient of information.

His theory involves the scientific systematization of human experience, the educational process being understood as a “continuous reorganization, reconstruction, and transformation of experience.” Human beings learn about the world through experience, and experience, in turn, generates both individual and societal development. This represents the natural way of learning—through action followed by reflection. Reflective thinking involves problematic situations, possible solutions, and hypotheses.

J. Dewey distinguished himself through several key ideas:

- education is development in, through, and for experience;
- education is the reconstruction or reorganization of experience, which adds meaning to prior experience and increases the capacity to direct subsequent experience;
- experience is vital in learning; it is, first and foremost, action;
- experience occurs under specific conditions and requires a specialized environment;
- experience presupposes knowledge, and knowledge enables us to adapt the environment to our needs, purposes, and desires [5].

Dewey’s approach is naturalistic, grounded in Darwinian biological evolutionary theory, which emphasizes the organism’s need to adapt to its environment. In this process, individuals form habits – routine ways of doing things. When these habits no longer function, a problem arises, along with uncertainty and a crisis that stimulates reflective thinking and investigation of the conditions of the situation. As in experimental inquiry, a hypothesis is formulated and then tested in practice. When habitual behavior is disrupted by new or unexpected experiences, the organism must resort to reasoning or “intellectual activity.”

Dewey’s model of experience and reflection: phases of reflective learning [5.]:

1. *A state of uncertainty and indeterminacy.* When the normal course of activity is disrupted, a state of uncertainty and indeterminacy emerges. The inhibition of direct action is a necessary precondition for reflective thinking, creating hesitation that is essential for cognition. Reflective thinking begins with the examination of conditions, resources, difficulties, and obstacles within action.

2. *Intellectualization – defining the problem.* In the second stage, the organism extracts the essential elements of the situation in order to frame it as a problem to be solved. Reflective thinking begins with an attempt to define what is wrong in a given situation. The actor forms a preliminary conception and defines the problem. Problem formulation already involves studying the conditions of the situation and transforming the situation into a clearly articulated problem, which facilitates further inquiry and knowledge acquisition.

3. *Examination of the conditions of the situation and formulation of a working hypothesis.* The next stage involves the “construction of a hypothesis,” whereby the organism creatively uses imagination to generate possible responses. At this stage, the material and social conditions, as well as the means and resources necessary to solve the problem, are analyzed. A working hypothesis may also be described as a guiding idea or plan.

4. *Rationalization.* The fourth stage identified by Dewey involves the use of reason to weigh and organize alternative hypotheses, evaluating the different experiences that may result from each one. In this rationalization phase, thought experiments may be conducted. The hypothesis is assessed and tested in light

of the knowledge and resources available to the individual or community. These thought experiments are important because they allow the process to be revisited and refined. They may lead to the reformulation of the working hypothesis. However, material results and practical experiments are not reversible in the same way.

5. *Testing the hypothesis in action.* Finally, testing or experimentation represents the process through which hypotheses are eliminated or confirmed as they are weighed against the resulting experiences. The working hypothesis is tested by attempting to implement it in practice, through the reconstruction of the situation or the human–environment relationship.

Dewey argues that only practical testing makes it possible to draw conclusions about the validity of a hypothesis. For this reason, he refers to the previous phase as rationalization in a more limited sense. The final outcome of this process appears as the resolution of the problem through the adoption of a new hypothesis that proves functional. This insight underlies his famous statement: “Truth is what works.” We are justified in accepting a hypothesis only insofar as it works; any claim of mere “correspondence with reality” is, in Dewey’s view, a metaphysical speculation that neither deepens knowledge nor aids in deciding among hypotheses.

Reflection represents a central element of experiential learning and, like the experiential process itself, it can be facilitated through pedagogical intervention or may occur independently and autonomously. Dewey wrote that “successive sequences of reflective thought develop from one another and support each other.” This approach confirms the dynamic and cyclical nature of experiential and reflective learning, showing that the development of knowledge takes place through a continuous process of integrating lived experience with its reflective analysis and reinterpretation.

Subsequently, Kurt Lewin introduced a psychosocial dimension, highlighting group dynamics and the action–reflection–action cycle as a mechanism of learning. He established action research as a legitimate research method, starting from the premise that in order to “understand and change certain social practices, social scientists must include practitioners from the real social world in all phases of the inquiry.” According to Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, Lewin described action research as “a spiral process of steps, each of which consists of planning, action, and evaluation of the results of the action.”

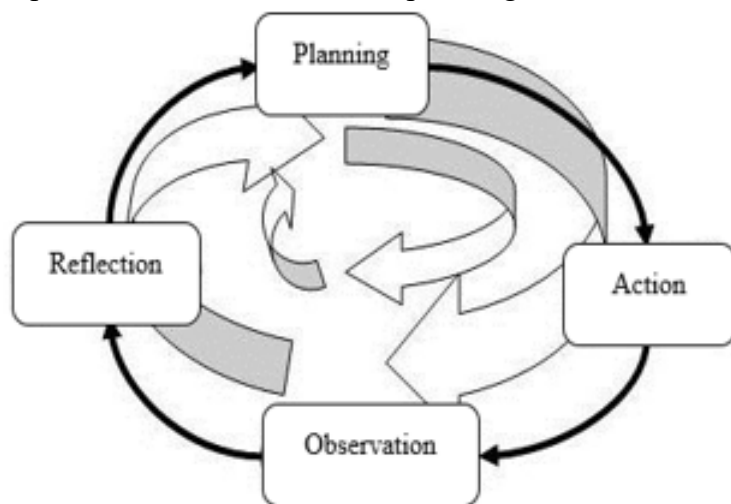


Fig. 1. The model of action, research, and laboratory training, Lewin [12]

The Lewinian model of research, action, and practice considers learning to be an integrated process that involves feedback sessions between concrete experiences, observations and reflections, and the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations. This is followed by testing the implications of these concepts in new situations (the real world). Learning is thus conceived as a four-stage cycle characterized by interdependence, unfolding in a spiral form: reflection, planning, action, and observation.

Planning is the constructive moment that emerges during discussions among research participants, in which the action plan is critically analyzed by each participant and includes an evaluation of the change that is to be produced.

Action involves the implementation of the action plan, a stage in which the intention to improve the analyzed social situation also becomes evident. The action is deliberate and strategic. Through this stage of action research, it becomes fundamentally different from other research methods, since “action or change takes place in reality and does not appear as an experiment of the type: let’s just see if it works.”

Observation represents, in fact, the “research component” of action research, when the changes outlined in the action plan are observed from the perspective of their effects and the context of the analyzed situation.

Reflection in action research refers to the moment when research participants examine and construct, then evaluate and reconstruct their concerns, starting from the identification of a shared concern or common problem.

In this sense, action research can be defined as “a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview.” This process seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in collaboration with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to pressing issues of concern to people, and more broadly, the individual well-being of persons and their communities.

Kurt Lewin viewed action research as a form of experimental research grounded in groups facing real problems, since, in his opinion, research in social science must begin with existing social issues. Lewin’s model is based on a cyclical approach to research, consisting of action cycles that include analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, implementation, and evaluation of action.

Thus, we reach the conclusion that theory should be shaped by practice and becomes truly useful when it is placed in the service of practice aimed at achieving positive social change. Due to its multidisciplinary character, action research today offers the possibility of restoring and strengthening the relationship between the university and society.

In his work *Experiential learning*, David A. Kolb states that John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget are the founders of the experiential approach. Kolb draws upon the Lewinian tradition of action research as well as Dewey’s work to ground his own model. It has been concluded that Kolb generalizes a historically specific and somewhat unilateral model of experience feedback sessions in group training into a broader, general model of learning.

Kolb’s theory of experiential learning is frequently cited and invoked by educational practitioners and researchers and is widely applied within higher education frameworks and developments. He used the term “experiential learning” to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process, rooting his ideas in the works of Dewey and Lewin. Kolb graphically presents the learning conceptions of these three theorists. He states that he does not intend to develop an alternative theory of learning, but rather, through experiential learning theory, to propose an integrative and holistic perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior.

There is a strong argument supporting the idea that structured learning experiences can enhance internship experiences if they are effectively integrated and utilized within the broader learning framework. The framework proposed and modified by Kolb aims to produce conscious change by improving the internship experience in order to minimize or eliminate its problems and deficiencies, as revealed by the literature review and the current state of knowledge, together with the experiences of all stakeholders. Kolb formulated a comprehensive definition of learning, viewing it as a process through which knowledge is constructed by transforming direct experience into understanding and meaning. According to him, experiential learning is characterized by six fundamental principles:

Table 1. Basic principles of experiential learning, adapted from Kolb [7]; Stirling [15]

Learning is a process.	- Acceptance of knowledge from learners’ prior formal and informal learning. - Students’ learning is seen as continuous. - Encouraging the exchange of ideas or techniques applied during the learning experience.
Learning is based on experience.	- Carrying out learning experiences at an appropriate pace and progression. - Changing learners’ conceptions through new experience, theory, and reflection.
Learning involves mastering all four modes of learning.	- Providing students with the opportunity to experience, reflect, theorize, and apply.

Learning is a holistic process of adaptation.	- Addressing current feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors throughout the practical experience.
Learning occurs when a person interacts with the environment.	- Familiarizing students with direct experience from the real environment (e.g., the labor market).
Knowledge is created through motivation and learning.	- Learning should be individualized for each student. - Assigning responsibility for themselves and for the learning process.

David A. Kolb's experiential learning theory describes learning as a four-stage cycle consisting of:

- *Concrete experience* – the dimension of feeling, in which the intern must be willing to play an active role in the experience;
- *Reflective observation* – the dimension of reflecting/watching, in which the student intern must be able to reflect on their experience;
- *Abstract conceptualization* – the dimension of thinking, in which the intern must possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience;
- *Active experimentation* – the dimension of doing, in which the student must have decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to apply the new ideas gained from experience.

Each stage, also referred to as a learning mode adaptation, provides the foundation for the subsequent stage of learning. Learners may enter the cycle at any stage; however, effective learning requires the development of abilities associated with all four stages [7].

Kolb clarified the role of concrete experience within the learning process by identifying the other three learning modes as reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. He emphasized that reflection is the most important element for the internalization of knowledge. According to Kolb, reflection helps define experience when individual students are able to connect it with their learning objectives.

Subsequently, numerous other pedagogical approaches have emerged that can be used to facilitate student learning through experience. See the figure below for a synthetic overview of the main approaches.

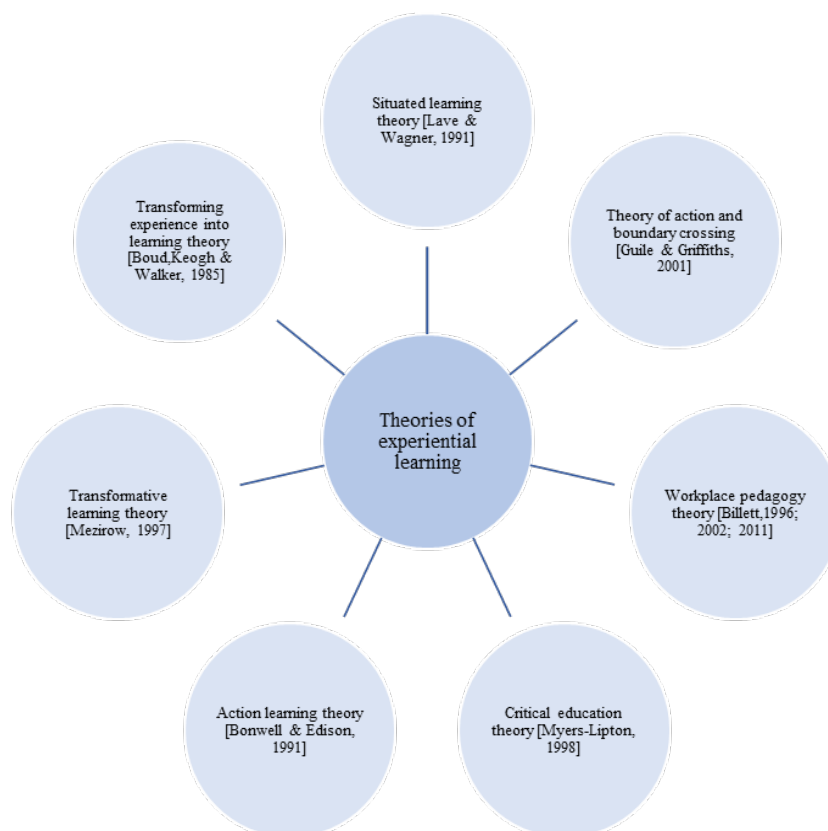


Figure 2. Theories of experiential learning, adapted by Sattler [14]

Situated learning theory – emphasizes the role that environment and context play in shaping learning and knowledge. Learning is not an abstract process detached from reality; rather, it occurs through active participation in “communities of practice.” Knowledge is constructed through interaction with the social and professional environment, and the gradual integration of the intern into the community becomes essential for competence development [9].

Theory of action and boundary crossing – focuses on an approach to learning and knowledge production through work experiences that break down barriers created by different contexts. The emphasis is placed on the individual’s capacity to navigate between diverse contexts and to integrate formal learning with professional learning [6].

Workplace pedagogy theory – conceptualizes the quality of workplace learning as resulting from direct engagement in professional activities, mentoring and guidance provided by experienced practitioners, as well as the deliberate organization of knowledge transfer and application in different situations. Thus, the workplace becomes a structured pedagogical space [1].

Critical education theory – introduces a transformative dimension that seeks to reshape educational goals, purposes, and scope in order to enable individuals’ progressive growth through cultural and social transformation [11].

Active learning theory – is learner-centered, maximizes student participation in the process, motivates them, and encourages students to move beyond superficial approaches, relying on concrete facts and actions [2].

Transformative learning theory – involves experiencing a profound structural shift in the basic premises of thinking, feelings, and actions. It represents a transformation of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly changes one’s way of being in the world [10].

Reflection and the transformation of experience into learning – emphasizes the importance of learners’ prior experiences and the need to provide opportunities for active engagement in what they learn [3].

Service-learning theory – aims to ensure equal focus both on the identified community need being addressed and on the learning that takes place, integrating academic objectives with meaningful community involvement.

Overall, these theories converge toward an integrated vision of experiential learning in which context, active participation, reflection, collaboration, and the transformative dimension become essential elements. Applied to internship settings, they support the idea that effectiveness does not depend solely on physical presence in a professional environment, but on the quality of participation, pedagogical mediation, and the capacity of experience to generate meaning, competence, and personal development.

The integration of the classical theories of experiential learning – John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and David A. Kolb – in relation to the Framework Regulation on the organization and conduct of internships approved by the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova highlights the profound theoretical foundation of the normative framework [16].

Dewey argued that authentic education occurs through experience; however, not every experience is educational, but only that which is consciously reflected upon and integrated. The Framework regulation on internships translates this idea into practice by organizing internships in real work contexts, establishing learning objectives (point 9 of the Regulation) and professional competencies, and requiring an internship report and reflective evaluation. Thus, the internship becomes a pedagogically structured experience, not merely an isolated practical activity.

The model developed by Kurt Lewin, grounded in the dynamics of experience and learning through social interaction, is reflected in the coordination and mentoring mechanisms provided by the Framework regulation on the organization and conduct of internships. The student acts within the professional environment, receives feedback from the mentor, and thus adjusts behavior and performance. This sequence mirrors the Lewinian experimental cycle and the social dimension of learning achieved through collaboration and integration into the professional community.

The theory of David A. Kolb offers perhaps the clearest structural correspondence with the organization of internships, namely through:

- Concrete experience – direct participation in professional activities;
- Reflective observation – analysis of the activities carried out;

- Abstract conceptualization – correlating experience with the theories studied;
- Active experimentation – applying new understandings in subsequent situations.

The framework regulation operationalizes this cycle by establishing the stages of the internship, ensuring monitoring by the university internship coordinator and the mentor from the host institution, as well as through evaluation and integration of results into the academic pathway.

While modern theories explain the contextual, transformative, and social dimensions of practice, the theories of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and David A. Kolb provide the foundational conceptual architecture of experiential learning. The Framework regulation approved by the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova may be interpreted as a normative transposition of this paradigm: it offers the institutional framework through which professional experience becomes a structured, reflective, and competence-oriented educational process.

Situated learning theory, developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, is reflected in the provisions requiring internships to take place in institutions and organizations relevant to the field of study, either through institutional partnerships or selected individually by the intern in accordance with internship objectives. The integration of the student into a real professional environment, under the coordination of a mentor, corresponds to the concept of a “community of practice,” where learning occurs through progressive and legitimate participation.

The theory of action and boundary crossing, proposed by David Guile and Toni Griffiths, is reflected in the partnership between the educational institution and the host organization, formalized through the collaboration agreement [16]. The normative document facilitates articulation between the academic and professional environments, creating a formal framework for knowledge transfer and co-construction across different contexts.

Through provisions concerning the role of the university internship supervisor and the mentor from the host institution, the Regulation operationalizes workplace pedagogy theory developed by Stephen Billett. The emphasis on guidance, evaluation, and active involvement in authentic tasks reflects the idea that the workplace becomes a structured pedagogical space.

The reflective and evaluative dimension of internships (internship report, self-assessment, feedback) is consistent with the theory of transforming experience into learning developed by David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker, as well as with transformative learning theory formulated by Jack Mezirow. The Regulation does not aim merely at the execution of activities, but at integrating experience into a process of critical analysis and personal and professional development.

Elements related to social responsibility, professional ethics, and community contribution can be correlated with Critical education theory advanced by Scott Myers-Lipton and with service-learning theory, particularly when internships involve activities with community impact. Thus, internships become not only mechanisms of professional training but also instruments of civic engagement and social transformation.

Finally, the active, applied, and student-centered character of internships, as provided in the Regulation through clearly defined objectives, reflects the principles of active learning theory developed by Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, where the student is an active participant rather than a mere observer.

Conclusion

In contemporary higher education, internships represent an essential bridge between academic knowledge and professional practice. Universities are increasingly required to move beyond traditional models of knowledge transmission and to create learning environments that allow students to develop not only theoretical understanding but also practical competencies, critical thinking, and adaptability. Within this framework, experiential learning becomes a key pedagogical approach that supports the transformation of theoretical knowledge into meaningful professional skills. The theories of experiential learning developed by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and David A. Kolb provide a solid conceptual foundation for organizing and improving internship programs within universities. Their perspectives emphasize that learning occurs through the interaction between experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. When applied to internship contexts, these principles ensure that students are not merely observers in professional environments but active participants who engage in reflective practice and gradually develop professional competencies.

In the university environment, the effectiveness of internships depends largely on their pedagogical structuring and on the collaboration between higher education institutions and host organizations. Through clear learning objectives, mentoring systems, reflective activities, and evaluation processes, universities can ensure that internships become structured educational experiences aligned with academic goals. In this sense, the regulatory framework governing internships in the Republic of Moldova provides an institutional mechanism that translates experiential learning principles into concrete educational practice.

Ultimately, internships contribute significantly to strengthening the relationship between universities, the labor market, and society as a whole. By integrating students into real professional contexts, universities support the development of competent graduates capable of responding to contemporary challenges. Therefore, internships should be viewed not merely as practical requirements within academic programs but as central components of experiential learning strategies that enhance students' professional development and contribute to the modernization and relevance of higher education.

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STRENGTHENING EVALUATOR INDEPENDENCE IN PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES: INSIGHTS FOR EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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The evaluator–client relationship in external project evaluations is often characterized by tensions that may affect the evaluator’s professional independence. Vulnerability arises particularly when beneficiaries challenge interpretations or when the evaluation process is constrained by limited access to information and insufficiently defined terms of reference. This article examines how evaluator independence is managed in participatory evaluation processes in the Republic of Moldova, with particular relevance to the field of education. The research combines an analysis of the normative framework with empirical data collected through a survey conducted in 2022 among eleven independent evaluators. The findings highlight the presence of subtle forms of beneficiary influence on the evaluation process, with over 63% of respondents reporting pressure to reformulate critical findings. Evaluator independence thus emerges as a negotiated practice within institutional and relational contexts. The research underscores the need to strengthen the professional and institutional framework, which is essential in education for supporting decision-making, quality assurance and institutional development.

Keywords: *evaluator independence; participatory evaluation; evaluation process; educational evaluation; evaluator competency standards; quality of education; evidence-based decision-making.*

CONSOLIDAREA INDEPENDENȚEI EVALUATORULUI ÎN PROCESE PARTICIPATIVE: PERSPECTIVE PENTRU EVALUAREA EDUCAȚIONALĂ ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Relația evaluator–client în evaluările externe de proiecte este adesea marcată de tensiuni care pot afecta independența profesională a evaluatorului. Vulnerabilitatea apare în special atunci când beneficiarii contestă interpretările sau când procesul de evaluare este limitat de acces restrâns la informații și de termeni de referință insuficient clarificați. Articolul analizează modul în care independența evaluatorului este gestionată în procesele de evaluare participativă în Republica Moldova, cu relevanță pentru domeniul educației. Cercetarea combină analiza cadrului normativ cu date empirice colectate printr-un sondaj realizat în 2022 în rândul a unsprezece evaluatori independenți. Rezultatele evidențiază influențe subtile ale beneficiarilor asupra procesului de evaluare, peste 63% dintre respondenți raportând presiuni de reformulare a constatărilor critice. Independența evaluatorului apare astfel ca o practică negociată în contexte instituționale și relaționale. Cercetarea subliniază necesitatea consolidării cadrului profesional și instituțional, esențial în educație pentru susținerea luării deciziilor, asigurarea calității și dezvoltarea instituțională.

Cuvinte-cheie: *independența evaluatorului, evaluare participativă, proces de evaluare, evaluare educațională, standardul de competență al evaluatorului, calitatea educației, luarea deciziilor bazată pe dovezi.*

Introduction

According to the OECD-DAC Quality Standard for Evaluation, the overall purpose of evaluation is to „contribute to the improvement of a development policy, procedure or technique, to consider the continuation or discontinuation of a project or programme, to report to stakeholders and taxpayers on the results of public and development investments” [13]. In this context, one of the evaluator’s tasks is to note the challenges faced by the object being evaluated and analyse the consequences in order to make them transparent, even if this calls into question the implementation of current strategies or its subsequent funding. In such situations, the feedback received from clients on evaluation results may not always be constructive.

Ensuring the independence of the evaluator in the participatory project evaluation process is fundamental to guarantee the objectivity and viability of the results obtained. A growing body of research (Morris and Clark, 2012; Pleger et al., 2016; Stockmann et al., 2011; Turner, 2003) demonstrates „that evaluators in all countries face attempts by stakeholders in the evaluation process to influence them to distort their findings” [17]. Such attempts may occur at all stages of the evaluation process and are often associated with actors involved in the implementation or commissioning of projects. In this context, it is very important on the one hand for evaluators to adopt a participatory approach in the evaluation process, and on the other hand to contribute to the development of state-wide standards that would help them. Carter and Williams (2009) stress „the importance of involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, but not in the evaluator’s decision-making process, to avoid inappropriate influence”. By asking questions, applying methodology and addressing issues, the evaluator in the evaluation process could avoid subsequent problems and generate a commonly accepted end result. According to Ghauri and Grønhaug „open and transparent communication with all stakeholders can help build trust and underline the evaluator’s commitment to objectivity and independence”. At the same time, national and international standards would help evaluators produce a credible report with valid and reliable results so that the evaluator has professional independence. This is why this requirement has been introduced in evaluators’ standards worldwide. For example, the standard of competence for the external evaluator in the Republic of Moldova states that “the evaluator, through the methodology applied, shall confirm the veracity of the findings in a fair, impartial and independent manner” [11]. According to the occupational standard for project evaluators in Romania, independence of decision is among the principles of professional conduct [12]. In Germany, for example, the DeGEval standard of fairness states that “the entire evaluation process as well as the evaluation reports should show the impartial position of the evaluators.” [6]. The OECD-DAC Evaluation Quality Standard describes in detail the independence of evaluators from stakeholders, namely: “the evaluation report indicates the degree of independence of the evaluators from the policies, measures and administration of the client, the implementers and the beneficiaries. The evaluation team must be able to work freely and without any interference.” [14].

At the European Union level, there are at least four principles [13] to ensure the credibility of project evaluation, namely:

- *Impartiality and independence*, which implies that there is a complete separation between the evaluation function and the programming and implementation functions, and that the persons and units responsible for project preparation and/or implementation are not in the role of evaluators.
- *Credibility*, according to which competent, independent experts trained in project evaluation are to be involved in the evaluation process.
- *Stakeholder participation in the evaluation* to ensure that different perspectives are taken into account and reflected in the evaluation results. Obtaining agreement from those with a vested interest in the project evaluation - whether from beneficiaries, project managers, members of the target group, etc. - is a key step in giving a sense of ‘ownership’ over the evaluation results and recommendations.
- *Utility*. The conclusions and recommendations of an evaluation report must be useful and feasible.

Analysing the stages of an evaluation process applied in a project, attempts to influence evaluators can be systematised as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages of the evaluation process and corresponding attempts to influence evaluators

Stages of an evaluation process	Attempts to influence evaluators
<i>Planning stage</i>	- During the preparation of an evaluation, the client defines the desired or less desired results. - Attempts are made to exclude certain questions from the outset, even if they are relevant. - Knowingly or unknowingly excluding certain participants from the evaluation process can disrupt the process of an evaluation. - Not following the participatory approach in the project evaluation process limits the evaluator from taking into account the views and perspectives of different target groups.

<i>Implementation stage</i>	- Attempts not to use certain data collection or analysis methods. - Requests to disclose the names of interviewees who were guaranteed anonymity by the evaluators.
<i>Synthesis stage</i>	- Attempts to present results in a more positive light, to underestimate or otherwise manipulate them. - Use of evaluation results by clients to punish certain stakeholders. - Attempting to deliberately hide evaluation results from donors or project beneficiaries. - Incorrect interpretation of project evaluation results by stakeholders.

In contexts where the number of evaluators is relatively small in relation to the number of potential clients, competitive pressures may increase the vulnerability of evaluators to such influences. Situations may arise in which evaluators are indirectly encouraged to adjust their conclusions, for example through expectations related to future contracts or financial conditions. In some cases, this may involve requests to rephrase critical findings or to present results in a more favourable manner. Such practices may raise concerns regarding both the quality of the evaluation and the professional integrity of the evaluator. From an analytical perspective, these forms of influence may be interpreted as potential sources of conflict of interest. In this context, examining evaluator independence becomes relevant not only from a methodological standpoint, but also in relation to professional practice.

In the field of education, evaluation is widely used as an analytical tool for examining programmes, institutional practices and policy implementation. According to international standards in educational evaluation, evaluation should be conducted in a systematic, ethical and independent manner in order to ensure the credibility and usefulness of its results [8]. In addition, OECD frameworks emphasize that evaluation plays an important role in supporting policy learning and informed decision-making, particularly when results are based on transparent and independent analysis [15]. In this context, maintaining evaluator independence contributes to ensuring that findings reflect the data collected and the analysis conducted. This, in turn, supports their consistent interpretation and use in institutional processes. Against this background, the present research aims to analyse how evaluator independence is experienced and managed in participatory evaluation processes in the Republic of Moldova, as well as to explore the implications of these dynamics for the use of evaluation results, including in contexts relevant to education.

This study contributes to the literature by conceptualising evaluator independence as a context-dependent and negotiated practice, with particular relevance for educational evaluation, where findings inform decision-making, quality assurance and institutional development.

Methodological framework

The research on evaluator independence in participatory evaluation processes was based on a mixed-methods approach, predominantly qualitative-analytical, complemented by descriptive quantitative elements. The study explored how standards of independence and impartiality are interpreted and applied in external project evaluations in the Republic of Moldova.

The research follows an exploratory, comparative design. A combination of analytical-deductive reasoning and comparative review of national and international evaluation norms was used to conceptually ground the principle of evaluator independence. Empirical data were collected in 2022 through an online survey administered via Microsoft Forms.

A purposive sample of 11 independent evaluators active in Moldova was selected. Participants were required to have: (a) experience evaluating at least two externally funded projects; (b) involvement in evaluations conducted within the last three years; and (c) experience with projects having budgets up to one million euros and durations of up to 30 months. The evaluated projects spanned multiple sectors—including education, social services, agriculture, environment, and IT—allowing for diverse perspectives. The survey included both closed-ended (5-point Likert scale) and open-ended items, capturing the perceived influence of beneficiaries on evaluators and the qualitative experiences of participants. Questions were organized around key stages of the evaluation process: planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Data analysis combined descriptive statistics for quantitative items with thematic analysis of qualitative responses, enabling the identification of influence patterns, professional vulnerabilities, and evaluators' perceptions of independence limits.

Validity and limitations. Internal validity was ensured by linking empirical data to the normative framework, while credibility was strengthened through the inclusion of evaluators' first-hand experiences. However, the small, non-probabilistic sample limits generalizability, positioning findings primarily as exploratory and interpretive.

This methodological framework provides both conceptual and empirical insight into the tensions between formal standards of independence and actual practices in participatory evaluation contexts in the Republic of Moldova. The methodological approach is also relevant for the field of educational sciences, as it examines evaluation practices that are increasingly applied in the assessment of educational programmes and institutional processes. By combining normative analysis with empirical data derived from evaluators' experiences, the study contributes to understanding how principles such as independence and impartiality are interpreted in contexts where evaluation results may inform reflection and decision-making.

Content

This research employed a comparative and analytical-deductive method to examine the principle of evaluator independence in project evaluations, with a focus on the Republic of Moldova and a review of similar evaluation standards adopted in other European countries.

Republic of Moldova: The most significant national reference is the *„Methodological framework for evaluation of research and development projects and programmes in the Republic of Moldova”* published in 2014 by the Information Society Development Institute [7]. The methodological framework was developed as part of the InfoScientific project and provides practical guidance for evaluators, project implementers and financial authorities. The document supports decision-makers in the design of programmes and financial instruments, the selection of evaluators, the implementation of evaluation results and public communication. It also supports evaluators in carrying out the evaluation process, positioning themselves vis-à-vis other actors involved and establishing the information base for evaluations. In the project evaluation process, evaluators are encouraged to adhere to eight evaluation standards: *professionalism, ethics and integrity, clarity, judgement, confidentiality, independence, usefulness, reporting and use*. According to this document, the evaluator must be independent of the managing, funding and evaluation authorities and be selected through a competitive process. The findings should be formulated in an objective manner, without undue influence, while the evaluator's position must remain politically, religiously or otherwise neutral.

Romania: The *Occupational Standard for Project Evaluators* adopted by the National Qualifications Authority in 2017 outlines a framework of professional and ethical expectations for evaluators [11]. This standard explicitly mentions the principle of independence, emphasizing that the evaluator must act autonomously, free from conflict of interest or external interference. It also promotes transparency in methodology and decision-making, requiring evaluators to base their conclusions on objective data.

Austria: The Austrian Platform for the Evaluation of Research and Technology Policy (fteval) published in 2019 the evaluation standards in research, technology and innovation policy. According to this document, the independence standard assumes that *„evaluation is produced using scientific methods and taking into account different opinions or positions. Evaluation is not influenced by politics, clients, programme management, stakeholders or even a possible bias of the evaluators themselves to influence or manipulate the content of the evaluation. „Courtesy analyses” or the like, particularly to possibly generate follow-up orders or to avoid disrupting the broader political context with critical points, are not a serious form of evaluation and clearly contradict the purpose of an evaluation.*” The independence of evaluators is one of the evaluation principles included in the evaluation policy of the Austrian Development Cooperation document. Evaluators must have expertise. Credibility also includes the independence of evaluators from all operationally involved staff. The Austrian Development Cooperation policy complements these standards by mandating that evaluations be conducted by external, professionally certified experts who are not operationally involved in the evaluated activities [2].

France: In 1999, in France, the French Evaluation Society was founded to help improve the evaluation process and promote its use in public and private organisations. *One of the principles of evaluation in France refers to distancing and states that “evaluation is carried out impartially. The persons involved in the evaluation process are professionals. The evaluation process is carried out independently of management and decision-making processes. This autonomy preserves the freedom of choice of public decision-makers”* [21].

Germany: In Germany there is the German Evaluation Society - DeGEval. Since the publication of the first version in 2002, *DeGEval’s evaluation standards define usefulness, feasibility, fairness and accuracy* as the four general principles that characterise good evaluations. The whole evaluation process as well as the evaluation reports should highlight the impartial position of the evaluator. As stated in the guidelines of the Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) in the evaluation policy of German cooperation, the key features of GIZ evaluations are *usefulness, credibility and independence*. Credibility can only be achieved if evaluation results and assessments are generated independently [6].

Switzerland: In September 2016, the Swiss Evaluation Society adopted the Evaluation Standards (SEVAL). Their purpose and scope contribute to the professionalisation of evaluation activities in Switzerland. According to these standards, *an evaluation is designed as an open process that ensures an impartial evaluation* [19].

Sweden: Established in January 2003, the Swedish Evaluation Society (SVUF) promotes professional evaluation by facilitating an ongoing dialogue on the role of evaluation and evaluators in society. Evaluators are normally *independent from the subject of the evaluation and the activities evaluated and have no interest in the outcome of the evaluation* [20].

Across these national contexts, independence is consistently defined as a key condition for credible evaluation. Although institutional arrangements differ, a common expectation can be identified: evaluators are required to operate autonomously, apply transparent methodologies and ensure that conclusions are grounded in evidence rather than shaped by stakeholder expectations. According to the OECD/DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance [13], the requirement for impartiality and independence applies to all stages of the evaluation process, including planning, the formulation of terms of reference and the selection of evaluation teams. Similar principles are also reflected in educational evaluation standards, which emphasize the importance of independence, transparency and ethical conduct in ensuring credible and usable results [16]. Evaluation standards thus define not only procedural aspects, but also the conditions under which evaluation results can be considered credible and usable. From an analytical standpoint, the comparative review highlights the convergence of national and international frameworks around the principle of evaluator independence, while also illustrating the role of institutional and professional mechanisms in supporting its implementation. The consistency of these standards suggests that the credibility and interpretability of evaluation results are closely linked to the extent to which independence is maintained in practice.

Results of the evaluation survey – Republic of Moldova

Despite the presence of well-established normative frameworks, the practical implementation of evaluator independence in Moldova often reveals critical tensions. To gain insight into these dynamics, a survey was conducted in 2022 involving eleven independent evaluators who had each assessed at least one development project in the past three years. The projects evaluated spanned diverse sectors, including education, healthcare, environment, agriculture and information technology and were geographically situated mainly in the central and northern regions of the Republic of Moldova. The survey was administered using Microsoft Forms and included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. It utilized a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the frequency and perceived severity of client influence throughout the stages of the evaluation process: planning, data collection, analysis and reporting. Notably, 63% of respondents admitted to having complied at least once with client requests to modify the wording or tone of evaluation findings. Some evaluators reported that such requests were framed as efforts to improve clarity or prevent misinterpretation by external stakeholders such as donors or implementing partners. However, this practice raised ethical

concerns, with 36% of respondents considering these modifications a clear compromise of their professional independence. Several evaluators shared qualitative remarks highlighting the challenges they face. For instance, one respondent noted, “*I had to rephrase an entire section of my report because the client believed it reflected poorly on their coordination efforts, even though the data supported my original analysis.*” Another evaluator recounted being asked to omit critical remarks concerning project sustainability because the client feared negative repercussions on future funding. Moreover, some respondents described indirect pressures, such as delays in contract payments or vague threats about exclusion from future calls for evaluators, which influenced their willingness to resist interference. These tactics, although not always overt, contribute to an environment in which evaluators feel compelled to prioritize professional relationships over full disclosure of findings. Interestingly, a few respondents emphasized that client feedback can enhance the clarity and relevance of an evaluation report. They advocated for evaluators to distinguish between constructive editorial suggestions and coercive attempts to shape findings. Yet, the survey data indicate that this distinction is not always easy to maintain in practice. The findings underline broader issues related to role ambiguity and inconsistent enforcement of evaluation ethics in Moldova. The limited pool of evaluation opportunities intensifies competition among evaluators, creating forms of dependency on clients that may undermine professional independence. These dynamics suggest the need for institutional mechanisms that protect evaluator autonomy and support the consistent application of evaluation standards.

From an analytical perspective, the findings indicate that evaluator independence is contingent not only on formal standards, but also on the institutional and contractual contexts in which evaluations are conducted. The reported adjustments to findings suggest that interactions with commissioning actors may shape how evidence is interpreted and presented, with implications for the robustness and consistency of evaluation outputs. These dynamics are particularly relevant in contexts where evaluation results inform programme development and organisational decision-making. In such cases, the framing of findings may influence not only immediate implementation choices, but also longer-term processes related to planning, quality assurance and institutional learning. Consequently, the credibility and utility of evaluation depend not only on methodological soundness, but also on the ability of evaluators to maintain independence throughout the evaluation process.

Participatory evaluation, which ideally incorporates the perspectives of diverse stakeholders—including beneficiaries, implementers and funders—often places evaluators in complex and sensitive environments. Even when evaluation methodologies are rigorous and inclusive, findings that do not align with institutional narratives or funder expectations may generate resistance, including attempts to reinterpret or discredit conclusions. In some cases, evaluators may face pressures such as the risk of losing future contracts, delays in payments or reputational constraints. In this context, professionalism alone does not fully protect evaluators from external influence. Participatory evaluation requires not only methodological expertise, but also a broader set of competencies. In addition to analytical and technical skills, evaluators need strong communication and negotiation abilities in order to manage stakeholder expectations and maintain analytical clarity throughout the evaluation process. Furthermore, effective evaluation practice depends on organisational and contextual competencies. Evaluators must be able to plan and manage evaluation processes, understand institutional and policy environments and adapt their methodological approaches to specific conditions. In contexts characterised by cultural or institutional diversity, additional competencies—such as contextual awareness and domain-specific knowledge—become particularly relevant. Where such competencies are not available within a single evaluator, the use of multidisciplinary teams represents a practical solution. Combining methodological expertise with sectoral and contextual knowledge allows for a more balanced and robust evaluation process, particularly in complex participatory settings.

According to the national standard of competencies for external evaluators adopted in the Republic of Moldova [8], there are six core domains guiding evaluator qualification and conduct:

- *Basic skills*: Demonstrating ethical conduct and personal integrity, aligned with codes of ethics and related regulatory documents.
- *Professional practice*: Distinguishing the evaluator’s role from that of other professionals in education and development by applying specific evaluation logic and accountability.

- *Interpersonal communication*: Ensuring effective interaction with various stakeholders during all evaluation phases – pre-evaluation, on-site data collection, synthesis, and post-evaluation dissemination.

- *Evaluation methodology*: Applying evidence-based tools and methods to ensure reliability and validity in findings.

- *Leadership and management*: Planning, monitoring, and coordinating resources and activities to achieve a structured and transparent evaluation process.

- *Contextual understanding*: Recognizing the diverse social, institutional, and cultural environments where evaluations take place and integrating stakeholder expectations in a balanced manner.

These standards serve as an important framework for ensuring evaluator integrity and quality assurance. However, empirical findings indicate that, even in the presence of clear guidelines, professional independence remains vulnerable in contexts where expectations from donors, implementers or political stakeholders are not fully aligned with objective findings. Evaluators are often required to respond to complex and sometimes competing expectations, which places additional demands on their professional competencies. Evaluation competence therefore extends beyond methodological expertise and includes a combination of knowledge, skills and professional judgement that enable evaluators to conduct high-quality assessments adapted to specific contexts.

Based on information provided by the evaluators who participated in the 2022 questionnaire, a number of typical patterns of criticism in the evaluation process were identified:

- *Principle of an inappropriate methodology*. Evaluators may face challenges regarding the appropriateness of their methodological approach, particularly in contexts with limited resources. In such situations, clearly defined terms of reference and inception reports can help reduce misunderstandings. At the same time, the evaluator remains responsible for ensuring that the evaluation meets professional standards, including methodological rigor, transparency and adequacy of design, as emphasized in educational evaluation standards [10] and in frameworks for evidence-based educational policy [15].

- *Principle of refusal*. Stakeholders may reject findings that challenge existing assumptions or institutional narratives. In educational contexts, this may occur when evaluation results question established practices, teaching approaches or performance perceptions. In such cases, conclusions must be clearly supported by evidence and transparently communicated, in line with standards emphasizing accuracy, utility and propriety in educational evaluation [10]; [3].

- *Principle of details*. Criticism may focus on minor issues such as formatting or language, potentially diverting attention from substantive findings. Such observations should be addressed without affecting the analytical integrity of the report. This reflects broader concerns in evaluation practice regarding the distinction between technical feedback and attempts to undermine substantive conclusions, particularly in complex institutional environments such as education systems [15].

- *Principle of knowledge*. Stakeholders may argue that evaluation findings are already known. However, even in educational settings where practitioners are aware of existing challenges, evaluation plays a critical role in providing empirical validation and structured analysis that can support informed decision-making, policy learning and improvement of teaching and learning processes [15]; [5].

- *Principle of lack*. Constraints related to access to data, availability of respondents or institutional support may affect the evaluation process. In such cases, limitations should be clearly documented and communicated, as transparency regarding constraints is a key requirement for ensuring credibility and proper interpretation of results, particularly in educational evaluations where data quality and context are essential [8].

It should be noted that “*not every suggestion for change constitutes an attempt to influence*” [16]. In principle, it can be assumed that the clients of an evaluation, who provide the financial, organisational and logistical resources for its implementation, are interested in the results and may seek to use even critical findings constructively for the further development of projects, programmes or policies.

The results of an evaluation can serve as a basis for organisational learning. This is particularly evident in educational institutions where reflective practice, feedback and evidence-informed decision-making are central to improving teaching quality and institutional performance [5]. In organisations where a learning-oriented culture is present, evaluation findings are more likely to be accepted and recommen-

dations more likely to be implemented. On the one hand, evaluators argue “that evaluation should have consequences” [11], while on the other hand, donors and policy-makers expect evaluation processes to generate useful and actionable results. The acceptance and use of evaluation results depend significantly on the organisational context. In environments that support reflection and open dialogue—such as learning-oriented educational systems—critical findings are more likely to be integrated into decision-making processes. In this sense, evaluation functions not only as a mechanism for accountability, but also as a tool for institutional learning, provided that it is conducted under conditions of professional independence.

Recommendations

The best way for evaluators to be protected against criticism is through a professionally grounded and ethically consistent approach to their work. Central to this is the adoption of a comprehensive communication strategy that ensures transparency and a clear flow of information among all parties engaged in the participatory evaluation process. This open dialogue contributes to clarifying expectations, reducing potential misinterpretations, and building trust among stakeholders. At the same time, it supports the management of divergent interests, which is particularly relevant in participatory evaluations where findings may be contested. Equally important is the proper planning of available resources at all stages of the evaluation. This includes a realistic allocation of time, human capacity and financial support. A lack of adequate resources can compromise the quality and depth of the evaluation process and may increase the vulnerability of evaluators to external influence. Therefore, early and thorough planning is essential not only for ensuring feasibility, but also for safeguarding evaluator independence and the credibility of results. Developing an appropriate evaluation strategy is another key recommendation. This strategy should clearly define the scope, goals, methodology and tools used in a way that aligns with the purpose of the evaluation and the specific research questions. A well-defined strategy supports methodological rigor and provides a clear analytical framework that can be used to justify evaluation decisions in situations where findings are questioned or challenged. The use of an evaluation methodology that is consistent with the objectives of the evaluation is essential. This involves selecting data collection and analysis tools that are not only technically valid but also contextually appropriate. Evaluators must be guided by evidence and maintain professional detachment from influences that seek to steer results in a particular direction. In this respect, adherence to recognised evaluation standards contributes to strengthening both the credibility and the usability of evaluation outcomes.

Professional, technical and ethical standards must be actively upheld throughout the evaluation process in order to ensure its usefulness, feasibility and fairness. These standards provide an essential reference framework for evaluators, particularly in contexts where multiple stakeholders are involved and expectations may not be fully aligned. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the diversity of stakeholder interests and perspectives. A participatory evaluation that incorporates multiple viewpoints is more likely to produce balanced and credible results; however, such inclusivity must be carefully managed in order to preserve analytical independence.

Results should be interpreted systemically, meaning that they must be situated within broader institutional and societal contexts. This form of analysis increases the relevance of findings and allows recommendations to be framed with an awareness of interdependencies and structural conditions. This is particularly important in the field of education, where evaluation results are used to inform programme design, institutional development and policy implementation. In such contexts, the way in which findings are interpreted and communicated can influence both decision-making processes and the use of evidence in practice.

Recommendations must logically follow from the findings and data presented in the report. They should be practical, implementable and clearly linked to the evidence. In addition, recommendations should be formulated in a way that facilitates their use by decision-makers, including in educational and policy contexts where evaluation results are expected to inform improvement processes. When recommendations are transparent, evidence-based and context-sensitive, they are more likely to be accepted and translated into action. Taken together, these recommendations support the development of a culture of evaluation that

values independence, competence and accountability. In the context of the Republic of Moldova, such an approach contributes not only to strengthening a professional evaluation ecosystem, but also to supporting evidence-informed decision-making and institutional learning processes, particularly in sectors such as education.

Conclusion

Evaluator independence stands at the heart of credible and meaningful participatory project evaluation. Without this independence, the evaluation process risks becoming a procedural formality rather than a reliable instrument for learning, accountability and improvement. Independence ensures that evaluation findings are not shaped by expectations, but are grounded in empirical evidence and guided by principles of fairness, transparency and professional integrity.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova, where evaluation practices are evolving and institutional mechanisms are still consolidating, the findings of this study point to a persistent tension between formal standards and practical constraints. Evaluators, although professionally trained and guided by ethical norms, may remain vulnerable to both explicit and implicit forms of influence. These range from direct interventions in reporting to more subtle conditioning of future professional opportunities. In this sense, independence is not an abstract principle, but one reflected in concrete professional behaviours and decisions, including the ability to:

- reject undue influence on findings or methodological choices;
- ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives, including critical or underrepresented voices;
- avoid conflicts of interest, whether financial, relational or institutional;
- interpret and report data exclusively on the basis of evidence, even when findings contradict stakeholder expectations.

Maintaining evaluator independence also requires continuous professional development. Competencies such as methodological literacy, contextual understanding, ethical judgement and stakeholder management are essential and must be continuously strengthened through training, professional exchange and engagement in evaluation networks. Although Moldova's competency framework for evaluators provides a solid foundation, its consistent application depends on institutional support and the development of a professional culture that values critical reflection over formal compliance. Another important finding concerns the design and governance of the evaluation process itself. Terms of reference should clearly define the scope, objectives and limitations of the evaluation, ensure realistic timelines and resources, and explicitly safeguard the evaluator's right to independent judgement. Similarly, evaluation contracts should include provisions that protect evaluators from retaliatory actions or the suppression of findings. In parallel, institutions commissioning evaluations—including those in the education sector—need to develop the capacity to distinguish between constructive feedback and inappropriate interference.

Taken together, these findings point to the need for a stronger alignment between formal evaluation standards and the practical conditions under which evaluations are conducted. Strengthening evaluator independence therefore requires more than the existence of regulatory frameworks; it depends on the development of institutional safeguards, clearer contractual provisions and organisational practices that support transparency and accountability. The relevance of these issues is particularly evident in the field of education, where evaluation results are expected to inform programme design, institutional development and policy-making processes. In such contexts, the credibility of evaluation outcomes directly influences their capacity to support improvement, quality assurance and evidence-informed decision-making.

Overall, the research suggests that ensuring evaluator independence requires a systemic perspective that integrates professional standards, institutional arrangements and cultural factors. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, advancing this agenda involves not only strengthening formal frameworks, but also fostering an environment in which critical reflection is valued and evaluation is recognised as a tool for learning rather than validation. By addressing these dimensions, evaluation can better fulfil its role as a mechanism for generating credible knowledge, supporting institutional development and contributing to more transparent and accountable governance, including in education systems.

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METHODOLOGY FOR CREATING GRADING RUBRICS FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

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Assessing open-ended questions requires explicit criteria and transparent procedures, especially in automated assessment contexts. This paper proposes a generalized framework, with mathematical formalization, for designing grading rubrics suitable for AI-based evaluation systems. Four rubric types are systematized: binary rubrics, rubrics with multiple compliance levels, rubrics with penalty points, and rubrics with weighting coefficients, including combined variants. For each type, formal equations for final-grade computation are provided, supporting algorithmic implementation. A seven-step rubric-development methodology is presented, emphasizing criterion completeness, formulation clarity, operationalization, and structural consistency. The proposed framework is platform-independent and illustrated through examples from programming education. It also supports comparability across rubric designs and assessment contexts.

Keywords: *grading rubrics, open-ended questions, automated assessment, criterion-based assessment, learning objectives, educational measurement, formative assessment.*

METODOLOGIA CREĂRII RUBRICILOR PENTRU EVALUAREA ÎNTREBĂRILOR DE TIP DESCHIS

Evaluarea întrebărilor deschise necesită criterii explicite și proceduri transparente, în special în contextul evaluării automatizate. Lucrarea propune un cadru generalizat, cu formalizare matematică, pentru proiectarea rubricilor de evaluare aplicabile în sisteme bazate pe inteligență artificială. Sunt sistemate patru tipuri de rubrici: binare, cu niveluri multiple de conformitate, cu penalizări și cu coeficienți de ponderare, inclusiv variante combinate. Pentru fiecare tip sunt prezentate formule de calcul al notei finale, adecvate implementării algoritmice. Este descrisă o metodologie în șapte pași pentru elaborarea rubricilor, cu accent pe completitudinea criteriilor, claritatea formulărilor, operaționalizare și structurare. Cadrul propus este independent de platformă și este ilustrat prin exemple din domeniul programării.

Cuvinte-cheie: *rubrici de evaluare, întrebări deschise, evaluare automatizată, evaluare criterială, obiective de învățare, măsurare educațională, evaluare formativă.*

Introduction

Assessing student knowledge is an important part of the educational process. It allows educators to objectively evaluate students' understanding of the material and their skills, and to provide constructive feedback.

Knowledge assessment can be performed using various methods, referred to in this paper as **assessment tools**: individual assignments, reports, essays, tests, among others [1]. An assessment tool is any method or instrument used to measure and evaluate students' knowledge, skills, and competencies, consisting of the following main elements:

1. the name of the assessment tool;
2. the learning objectives that the assessment tool checks;
3. the formulation of the task or tasks;
4. the assessment criteria.

An assessment tool may also include additional elements: *description, instructions for students, examples of tasks, and assessment recommendations*. Assessment tools include: *question, test, individual assignment, group project*.

The simplest (atomic) assessment tool is a question. Other assessment tools consist of one question or a set of questions.

Questions can be classified by the type of response required from the student. There are two main types of questions:

- closed-ended questions;
 - single-choice questions;
 - multiple-choice questions;
 - short-answer questions;
 - matching questions;
 - ordering questions; etc.
- open-ended questions;
 - essay questions;
 - math questions;
 - report questions;
 - programming questions; etc.

Closed-ended questions require the student to select one or more correct answers from a given set of options. This type of question is well suited to automated grading due to the presence of a clearly defined correct answer and is often used to assess basic knowledge and facts.

Open-ended questions require the student to provide an extended response involving analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. The student must demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a free-form manner. In the absence of a clearly defined correct answer, assessing the response may be unclear to students or perceived as subjective. In such cases, it is recommended to use rubrics for assessing student responses, as this ensures transparency and objectivity in the assessment process [13, 17].

The problem of assessing open-ended questions is especially relevant in the context of large-scale online education, where student cohorts can number in the thousands and instructional resources are limited for high-quality assessment of each response. Automated Essay Scoring (AES) is an actively developing research area [11, 20]. Traditional AES systems were based on machine learning and natural language processing [5, 8], but in recent years significant progress has been made thanks to the application of modern artificial intelligence methods, including large language models [10, 18].

Recent studies demonstrate the high potential of using machine learning and artificial intelligence methods for automated assessment of students' textual responses [4, 7]. For example, Mizumoto and Eguchi [10] showed the effectiveness of using AI models for essay assessment, and Uyar and Büyükhiska [18] explored the capabilities of modern language models as a tool for automated assessment. Hashemi et al. [7] proposed a multidimensional calibrated approach to automated assessment, emphasizing the importance of clearly structured rubrics for the effective operation of AI-based systems.

However, despite recent progress in the application of artificial intelligence for assessment, the question of a systematic representation of grading rubrics suitable for automated assessment remains open. Rubrics for automated systems must be sufficiently clear, unambiguous, and structured so that algorithms can correctly interpret the criteria and apply them consistently to student responses. Rubrics designed for manual grading do not always meet these requirements [7, 9]. As noted in the literature, rubric development is an iterative and complex process with both pedagogical and technical components [1, 3, 6, 17].

Various learning management systems (such as Moodle) implement mathematical models of assessment using rubrics with multiple levels of correspondence. However, these models are designed for specific platforms and are not presented in a generalized form suitable for theoretical analysis and adaptation to various contexts of automated assessment.

The scope of this work is to develop a generalized representation of analytic grading rubrics for open-ended questions, with a formalized mathematical description suitable for automated assessment.

To achieve this goal, the following **tasks** need to be addressed:

1. Systematize the principles of criterion-based assessment and their connection to learning objectives.
2. Develop a generalized representation of the main types and structures of grading rubrics for open-ended questions.

3. Provide mathematical formalization of different rubric variations (multi-level rubrics, penalties, weighting coefficients).

4. Describe the process of formulating assessment criteria based on learning objectives.

5. Develop a methodology for creating rubrics that takes into account the requirements of clarity and unambiguity for automated assessment systems.

The scientific novelty of this work is as follows:

1. A generalized representation of analytic grading rubrics is proposed, combining different assessment approaches (binary, multi-level, with penalties, with weighting coefficients) into a unified conceptual model.

2. A mathematical description of various types of rubrics has been developed, allowing formalization of the assessment process and ensuring its technical feasibility in automated systems.

3. An explicit connection between learning objectives, assessment criteria, and rubric structure has been established, providing both pedagogical justification and technical applicability of rubrics.

4. A methodology for creating rubrics has been proposed, taking into account the requirements for clarity and unambiguity of the assessment results.

The article is organized as follows. The section “Criterion-based Assessment” discusses the connection between learning objectives and assessment criteria. The section “Grading Rubrics” describes the main rubric types and structures. The sections “Variations of Grading Rubrics” and “Methodology for Creating Grading Rubrics” present the development process for different types of tasks. The final part formulates the main conclusions and directions for further research.

1. Criterion-Based Assessment

When designing a course, learning objectives are defined that students should achieve upon completion of the course. These objectives may include knowledge, skills, and competencies that students should acquire. Each course topic corresponds to the set objectives to some extent and is aimed at achieving them. Course topics implement more specific learning tasks, which collectively determine the achievement of learning objectives. Additionally, learning tasks can be broken down into smaller session objectives, which define specific learning outcomes for each session.

For effective assessment of students’ knowledge, it is necessary to clearly define a method for measuring the correspondence of their knowledge and skills to the course objectives. An optimal approach is criterion-based assessment, where each criterion corresponds to a specific learning objective [1, 3, 16].

The alignment of a student’s knowledge and skills with the course objectives can be naturally expressed as a percentage:

- 100% – full correspondence of knowledge and skills to the course objectives;
- 0% – complete non-correspondence;
- 1%–99% – intermediate levels of correspondence.

This percentage can be mapped to any conventional grading scale.

Example: Python Programming for Beginners

Consider a course “Python Programming for Beginners” aimed at teaching students the basics of programming using the Python language. The course may have the following general learning objectives:

- Understand the basic concepts of programming, such as variables, data types, operators, and control structures (forming basic programming knowledge);
- Develop simple programs in Python using functions and modules (forming programming skills);
- Solve basic programming problems using algorithms and data structures (forming analytical skills);
- Write and debug Python code using development tools (forming technical skills).

In this case, the first five course topics may be formulated as follows:

1. Introduction to Programming and Python
2. Variables and Data Types
3. Operators and Expressions
4. Control Structures (Conditional Statements and Loops)
5. Functions and Modules

The first course topic “Introduction to Programming and Python” is aimed at achieving the general

learning objective related to understanding the basic concepts of programming and includes the following learning tasks:

- Familiarization with the history and features of the Python language:
 - when and by whom the Python language was created;
 - where Python is used;
 - the main advantages of Python;
 - how Python differs from other programming languages.
- Installation and configuration of the development environment for Python:
 - installation of Python on various operating systems;
 - selection and installation of an integrated development environment (IDE) for Python;
 - configuration of the development environment for effective work with Python.
- Familiarization with the basic syntax of Python:
 - basic Python syntax for creating and running programs;
 - using comments in Python code;
 - basic rules for formatting code in Python.
 - running a program and checking its operation.

All the learning objectives together determine the achievement of the general learning objectives of the course.

Specific learning objectives (lesson objectives, learning tasks) form the basis for developing assessment criteria. Each objective formulated for a lesson or topic must be measurable and verifiable, thus becoming a natural criterion for a grading rubric.

2. Grading Rubrics

In educational practice and learning management systems, various approaches are used to create and apply grading rubrics. For example, the Moodle system provides functionality for creating rubrics with multiple levels and automatic calculation of grades based on them. Similar mechanisms are implemented in other LMS (Learning Management Systems). However, these implementations are platform-specific and are not presented as a generalized model that could serve as a theoretical basis for the development and comparison of different types of rubrics.

Existing scientific works consider separate aspects of rubrics: elements of rubrics [2], validation for specific subject areas [15], comparison of analytical and holistic approaches [19]. However, there is no unified generalized representation that systematizes various types of rubrics and their mathematical description.

As already noted, various assessment tools are used to evaluate students' knowledge, which define assessment criteria. These criteria can be formulated in the form of a grading rubric.

According to Reneau [13], **a grading rubric is a tool that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing criteria, and for each criterion, describing levels of quality. It serves as a guide for grading, consisting of specific predetermined performance criteria used in evaluating students' work.** A grading rubric is a matrix where rows correspond to assessment criteria, and columns correspond to levels of compliance with these criteria. This matrix allows for systematic evaluation of a student's work for each criterion and determining the final grade based on the cumulative compliance.

The formation of assessment criteria is based on specific learning objectives: each lesson objective can become a separate criterion for evaluating a student's work. The assessment tool may cover all or part of the objectives. Meeting the criterion is scored as 100%, and not meeting it as 0%. A **grading rubric** is a set of objectives verified by the assessment tool, indicating how to determine full or partial compliance with these objectives. The simplest grading rubric has the form:

Table 1. The simplest grading rubric

Criterion	Complete Non-Compliance	Complete Compliance
Objective 1	0	100
Objective 2	0	100
...		
Objective n	0	100

The final grade for a student's response is determined as the sum of the percentages for each criterion divided by the number of criteria:

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N P_i}{N} \quad (1)$$

Where:

G – the final grade for the student's response (in percentage);

N – the number of criteria in the grading rubric;

P_i – the percentage of the student's response compliance with the i-th criterion (0% or 100% in the simplest grading rubric).

Example: The simplest grading rubric for “Python Programming for Beginners”

An example assessment tool could be an assignment to write a small and simple Python program for the first topic of the course “Introduction to Programming and Python”. The grading rubric for this assignment is formed based on the lesson objectives and may look as follows (Table 2):

Table 2. The simplest grading rubric for Python programming

Criterion (based on lesson objectives)	Complete Non-Compliance	Complete Compliance
Basic Python syntax	0	100
Use of comments in Python code	0	100
Python code formatting rules	0	100
Running the program and checking its operation	0	100

An example student response is shown in Listing 1:

Listing 1. Example student response

This is a simple Python program. The code contains an error - echo commands do not exist in Python.
 echo(“Hello, World!”)

In this case, the grading according to the rubric will be as follows (Table. 3):

Table 3. Student response grading according to the simplest rubric

Criterion	Complete Non-Compliance	Complete Compliance
Basic Python syntax	0	100
Use of comments in Python code	0	100
Python code formatting rules	0	100
Running the program and checking its operation	0	100

The final grade for the student's response will be:

$$G = \frac{0\%+100\%+100\%+0\%}{4} = 50\% \quad (2)$$

This example illustrates that the rubric criteria directly correspond to the specific learning objectives for the first topic described above. Each objective becomes a measurable criterion by which the student's work is evaluated [12, 15].

3. Variations of Grading Rubrics

Simple rubrics are often insufficient in practice because responses can be partially correct or may contain errors of different severity. For such situations, extended rubrics are useful: they preserve the same basic logic but introduce intermediate compliance levels, penalties, and/or weights [2, 6, 19].

3.1. Multi-level Compliance

Instead of a binary scheme (0%/100%), criteria can be evaluated on multiple levels. A 5-level scale can be used: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%, where each level corresponds to a certain response quality (Table 4).

Table 4. Compact description of compliance levels

Percentage	Interpretation	Meaning
0%	Completely incorrect	The response does not meet the criterion
25%	Almost incorrect	The response contains significant errors
50%	Partially correct	Partial correspondence with the criterion
75%	Almost correct	Nearly complete correspondence
100%	Correct	Complete correspondence

The final grade is calculated in the same way as in the simple case:

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N P_i}{N} \quad (3)$$

where P_i is the compliance level assigned to criterion i and N is the total number of criteria.

However, each criterion may define its own levels and interpretations, which allows the rubric to be adapted to the task specifics and learning objectives.

Using multi-level criteria reflects response quality more precisely and provides more differentiated feedback, supporting competence development and reinforcing understanding [9, 17].

3.2. Penalties

Penalties can be applied per criterion or globally. For per-criterion penalties:

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N \max(0, 100 - k_i \cdot D_i)}{N} \quad (4)$$

where k_i is the number of errors for criterion i and D_i is the penalty per error.

For global penalties:

$$G = \max\left(0, \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N P_i}{N} - k \cdot D\right) \quad (5)$$

where k is the total number of errors and D is the penalty per error.

Penalties are useful to account for errors that may be present even in formally correct responses.

3.3. Weighting coefficients

When criteria have different importance, weights q_i are used:

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N P_i \cdot q_i}{\sum_{i=1}^N q_i} \quad (6)$$

Weighting prioritizes criteria with greater impact on the final result.

3.4. Combined rubrics (unified example)

In practice, mechanisms can be combined: compliance levels, penalties, and weights. For each criterion, the final score can be computed as:

$$P_i = \max(0, L_i - k_i \cdot D_i) \quad (7)$$

where $L_i \in \{0, 25, 50, 75, 100\}$ is the compliance level, k_i is the number of errors, and D_i is the penalty for one error.

The final grade is determined as the weighted average of criterion scores:

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N P_i \cdot q_i}{\sum_{i=1}^N q_i} \quad (8)$$

Table 5. Combined rubric (Python example)

Criterion	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%	Errors	Penalty	Weight	Rezult
Basic Python syntax				■		1	5	3	70
Use of comments in Python code					■	0	5	1	100
Python code formatting rules					■	0	5	1	100
Running the program and checking its work			■			2	10	2	30
Total									67,14

The final result for the unified example is:

$$G = \frac{70 \cdot 3 + 100 \cdot 1 + 100 \cdot 1 + 30 \cdot 2}{3 + 1 + 1 + 2} = \frac{470}{7} \approx 67,14 \quad (9)$$

The general formula for combined rubrics is:

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N \max(0, L_i - k_i \cdot D_i) \cdot q_i}{\sum_{i=1}^N q_i} - k \cdot D \quad (10)$$

- G the final grade for the student's response;
- N the number of criteria;
- L_i the compliance level for criterion i ;
- k_i the number of errors for criterion i ;
- D_i the penalty per error for criterion i ;
- q_i the weight of criterion i ;
- k the total number of errors;
- D the global penalty per error.

Typically, only a subset of these mechanisms is applied depending on the task specifics and learning objectives (e.g., D can be zero if global penalties are not used).

4. Methodology for Creating Grading Rubrics

The rubric types and their connection to learning objectives were analyzed above. Based on this analysis, a rubric-development methodology for open-ended questions can be formulated. To create an effective rubric, the following seven-step sequence is recommended:

1. define the learning objectives verified by the assessment tool;
2. identify measurable criteria;
3. define compliance levels (e.g., 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%) with operational descriptions rather than vague labels;
4. assign weighting coefficients (if needed);
5. define penalty points (if needed);
6. test the rubric on real student work to verify objectivity [14];
7. adjust the rubric based on results (returning to step 3 if necessary).

Characteristics of Rubrics for Automated Assessment

For use in automated assessment systems, a rubric should satisfy the following requirements:

1. **Completeness of criteria** – all aspects to be assessed must be clearly defined as separate criteria.
2. **Clarity of formulations** – each compliance level should describe observable characteristics of the response, eliminating ambiguity of interpretation.
3. **Operationalization of criteria** – criteria should be expressed via measurable or verifiable indicators.
4. **Avoidance of subjective assessments** – formulations like “qualitative analysis” or “deep understanding” must be concretized through observable indicators.
5. **Structuredness** – the rubric should have a clear structure enabling formal representation (e.g., as tables, JSON, XML).

These conditions enable programmatic implementation and increase assessment reproducibility.

Results and Discussion

The proposed generalized model covers the main types of analytic grading rubrics used in practice and provides a single mathematical basis adaptable to different automated-assessment contexts.

Formalizing analytic grading rubrics (binary, level-based, with penalties, with weights, combined) enables: formalization of the assessment process; transparency and reproducibility of grades; easier technical implementation in automated systems; comparison of assessment approaches on a common basis.

Limitations: The methodology focuses on quantitative criterion-based assessment (analytic rubrics). It does not cover holistic assessment [19] and does not detail calibration/validation of rubrics in specific systems.

Conclusions

This work presents a generalized description of grading rubrics for open-ended questions, oriented toward use in automated grading systems.

In accordance with the stated objectives, the following results were obtained:

1. The principles of criterion-based assessment have been systematized, showing an explicit connection between learning objectives (course, topic, lesson) and grading criteria in rubrics.
2. A generalized representation of grading rubrics has been developed, including four main types: binary rubrics, rubrics with multiple compliance levels, rubrics with penalty points, and rubrics with weight coefficients, as well as their combinations.
3. A mathematical description for each type of rubric has been proposed, allowing formalization of the final grade calculation process and ensuring technical feasibility in automated systems.
4. The process of formulating grading criteria based on specific learning objectives has been described, wherein each measurable objective becomes a separate rubric criterion.
5. A seven-step methodology for creating rubrics has been developed, indicating specific requirements for automated assessment (completeness, unambiguity, operationalization of criteria).

The proposed representation is independent of platform and technology, which distinguishes it from local, platform-specific solutions. Mathematical formalization increases assessment transparency and simplifies technical implementation [4]. Clear structure and criterion unambiguity make rubrics suitable both for manual grading and for AI-based automated assessment systems [1, 13, 17].

Promising directions for future research include empirical validation of the proposed rubric types, development of methods for automatic generation of criteria, and investigation of the consistency of automated assessment with expert assessments by instructors.

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QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODELS IN EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL SPECIALIZED AUTHORITY IN THE DOMAIN OF EDUCATION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL OF AN INTEGRATED MODEL FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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The article comparatively analyzes the main international models and frameworks of quality management in education, with a focus on their relevance and applicability at the level of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education in the Republic of Moldova. Normative standards (ISO 21001), organizational excellence models (EFQM, Baldrige), the European framework for self-assessment in the public sector (CAF), the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy, as well as international comparative assessment tools (PISA and TALIS) are examined. The analysis highlights the conceptual convergences and structural differences between these frameworks and argues for the need for an integrated approach, adapted to the national administrative and educational context. The conclusions support the adoption of a hybrid model, with a strategic foundation in EFQM, complemented by elements from ISO 21001 and CAF, and supported by the use of data provided by PISA and TALIS to substantiate decisions at the local systemic level.

Keywords: *Quality Management, Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, EFQM, ISO 21001, CAF, Baldrige, PISA, TALIS, Educational Management.*

MODELE DE MANAGEMENT AL CALITĂȚII ÎN EDUCAȚIE LA NIVELUL ORGANULUI LOCAL DE SPECIALITATE ÎN DOMENIUL ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI: ANALIZĂ COMPARATIVĂ ȘI PROPUNERE DE MODEL INTEGRAT PENTRU REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Articolul analizează comparativ principalele modele și cadre internaționale de management al calității în educație, cu accent pe relevanța și aplicabilitatea acestora la nivelul Organului Local de Specialitate în Domeniul Învățământului (OLSDÎ) din Republica Moldova. Sunt examinate standarde normative (ISO 21001), modele de excelență organizațională (EFQM, Baldrige), cadrul european de autoevaluare în sectorul public (CAF), filozofia Total Quality Management (TQM), precum și instrumentele internaționale de evaluare comparativă (PISA și TALIS). Analiza evidențiază convergențele conceptuale și diferențele structurale dintre aceste cadre și argumentează necesitatea unei abordări integrate, adaptate contextului administrativ și educațional național. Concluziile susțin adoptarea unui model hibrid, cu fundament strategic în EFQM, completat de elemente din ISO 21001 și CAF, și susținut prin utilizarea datelor furnizate de PISA și TALIS pentru fundamentarea deciziilor la nivel sistemic local.

Cuvinte-cheie: *managementul calității, OLSDÎ, EFQM, ISO 21001, CAF, Baldrige, PISA, TALIS, management educațional.*

Introduction

Quality in education is a complex and multidimensional concept that can be interpreted from several perspectives, including excellence, fitness for purpose, transformation, and public accountability, as described by Harvey and Green [5].

More recent approaches also emphasize continuous improvement and the principles associated with Total Quality Management [1,7].

Although international literature has examined a wide range of quality management models, most studies focus on the institutional or national level. As a result, the applicability of these models to intermediate governance structures remains less explored. In the Republic of Moldova, existing research primarily ad-

dresses quality assurance within educational institutions, while the role of quality management at the level of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education has received comparatively limited attention.

To address this gap, the present study undertakes a comparative analysis of several widely recognized international frameworks, including EFQM, ISO 21001, CAF, and Baldrige [6,7,9], alongside benchmarking tools such as PISA and TALIS [8]. Based on this analysis, the study proposes an integrated hybrid model adapted to the administrative and educational context of Moldova.

Research methodology

The research is of a theoretical-analytical nature and uses a methodology based on documentary analysis and comparative analysis, frequently used in studies in the field of public management and educational policies. The choice of comparative analysis is justified by the diversity of international quality management frameworks and the need to identify an appropriate model for the level of local governance represented by the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education. In educational policy studies, comparative analysis is used to examine the convergences and differences between institutional models, as well as to assess their transferability in different administrative contexts.

The documentary corpus included relevant international standards and frameworks for quality management in education (ISO 21001, EFQM, CAF, Baldrige), as well as documents of international organizations on the comparative assessment of educational systems (PISA, TALIS), developed by the OECD [8, 9]. The ISO 21001 standard was analyzed as a normative reference for educational management systems [6].

The analysis was carried out by:

- a. examining the conceptual structure of each framework;
- b. identifying the operating logic (normative, reflexive or results-oriented), in correlation with the principles of total quality management;
- c. assessing the applicability at the local level (Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education), in relation to the specifics of decentralized public management.

The models were compared based on the following analytical criteria:

1. degree of standardization and prescriptiveness;
2. dominant orientation (processes/results/organizational culture);
3. suitability for the public sector;
4. feasibility of implementation under conditions of limited institutional resources;
5. potential to support continuous improvement and organizational learning;
6. compatibility with the district/municipal administrative structure of the Republic of Moldova.

The dimension of continuous improvement and systemic change was analyzed in relation to theories of educational change [4], in order to assess the sustainability of the proposed model.

In the final stage, the results of the comparative analysis substantiated the proposal of an integrated quality management model for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, in which EFQM is used as a strategic framework for organizational excellence, complemented by the normative and self-assessment tools provided by ISO 21001 and CAF. PISA and TALIS data are used as support for evidence-based decisions, in the logic of empirically grounded educational policies [8].

The comparative interpretation was carried out by triangulating the analytical criteria with the targeted management level (Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education), using official documents of the issuing organizations and reporting the analysis to the European standards on quality assurance in education [2].

Analysis of international quality management models

ISO 21001 – normative and process approach

ISO 21001 is the first international standard developed specifically for educational organizations, applying quality management principles from the industrial sector to education. It is based on the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle, promoting continuous improvement within educational processes and respecting the social responsibilities of educational institutions.

The standard adopts a process-oriented approach, emphasizing that quality outcomes arise from well-defined, documented, and monitored processes. This aligns with total quality management principles, which focus on standardization and performance measurement.

ISO 21001 provides a framework for documenting educational processes, establishing performance indicators, and supporting evidence-based decision-making, ultimately reducing ambiguity and enhancing standardization within institutions like the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education.

However, excessive emphasis on compliance and documentation may lead to bureaucratic formalism if not coupled with a genuine quality culture. Therefore, while ISO 21001 is valuable for structuring organizational processes, it should be integrated into a broader framework that fosters organizational excellence and a quality-oriented culture.

TQM – organizational culture of quality

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an integrative management philosophy that conceives quality as the result of the involvement of all members of the organization and the coherent functioning of internal processes [7]. Unlike normative standards, TQM does not establish formal requirements, but promotes an organizational culture based on collective responsibility and continuous improvement, based on principles such as values-oriented leadership, staff involvement, a systemic approach to processes, data-based decisions, customer orientation and continuous improvement [1,7].

Applied in education, TQM supports the development of an institutional culture of quality, in which teachers, managers and administrative staff assume joint responsibility for organizational performance, in line with the paradigm of the learning organization and the perspective that sustainable educational change depends on the internalization of quality values at the organizational level [4, 10].

However, its predominantly philosophical character also represents a limitation. The lack of a standardized operational structure makes it difficult to implement TQM at a systemic level without complementary tools. In the absence of clear evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, TQM principles may remain at the declarative level, without producing measurable structural changes.

Consequently, TQM provides the cultural foundation of quality management, but requires integration into a more structured strategic and operational framework to produce effects at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level.

EFQM – organizational excellence model

The EFQM model is a leading framework for organizational excellence in Europe, highlighting the interplay between enablers and results in performance management [7].

Enablers include leadership, strategy, people, partnerships, resources, and processes, while results focus on performance indicators related to students, staff, society, and the organization.

Figure 1 below illustrates this systemic structure, showing how determinants such as leadership, strategy, people, resources, and processes create conditions for achieving organizational results.

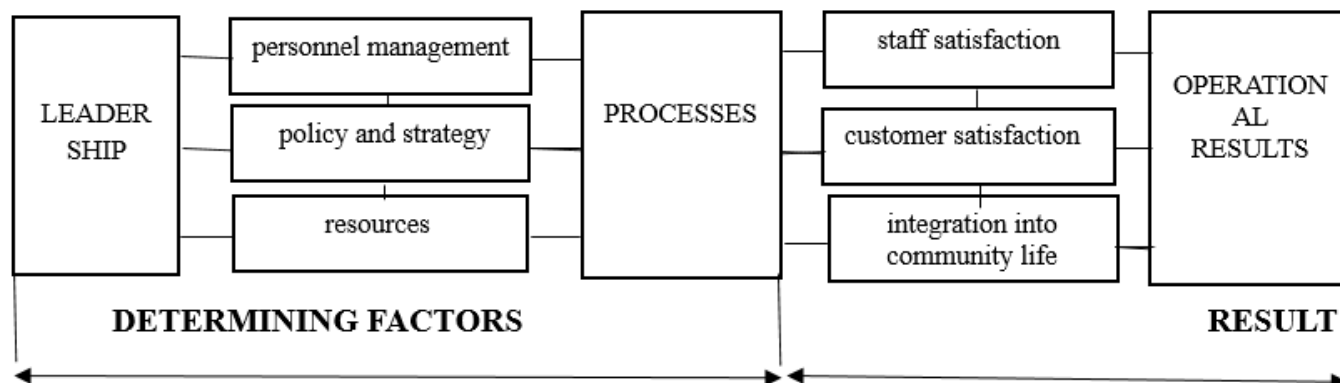


Figure 1. EFQM Model – Systemic Structure of Organizational Excellence

Evaluating these results allows for continuous adjustments, highlighting the model's cyclical nature and the interdependence between leadership and performance outcomes. This correlation is particularly vital in

education, as student performance is influenced by leadership, resources, and pedagogical approaches, as noted in literature on sustainable educational change [4].

The EFQM model enables the Local Specialized Authority in Education to be viewed as an integrated system, facilitating the analysis of the relationship between district strategy and educational outcomes.

It promotes a holistic approach focused on sustainable performance and societal impact rather than just internal efficiency, aligning with contemporary public sector reforms.

However, implementation can be challenging due to its complexity and the need for advanced assessment skills. Despite these challenges, the model's flexibility allows for gradual adoption in the Moldovan context, integrating various quality management tools.

CAF – participatory self-assessment in the public sector

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a European model for public administration, designed as an organizational self-assessment tool in the context of public sector modernization (3). Inspired by EFQM, but methodologically simplified, CAF promotes participatory performance analysis and identification of areas for improvement [3]. Structured on nine criteria, the model integrates the determinants and performance results, maintaining the logic of the relationship between processes and results. The participatory dimension favors the consolidation of organizational culture and institutional learning.

In the context of Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, CAF supports self-assessment and improvement planning. However, its effectiveness depends on the existence of solid data collection and analysis mechanisms; in their absence, the process can become formal and insufficiently results-oriented, contrary to the principles of evidence-based management.

Baldrige – orientation towards measurable performance

The Baldrige Excellence Framework is an American model of organizational excellence characterized by a strong orientation towards measurable results and data-driven management [7]. Structured in seven categories – leadership, strategy, learners, measurements and analysis, workforce, processes and results – the model emphasizes performance quantification and public accountability, in the logic of modern public management reforms.

Applied in education, Baldrige supports the development of a culture of performance and evidence-based decisions, convergent with the use of international assessments such as PISA [9] and with the principles of continuous improvement [1]. At the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level, the model can strengthen mechanisms for monitoring educational outcomes. However, the predominant emphasis on quantifiable indicators can diminish the attention paid to the qualitative dimensions of the educational process, and effective implementation requires the existence of a solid data infrastructure and institutional analytical capacity.

PISA and TALIS – systemic diagnostic tools

PISA and TALIS are international assessment tools developed for the comparative analysis of the performance of education systems and the teaching-learning environment [8, 9].

PISA provides data on students' functional competencies and provides information on equity, resource use and school management efficiency [9]. TALIS analyzes teachers' working conditions, educational leadership and teaching practices, contributing to the understanding of the organizational climate and internal processes [8]. Although they do not constitute quality management models, these tools have a major strategic value for substantiating decisions at the systemic level, being the expression of the evidence-based educational policy paradigm [8].

In the context of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, the integrated use of PISA and TALIS data can support self-assessment and strategic planning. However, their effectiveness depends on the existence of local capacity to analyze and interpret data, an essential condition for transforming information into relevant interventions.

Critical comparative synthesis of quality management models

The analysis of international quality management models highlights the existence of distinct paradigms, which reflect different ways of conceptualizing organizational performance and educational management. Beyond structural differences, these models can be grouped according to their epistemological orientation and the relationship they establish between processes, results and organizational culture.

Fundamental epistemological distinctions

From a theoretical perspective, the analyzed models can be positioned on three main conceptual axes:

1. Normative dimension in relation to the reflective dimension:
 - ISO 21001 is predominantly located on the normative axis, being focused on establishing minimum requirements and demonstrating conformity.
 - CAF and TQM are rather reflexively oriented, emphasizing self-assessment and organizational learning.
 - EFQM and Baldrige occupy an intermediate position, combining systemic analysis with performance evaluation.
2. Process dimension versus results-oriented dimension:
 - ISO 21001 privileges process stability.
 - Baldrige prioritizes measurable results and demonstrable impact.
 - EFQM makes an explicit integration between processes and results.
 - TQM emphasizes processes as the cultural foundation of performance.
3. Structural dimension versus cultural dimension:
 - Normative (ISO) and performance-oriented (Baldrige) models have a strong structural dimension.
 - TQM and CAF value organizational culture and participation.
 - EFQM explicitly integrates the cultural dimension into its strategic architecture.

Conceptual convergences and structural limits of the models analyzed

Despite differences in structure and methodological orientation, the models analyzed converge on a common core of fundamental principles of contemporary quality management. These include the importance of leadership as a catalyst for performance, the need to use data to substantiate decisions, beneficiary orientation, commitment to continuous improvement and public accountability. The convergence of these principles indicates that quality management in education goes beyond the strictly procedural paradigm and is part of a systemic logic of sustainable performance, in which processes, organizational culture and results are interdependent.

However, critical analysis highlights that this conceptual convergence does not eliminate the structural limits of the isolated application of each model, especially at the local level, the intermediate educational management level. ISO 21001 offers procedural rigor and operational clarity, but does not sufficiently integrate the strategic and cultural dimension of performance. TQM strengthens organizational culture and collective responsibility, but does not provide clear operational tools for systemic coordination. CAF is appropriate to the specifics of public administration and stimulates participatory self-assessment, but remains predominantly an internal diagnostic tool. The Baldrige model provides a robust framework for performance assessment, but assumes a developed data infrastructure and an organizational culture oriented towards their systematic use. Finally, PISA and TALIS provide relevant comparative data for decision-making, but do not constitute in themselves a quality management architecture.

Consequently, the isolated use of any model risks leading either to procedural formalism, or to strategic fragmentation, or to the unilateral emphasis on some dimensions of performance to the detriment of others.

Justification for the selection of the EFQM model

Regarding the context of the Republic of Moldova, the EFQM model presents a series of structural and epistemological advantages that justify its selection as a reference model for the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level.

1. *Systemic integration.* EFQM explicitly correlates leadership and strategy, resource management, educational processes, outcomes for students and society. This interdependence allows the district to be treated as an integrated educational system, not as a sum of individual institutions.
2. *Flexibility and gradual implementation.* Unlike certifiable standards, EFQM does not require mandatory external auditing, which allows gradual adaptation depending on organizational maturity.
3. *European compatibility.* As a European model of excellence, EFQM is aligned with the strategic guidelines of European educational policies and facilitates systemic convergence.

The model proves to be appropriate for intermediate management, as it facilitates strategic coordination at the district level under conditions of normative flexibility and conceptualizes performance as an expression of organizational capacity for learning, innovation and adaptation, not exclusively as a quantifiable result.

Substantiating an integrated model

The critical analysis leads to the conclusion that the optimal solution for OLSDÎ is not the exclusive adoption of a model, but the development of an integrated architecture, in which EFQM functions as a strategic core, ISO 21001 provides procedural support, CAF supports participatory self-assessment, PISA and TALIS provide data to substantiate decisions.

This integrated approach allows overcoming the limits of each framework and creates the premises for the development of local management oriented towards sustainable performance and societal impact.

From an epistemological and operational perspective, EFQM represents the model that achieves the most coherent articulation between: strategic dimension, process dimension, cultural dimension, results dimension.

Therefore, its selection as a reference model for quality management at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level is justified both theoretically and pragmatically.

The proposed integrated model for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education

Based on the comparative analysis and critical synthesis previously developed, an integrated quality management model is proposed at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level, which combines the advantages of a strategic framework for excellence (EFQM) with the procedural rigor of a normative standard (ISO 21001), the participatory support of a self-assessment tool (CAF) and the use of international data (PISA/TALIS) to substantiate evidence-based decisions.

The model is designed as an intermediate-level quality management architecture, in which Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education acts as a mediator between national policies and the autonomy of educational institutions, ensuring strategic coherence, analytical capacity and continuous improvement at the local scale.

Design principles of the integrated model

The proposed integrated model is based on four design principles, derived from the conceptual convergences of the analyzed frameworks and adapted to the feasibility requirements of the administrative context in the Republic of Moldova.

1. *Systemic approach.* The district/municipality is treated as an integrated educational system, in which performance results from the interdependence between leadership, strategy, resources, processes and results.

2. *Student orientation and equity.* Quality is defined by the impact on students and the community, with an emphasis on reducing disparities and creating public value.

3. *Balance between procedural rigor and organizational reflection.* ISO 21001 ensures process standardization, and EFQM and CAF support the strategic dimension and culture of continuous improvement.

4. *Data-based decision for improvement.* Educational data, including those from national and international assessments, are used for diagnosis and strategic adjustment, in a logic of development, not of sanction.

Architecture of the integrated model

The proposed model has EFQM as its strategic core, providing the framework for organizational excellence and the orientation towards sustainable performance. This core is functionally complemented by ISO 21001, which ensures the standardization of educational and administrative processes, by CAF, which supports participatory self-assessment specific to the public sector, and by the PISA and TALIS instruments, which provide comparative data for evidence-based decisions.

Figure 2 illustrates the integrated architecture of the quality management model proposed for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, highlighting the central role of the EFQM model and the functional relationships between the other instruments used.

As seen in Figure 2, EFQM functions as an integrative strategic structure, guiding leadership, strategy and performance assessment at the level of the local education system. Around this core, ISO 21001 contributes to the discipline and standardization of organizational processes, especially administrative and quality assurance processes, ensuring procedural coherence and traceability.

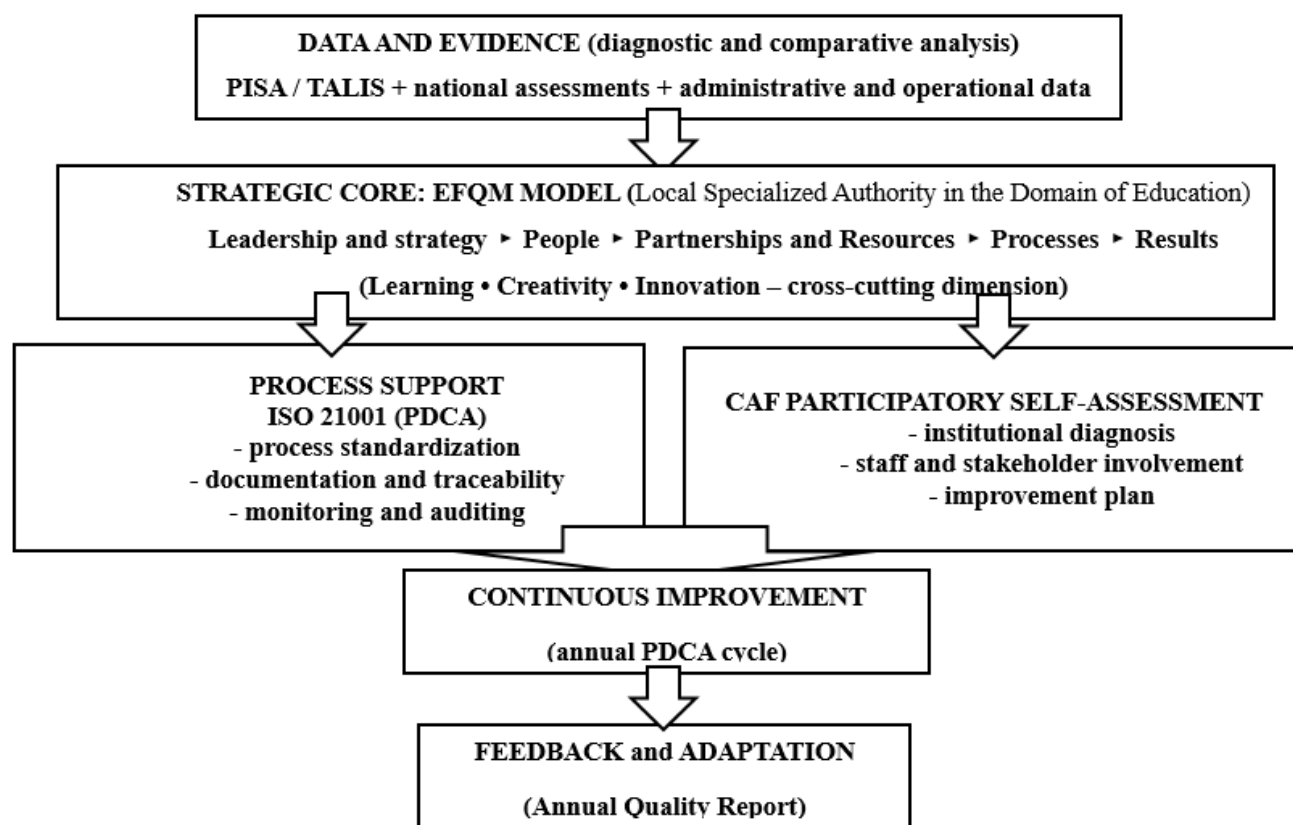


Figure 2. Integrated quality management model for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education

At the same time, CAF supports the reflective and participatory dimension of public management, facilitating institutional self-evaluation processes and identifying areas for improvement. The international instruments PISA and TALIS do not substitute quality management, but provide relevant comparative data on the performance of the education system and teaching-learning conditions. The integration of this data into the model allows for the substantiation of strategic decisions and the prioritization of educational interventions at the local level.

Through this architecture, the proposed model combines the strategic, procedural, participatory and analytical dimensions of quality management, providing the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education with a coherent framework for coordinating and improving the performance of the local education system.

Implementation stages at district/municipal level

The implementation is proposed as a phased process, integrated into the annual planning cycle of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education. A 6-stage sequence is recommended, compatible with the PDCA logic and with the EFQM/CAF self-assessment:

Stage 1. Establishment of the quality management framework

- designation of the district/municipal quality team (Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education + directors + methodical representatives);
- definition of roles (quality coordinator, data manager, partnership manager, etc.);
- establishment of the annual calendar.

Stage 2. Initial diagnosis and systemic self-assessment

- self-assessment based on EFQM criteria at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level (maturity, leadership, resources, processes, results);
- CAF self-assessment for the public administration component (participatory, non-punitive);
- data analysis: internal/national assessments, local indicators, PISA/TALIS benchmarks (where applicable).

Stage 3. Strategic planning of quality at district/municipal level

- definition of strategic objectives (e.g.: equity, key competencies, professional development, leadership);
- formulation of target indicators and monitoring mechanisms;
- correlation of objectives with national policies and local realities.

Stage 4. Standardization of key processes and operationalization (ISO 21001)

- mapping of Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education processes (monitoring, methodological support, training, relationship with schools, communication);
- minimum procedures and documentary flows (reports, feedback, monitoring);
- definition of data collection tools.

Stage 5. Implementation of interventions and support of institutions

- differentiated methodological support (depending on results and needs);
- professional development and leadership (mentoring, communities of practice);
- community partnerships for resources and inclusion.

Stage 6. Monitoring, evaluation and annual feedback

- annual quality report at district/municipal level;
- review of objectives and processes (PDCA);
- dissemination of good practices and inter-district comparative analyses (in the logic of learning, not sanctioning).

Minimum indicators for quality monitoring at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level

To operationalize the proposed integrated model, it is necessary to define a set of indicators that allow for the systematic monitoring of quality at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level. In this regard, a minimal set of operationalizable and feasible indicators is proposed, organized according to the logic of the EFQM model, which distinguishes between performance determinants and results generated by the education system. Table 1.1 presents an example of minimal indicators that can be used to monitor quality management at the district or municipal level. The indicators are structured according to dimensions corresponding to the EFQM model (leadership, strategy, people, processes, resources and results) and include, for each category, an operational definition, data sources and recommended collection frequency.

Table 1. Minimum indicators for quality management at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education (LSADE) level

Dimension (EFQM)	Minimum indicator	Operational definition (example)	Data source	Frequency
Leadership	Quality team functionality	team existence + documented meetings + implemented decisions	LSADE (minutes)	quarterly
Strategy	Quality district plan	approved plan with objectives, indicators, deadlines, responsibilities	LSADE	annual
People	Participation in training	% of teachers participating in relevant	school/LSADE	month
Processes	Monitoring and feedback	% of schools with written feedback after monitoring and improvement plan	LSADE	month
Partnerships Resources	Active partnerships	no. of functional partnerships (LPA, NGOs, economic agents) + activities carried out	LSADE	annual
Processes (ISO)	Compliance with minimum procedures	existence and application of procedures (reporting, communication, evaluation)	internal audit	annual

Student results	Progress / performance	evolution of results in national/internal assessments (trend)	school /MER*	annual
Equity	Disparities between schools	urban–rural differences / socio-economic quintiles (where possible)	LSADE / school	annual
Personal results	Organizational climate	climate average score from internal questionnaires (satisfaction, collaboration)	school / LSADE	annual
Societal outcomes	Community participation	level of parent/community involvement (participation, consultations)	school / LSADE	annual
Data management	Data quality	completeness/update of educational databases	LSADE	quarterly
Continuous improvement	Implementation of actions	% of actions from the plan completed / ongoing / not started	LSADE	quarterly

* MER -Ministry of Education and Research-depending on the access of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education to official data and national reporting mechanisms.

As can be seen in Table 1.1, the indicators combine organizational dimensions and educational outcomes, reflecting the systemic logic of the EFQM model. For example, the indicators on leadership and strategy target the institutional capacity for coordination and planning, while the indicators on processes and resources track the functioning of monitoring mechanisms and methodological support. The outcome indicators (student progress, organizational climate or community participation) allow the assessment of the impact of these processes on the performance of the education system.

The set of indicators is indicative and can be adapted according to the local capacity for data collection and analysis. The use of a small number of relevant indicators facilitates the gradual implementation of the quality management model and reduces the risk of administrative overload of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education structures.

Methodological note: indicators should be used in the logic of continuous improvement (quality enhancement), not as punitive mechanisms. Annual reporting should include contextual interpretation and qualitative analysis, not just the presentation of numerical values.

The proposed integrated model thus provides a coherent architecture for quality management at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level, compatible with educational management at the local, district or municipal level and with the need to balance the strategic, process and participatory dimensions of educational governance. EFQM functions as a strategic and systemic benchmark, ISO 21001 disciplines processes, CAF strengthens participatory self-assessment, and PISA and TALIS support evidence-based decision-making. Phased implementation and the use of minimal indicators can contribute to the development of an institutional culture oriented towards quality and continuous improvement at the local level.

Recommendations for operationalizing the integrated model at the *Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education* level

The implementation of the integrated quality management model at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level requires the transposition of the conceptual framework into a coherent set of organizational mechanisms, functional procedures and managerial practices. Operationalization must be carried out gradually, with attention to the local institutional capacity and the need to build a quality culture.

Institutionalization and integration of quality management into the governance of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education

To avoid the declarative nature of the integrated model, quality management must be formally institutionalized at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level and integrated into the annual planning and reporting cycle, becoming a permanent mechanism of educational management at the local level.

It is recommended to establish a district/municipal quality team, with a strategic and analytical role, clearly define responsibilities for coordination, data analysis and monitoring, as well as explicitly include quality management in job descriptions and the Annual Activity Plan. The self-evaluation and reporting process must be regulated by a formalized internal framework.

The model must be correlated with existing administrative processes (planning, reporting, institutional evaluation), by integrating quality objectives in annual documents and developing an Annual Report on the quality of education at the district/municipal level, focused on analysis and interpretation. Effective operationalization requires aligning the model with existing administrative structures, not creating parallel mechanisms.

Developing the capacity to analyze educational data

A critical element for the functioning of the model is the capacity of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education to use data systematically and interpretively. It is recommended: appointing a person responsible for analyzing educational data; using standardized collection and interpretation tools (analysis sheets, comparative matrices); training staff in basic skills regarding statistical analysis and interpretation of indicators; using PISA/TALIS data and national assessments to identify local strategic priorities. Data-based decision-making must be oriented towards support and development, not punishment.

Process standardization and participatory self-evaluation

The implementation of the integrated model involves correlating the process dimension (ISO 21001) with the reflective dimension (CAF), so that procedural rigor is supported by organizational learning. It is necessary to map the key processes of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education and develop minimal standardized procedures, accompanied by periodic review and simplified internal audit, in a proportional logic that avoids excessive bureaucracy.

In addition, it is recommended to institutionalize an annual participatory self-evaluation, based on collective reflection and organizational diagnosis, finalized by a clearly structured improvement plan. Self-evaluation must be oriented towards continuous development and adaptation, not towards administrative formalism.

Differentiated support for educational institutions

The operationalization of the model involves adapting interventions to the level of performance and the needs of each institution. It is recommended: classify schools according to relevant indicators (performance, equity, resources); provide differentiated methodological support (mentoring, counseling, training); facilitate the exchange of good practices between schools; monitor progress in the logic of continuous improvement. The Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education should act as a facilitator of development, not exclusively as a control body.

Inter-district comparative analysis and management of implementation risks

To stimulate systemic learning, it is recommended to establish a voluntary mechanism for comparative analysis between districts/municipalities, based on the exchange of annual reports, thematic meetings between quality managers, the use of common indicators and the dissemination of good practices. Comparative analysis should be oriented towards cooperation and mutual learning, not towards competitive ranking.

The implementation of the model may encounter risks such as resistance to change, excessive bureaucratization, reduced capacity for data analysis or the perception of evaluation as a punitive mechanism. To reduce them, transparent communication regarding the purpose of the model, gradual application, simplification of procedures, and strengthening of skills through training and continuous methodological support are required.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis shows that contemporary quality management models in education go beyond the logic of procedural compliance and emphasize sustainable performance, leadership and organizational learning. ISO 21001 provides process rigor and traceability, TQM supports quality culture, and EFQM and Baldrige integrate performance in a systemic framework, with different orientations (holistic vs. measurable results). CAF complements these frameworks through participatory self-assessment adapted to the public sector, and PISA/TALIS contributes as diagnostic and comparative analysis tools, without providing

an educational management architecture. For the context of the Republic of Moldova, the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level requires an integrated solution, since the isolated application of a single model risks procedural formalism or strategic fragmentation. The study proposes a hybrid model with an EFQM strategic core, complemented by ISO 21001 (processes) and CAF (self-assessment), supported by the systematic use of data (including PISA/TALIS) for improvement-oriented decisions. Operationalization through the annual PDCA cycle and a minimal set of indicators creates the premises for coherent local management, oriented towards equity and impact. The limitation of the study remains the conceptual nature of the proposal, which justifies pilot testing in districts / municipalities and empirical evaluation of the effects on educational performance and equity.

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INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL LANDMARKS, TRANSFERABLE COMPETENCES AND AUTHENTIC LEARNING CONTEXTS

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Within the framework of the competence-based curricular paradigm, school assessment is expected to move beyond the traditional model primarily focused on fragmented verification of knowledge and to promote forms of evaluation that reflect the actual complexity of learning. In this regard, integrated assessment emerges as a particularly relevant approach for primary education, as it allows teachers to observe how pupils mobilize and transfer knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in authentic and meaningful contexts. The article analyses integrated assessment from the perspective of competence-based education, highlighting its relationship with the development of transferable competences and twenty-first century skills. Conceptual landmarks, pedagogical dimensions and stages of designing integrated assessment are presented, as well as the role of cross-curricular themes, real-life learning contexts and transdisciplinary learning products in shaping relevant assessment approaches for primary school pupils.

Keywords: *integrated assessment, primary education, transferable competences, competence-based education, cross-curricular themes, authentic learning contexts, formative assessment.*

EVALUAREA INTEGRATĂ ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR: REPERE CONCEPTUALE, COMPETENȚE TRANSFERABILE ȘI CONTEXTE DE ÎNVĂȚARE AUTENTICĂ

În cadrul paradigmei curriculare bazate pe competențe, evaluarea școlară este așteptată să depășească modelul tradițional axat în principal pe verificarea fragmentată a cunoștințelor și să promoveze forme de evaluare care reflectă complexitatea reală a învățării. În acest sens, evaluarea integrată apare ca o abordare deosebit de relevantă pentru învățământul primar, deoarece permite profesorilor să observe modul în care elevii mobilizează și transferă cunoștințe, abilități, atitudini și valori în contexte autentice și semnificative. Articolul analizează evaluarea integrată din perspectiva educației bazate pe competențe, subliniind relația acestora cu dezvoltarea competențelor transferabile și a abilităților secolului XXI. Sunt prezentate repere conceptuale, dimensiuni pedagogice și etape de proiectare a evaluării integrate, precum și rolul temelor intercurriculare, al contextelor de învățare din viața reală și al produselor de învățare transdisciplinară în conturarea abordărilor relevante de evaluare pentru elevii din școala primară.

Cuvinte-cheie: *evaluare integrată, învățământ primar, competențe transferabile, educație bazată pe competențe, teme intercurriculare, contexte de învățare autentice, evaluare formativă.*

Introduction

Contemporary transformations in education require a profound reconsideration of the ways in which school assessment is conceptualised and implemented. Within the traditional paradigm, the emphasis was primarily placed on verifying the amount of information retained and reproduced by pupils. In contrast, current curricular orientations promote a different perspective, centred on the formation and development of competences [3; 4]. Within this framework, assessment can no longer remain a simple final stage of instruction intended solely to determine results; instead, it must become an integral part of the learning process, fulfilling regulatory, supportive and motivational functions in relation to pupils' progress [2].

In primary education, this paradigm shift is particularly significant, as young pupils' learning tends to be global, contextualised and experiential. Children do not learn authentically through the artificial isolation of

content, but rather by connecting learning to situations close to their everyday lives, to concrete experiences, practical activities, interactions and meaningful products [3]. Consequently, assessment should follow the same logic, moving beyond excessive disciplinary fragmentation and focusing instead on integrative, meaningful and accessible tasks.

From this perspective, integrated assessment represents a particularly valuable approach. It allows teachers not only to evaluate specific learning outcomes but also to observe pupils' ability to mobilise a variety of resources – knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – in order to solve meaningful tasks. Furthermore, integrated assessment creates favourable conditions for observing transferable competences such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, reflection, autonomy and adaptability, which are considered essential for the development of the contemporary learner [5; 6].

The relevance of this topic is also supported by international frameworks concerning twenty-first century competences, which highlight the need for the integrated development of cognitive, metacognitive, social, emotional, practical and digital dimensions of learning [5]. Within a competence-based educational ecosystem, assessment must be able to capture the complexity of these learning outcomes and provide meaningful insights into how pupils learn, apply, transfer knowledge, collaborate and reflect. In this sense, integrated assessment is not merely a methodological solution, but rather the expression of a pedagogical vision consistent with the goals of contemporary education [1; 2].

The present article aims to analyse integrated assessment in primary education from the perspective of transferable competences and authentic learning contexts. The study seeks to clarify the conceptual foundations of integrated assessment, highlight its relationship with competence-based education, examine the role of cross-curricular themes and real-life learning contexts, and identify several guidelines for designing and implementing integrated assessment in educational practice. In addition, the article discusses the advantages, challenges and conditions that may support the effective implementation of integrated assessment in school practice.

Therefore, the central idea of this paper is that integrated assessment represents a pedagogical necessity in contemporary primary education, as it responds more effectively than fragmented assessment to the need to develop and value transferable competences in authentic learning contexts that are meaningful and closely connected to pupils' real-life experiences.

Integrated Assessment within the Competence-Based Education Paradigm

The evolution of the school curriculum toward a competence-based approach has generated significant transformations not only in terms of educational goals but also in the ways teaching, learning, and assessment are organized [3; 4]. Within such a framework, the emphasis is no longer placed exclusively on the assimilation and reproduction of information, but rather on the pupil's ability to functionally mobilize diverse resources in order to cope with various, relevant, and often complex situations. This shift in focus requires a reconsideration of assessment practices, which must become consistent with the logic of competence development [1; 6].

Competence-based education involves the integrated use of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in concrete life and learning contexts [3]. From this perspective, pupil performance cannot be reduced to providing the correct answer to an item or faithfully reproducing a taught content, but must instead be understood as an expression of the learner's capacity to select, combine, and use what they know and what they are able to do in response to the demands of a given situation. Naturally, such forms of performance require more complex, flexible assessment approaches that are closer to the real contexts in which competences are manifested [2; 6].

Integrated assessment responds to this need by overcoming fragmented approaches focused strictly on disciplines and isolated content sequences. It proposes assessment tasks that create connections between different learning domains, capitalize on authentic contexts, and provide pupils with opportunities to demonstrate what they know and what they are capable of doing in a comprehensive and meaningful manner. Thus, assessment no longer aims merely at measuring separate learning outcomes but at capturing the learner's ability to establish connections, transfer knowledge, and act competently within a given context [1; 2].

In primary education, this perspective has particular relevance. The developmental characteristics of young learners require educational approaches that emphasize the unity of learning experiences and the concrete, intuitive, and contextualized ways in which children relate to the world [3]. Young pupils learn more effectively when learning content is associated with themes close to their everyday lives, practical activities, meaningful tasks, and visible learning products. Consequently, integrated assessment becomes not only appropriate but necessary, as it allows learning to be evaluated in ways that correspond to how it actually takes place.

Another important argument supporting integrated assessment concerns its formative character. Within a competence-based educational ecosystem, assessment should not be understood solely as an instrument for classification or certification, but rather as a mechanism that supports learning [2]. Integrated assessment facilitates observation of the learning process, providing teachers with relevant information about how pupils think, collaborate, solve problems, and organize their work. At the same time, it offers pupils opportunities to become aware of the meaning of their activities, the criteria for success, and the directions for improvement. In this way, it supports self-regulation, reflection, and individual progress [2; 6].

However, integrated assessment should not be confused with the simple juxtaposition of several subjects within the same activity. Its pedagogical value does not lie in the formal act of “integration”, but in the coherence of the proposed task and in the extent to which it requires pupils to mobilize their resources functionally in order to solve a meaningful situation. An activity is truly integrated when the connections between contents, competences, and contexts are authentic, pedagogically justified, and accessible to pupils [1].

Consequently, integrated assessment may be considered one of the most appropriate expressions of the competence-based education paradigm. It provides the necessary framework for assessing complex learning outcomes, valuing contextualized learning, and developing an assessment culture centred on progress, meaning, and transfer. In primary education, such an approach contributes to building a coherent educational experience in which assessment becomes a natural component of learning and of pupils’ development.

Transferable Competences – Purpose and Reference Point of Integrated Assessment

In contemporary education, the development of transferable competences represents one of the essential goals of the educational process. Rapid social changes, the expansion of digital technologies, professional mobility, and cultural diversity require preparing pupils not only to accumulate knowledge but also to use it in diverse contexts and new situations [5]. Within this framework, transferable competences become key reference points both for organizing learning and for designing and implementing assessment.

Transferable competences can be understood as sets of resources – knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values – that can be mobilized flexibly in contexts different from those in which they were initially developed. They do not belong exclusively to a single school subject but emerge through diverse learning experiences and through the correlation of contents from multiple fields of study [3; 4]. In this respect, integrated assessment becomes an appropriate instrument for observing and evaluating such competences, as it creates situations in which pupils are encouraged to combine and apply resources from different learning domains.

International organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development emphasize the importance of developing twenty-first century competences, considered essential for individuals’ adaptation and success in a complex and dynamic society [5]. These include cognitive and metacognitive competences, social and emotional competences, practical and digital competences, as well as the ability to adapt and engage in lifelong learning.

Cognitive competences include abilities such as logical thinking, information analysis, problem solving, and the use of language or numerical representations. These abilities are fundamental for understanding and interpreting reality and for applying knowledge in concrete situations. At the same time, metacognitive competences involve the learner’s ability to reflect on their own learning process, monitor their progress, and adjust their learning strategies according to the requirements of a task [5].

Equally important are social and emotional competences, which include empathy, communication, cooperation, responsibility, and emotional regulation. In the school environment, these competences contribute to building positive relationships, active participation in group activities, and the development of constructive attitudes toward learning. In addition, practical and digital competences have become increasingly relevant in the current context, where the use of technologies, the manipulation of tools, and the application of knowledge in concrete activities represent important components of pupils' development [3; 5].

The complex and interdependent nature of these competences highlights the need for assessment approaches that go beyond the verification of isolated knowledge or procedures. Integrated assessment makes it possible to observe how pupils combine cognitive, social, and practical resources in order to solve authentic tasks, collaborate with others, and produce meaningful outcomes. Through activities such as projects, case studies, investigations, or problem-solving tasks, pupils can demonstrate not only what they know but also how they apply, interpret, and use their knowledge [2; 6].

In primary education, the development of transferable competences is particularly important, as it forms the foundation for pupils' later development. Integrated activities and contextualized tasks contribute to the development of critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and learning autonomy. Integrated assessment enables these dimensions to be observed in an authentic way, providing teachers with a more comprehensive picture of pupils' progress.

Therefore, transferable competences can be regarded both as a major goal of contemporary education and as a fundamental reference point for the design of integrated assessment. When assessment is designed in such a way that it captures the mobilization of these competences in diverse contexts, it becomes a valuable tool for supporting meaningful, functional, and life-oriented learning.

Pedagogical Landmarks and Stages in Designing Integrated Assessment

Designing integrated assessment requires a rigorous pedagogical approach that ensures coherence between educational goals, learning activities, and the ways in which pupils' outcomes are evaluated. Within a competence-based approach, assessment cannot be conceived independently of the learning process; rather, it must be organically integrated into it, providing relevant information about pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used [1; 2].

A first essential reference point in the design of integrated assessment is the clarification of the intended learning outcomes. The teacher must identify the targeted competences and formulate assessment objectives that reflect the integrated mobilization of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In this respect, assessment is not limited to verifying isolated learning outcomes, but focuses on pupils' capacity to use what they have learned in relevant and meaningful situations [3; 4].

Another important element is the selection of the integrating context. Assessment tasks should be anchored in themes or situations close to pupils' experiences and should enable connections between several areas of learning. In primary education, such contexts may include everyday activities, thematic projects, school events, or situations inspired by community life. Through these contexts, pupils are invited to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired in a functional and creative way.

An essential step in the design process is the formulation of the assessment task and the identification of the final product. In integrated assessment, the product created by the pupil – whether it is a project, a presentation, a poster, an experiment, or a solved problem situation – becomes the main basis for evaluation. This product should be relevant to the targeted competences and should provide pupils with opportunities to demonstrate how they mobilize diverse resources in order to accomplish the task [2; 6].

To ensure objectivity and transparency in the assessment process, it is necessary to establish clear assessment criteria and indicators. These criteria should be clearly formulated and communicated to pupils before the activity takes place, so that they understand what is expected from them and which elements define successful performance. In this way, assessment becomes an instrument that guides learning, while pupils can actively participate in the process through self-assessment and peer assessment [2].

Another important aspect concerns the analysis and interpretation of assessment results. Teachers should use the information obtained not only to evaluate pupils' performance but also to identify the difficulties encountered and to adjust subsequent teaching strategies. In this sense, integrated assessment has a strong formative character, contributing to the regulation of the learning process and supporting individual progress [2].

Furthermore, communicating results and providing constructive feedback represent essential components of integrated assessment. Feedback should highlight both successful aspects and directions for improvement, helping pupils develop the ability to reflect on their own learning processes. Through clear, progress-oriented feedback, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and to strengthen their autonomy in learning [2; 6].

Overall, the design of integrated assessment can be structured into several main stages: identifying the targeted competences, selecting the integrating context, formulating the assessment task and its evaluable product, defining assessment criteria, and using the results through feedback and reflection. Following these stages ensures the coherence and relevance of the assessment process, transforming assessment into an authentic instrument for supporting learning.

Thus, integrated assessment becomes not only a way of evaluating pupils' outcomes but also a pedagogical mechanism that facilitates the development of transferable competences, supports pupils' active engagement, and strengthens the connection between learning and real-life contexts.

Cross-Curricular Themes and Real-Life Learning Contexts as a Basis for Integrated Assessment

One of the elements that provide relevance and authenticity to integrated assessment is the use of cross-curricular themes and real-life learning contexts in the organization of learning and assessment activities. These create meaningful situations in which pupils can mobilize knowledge and skills from several fields of study, develop transferable competences, and strengthen the connection between learning and life experiences [3; 4].

Cross-curricular themes represent topics of general interest that can be approached from the perspective of several school disciplines. They facilitate the integration of curricular contents and contribute to the development of holistic learning, in which pupils perceive the relationships between different domains of knowledge. In primary education, such themes may be organized around topics close to the child's world, such as health, the environment, the local community, friendship, nutrition, cultural traditions, or space exploration [3].

Through these themes, teachers can create learning situations in which pupils investigate, discuss, experiment, and produce outcomes that reflect an integrated understanding of the studied content. For example, a theme such as *"The Environment"* may involve observation and experimentation activities in science, the writing of descriptive or informative texts in language classes, the creation of posters or artistic objects in visual arts, and the analysis of data or graphs in mathematics. Assessing the results of these activities allows teachers to evaluate how pupils use knowledge and skills from multiple domains in order to understand and explain complex situations.

Complementing cross-curricular themes, real-life learning contexts represent situations inspired by pupils' real experiences. These contexts are built around everyday activities, community events, or simple problems that may be encountered in daily life. Through these contexts, pupils are encouraged to apply previously acquired knowledge and skills in order to solve concrete tasks, while also developing responsibility, collaboration, and decision-making skills.

In primary education, such contexts can be diverse and adapted to pupils' developmental level. For example, organizing a school event, planning a trip, managing a shopping budget, creating a guide to the local community, or designing a school garden are contexts that allow the integration of content from several disciplines and enable the authentic assessment of pupils' competences. Within these activities, pupils may calculate costs, write texts, create presentations, collect and analyze information, collaborate in teams, and reflect on the results achieved.

These learning contexts may also extend into family or community environments. Activities such as

organizing a picnic, participating in a recycling campaign, developing a volunteer project, or preparing a thematic exhibition provide learning opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single school discipline and contribute to the development of important social and civic competences.

Integrating such contexts into school assessment allows teachers to observe how pupils use their knowledge in real situations and how they develop the ability to transfer learning. Instead of answering isolated questions or reproducing memorized information, pupils are engaged in activities that require critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and responsibility. In this way, assessment becomes more relevant to pupils' personal and social development and more accurately reflects their level of competence [5; 6].

By capitalizing on cross-curricular themes and real-life learning contexts, integrated assessment contributes to the creation of a dynamic and motivating educational framework in which learning gains meaning and practical value. Pupils perceive school activities as connected to their life experiences, while teachers can evaluate more comprehensively how pupils understand, apply, and transfer the knowledge they acquire.

Products and Instruments Used in Integrated Assessment

An essential component of integrated assessment is the use of assessment products and tools that enable pupils to demonstrate authentically how they mobilize knowledge, skills, and attitudes in carrying out meaningful tasks. Unlike traditional assessment, which is mainly focused on short answers or the reproductive verification of information, integrated assessment makes use of complex products resulting from activities of exploration, collaboration, and creation [2; 6].

In primary education, these products may take various forms and should be adapted to pupils' age-related characteristics, interests, and educational contexts. An important role is played by products aimed at synthesizing and organizing information, such as thematic portfolios, graphic organizers, data systematization tables, or lapbooks. These allow pupils to collect, structure, and present information in a visual and coherent way, thereby facilitating the understanding of relationships between concepts and reinforcing learning.

Another important category consists of communication and presentation products. Oral or digital presentations, interviews, newsletters, posters, or infographics provide pupils with opportunities to capitalize on the outcomes of the activities carried out and to develop their communication and argumentation skills. Through such activities, pupils learn to select relevant information, organize it logically, and communicate it in an accessible and convincing manner.

Products related to action and problem solving also occupy an important place in integrated assessment. Projects, case studies, experiments, or problem-based tasks offer pupils the opportunity to apply what they have learned in practice and to identify solutions to complex tasks. For example, organizing a school fair, carrying out an ecological experiment, or developing a guide to the local community may become assessment contexts in which mathematical, linguistic, social, and civic competences are mobilized simultaneously.

In addition, creative and artistic activities may constitute relevant forms of integrated assessment. Illustrated books produced by pupils, dramatizations, exhibitions of creative work, or the making of objects from recycled materials enable pupils to express ideas and knowledge in an original and personal way. Such products not only reflect pupils' level of understanding but also contribute to the development of creativity and emotional engagement in the learning process.

For these products to become effective assessment instruments, they must be accompanied by clear assessment criteria and appropriate evaluation tools. These include assessment rubrics, checklists, observation grids, and self-assessment or peer-assessment sheets. Such tools contribute to ensuring transparency in the assessment process and provide pupils with concrete reference points for understanding expectations and reflecting on their own performance [2].

Digital technologies may also play an important role in integrated assessment. Online platforms, multimedia presentations, interactive resources, or data visualization tools offer new possibilities for collecting,

analysing, and presenting learning outcomes. At the same time, the use of such tools contributes to the development of pupils' digital competences and to the diversification of assessment methods [5].

Overall, the diversity of products and instruments used in integrated assessment reflects the complexity of the learning process and enables the assessment of a wide range of competences. Their selection should be made carefully, depending on the targeted competences, the context of the activity, and pupils' developmental level. In this way, integrated assessment becomes a flexible and relevant process, capable of highlighting pupils' progress and supporting the development of active and meaningful learning.

Advantages, Challenges, and Conditions for the Effectiveness of Integrated Assessment

Integrated assessment offers numerous opportunities for developing an educational process that is more relevant and more closely connected to the reality in which pupils live and learn. Through its contextualized and interdisciplinary nature, it enables the assessment of complex competences and contributes to overcoming the limits of traditional assessment centred exclusively on the reproduction of information [2; 6].

One of the main advantages of integrated assessment lies in its ability to capture learning in a holistic manner. Pupils are not assessed only in terms of what they know, but also in terms of how they use knowledge, collaborate with others, solve problems, and organize their work. In this way, assessment reflects pupils' real competences more accurately and provides teachers with a more comprehensive picture of their progress.

Another important advantage is the stimulation of motivation for learning. When assessment tasks are placed in authentic contexts that are close to pupils' experiences, they become more interesting and more meaningful. Pupils perceive assessment activities not as a formal verification process, but as an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do and to participate actively in the learning process.

Integrated assessment also supports the development of collaboration and communication competences. Many integrated activities involve teamwork, exchange of ideas, and the presentation of results in front of peers. In this way, pupils learn to express their opinions, negotiate solutions, and contribute to the creation of a common product, thus developing their social and emotional competences.

At the same time, integrated assessment contributes to the transfer of learning. Through contextualized tasks, pupils are encouraged to use the knowledge they have acquired in situations different from those in which it was initially learned. This process supports the development of critical thinking and adaptability, competences that are essential for lifelong learning [5].

However, the implementation of integrated assessment may also encounter certain difficulties. One of the main challenges is related to the complexity of designing assessment tasks. Developing activities that authentically integrate several fields of learning and that allow the assessment of a variety of competences requires time, experience, and a solid understanding of curricular aims.

In addition, the assessment of complex products may raise issues related to objectivity and coherence. In the absence of clear criteria and appropriate evaluation tools, there is a risk that assessment may become overly general or difficult to compare. For this reason, the use of assessment rubrics and other criterion-referenced tools becomes essential in ensuring the transparency and fairness of the assessment process [2].

Another difficulty may concern the management of instructional time. Integrated activities, especially those involving projects or elaborate products, may require longer working periods and careful planning of the stages of implementation. Teachers must find a balance between curricular requirements, the available time, and the complexity of the proposed tasks.

For integrated assessment to be effective, several essential pedagogical conditions need to be respected. First, assessment tasks should be relevant and accessible to pupils, being correlated with their life experiences and their developmental level. Second, assessment criteria should be clearly formulated and communicated to pupils before the activities are carried out, so that they understand what is expected of them.

In addition, integrated assessment should maintain a balance between the disciplinary and the integrative dimensions. Integration should not lead to the dilution of subject-specific content, but rather facilitate

connections between disciplines and capitalize on their complementarity. At the same time, the feedback provided to pupils should be constant, constructive, and oriented toward progress, thereby supporting reflection and self-regulated learning [2].

Last but not least, the effective implementation of integrated assessment requires the continuous professional development of teachers. They must be familiar with the principles of competence-based education, with methods for designing integrated activities, and with modern assessment tools. Professional training and the exchange of good practices may significantly contribute to consolidating an assessment culture oriented toward learning.

Under these conditions, integrated assessment can become a valuable instrument for the development of a learner-centred education, in which assessment does not represent merely a moment of verification, but a continuous process of supporting learning and personal development.

Conclusions

Integrated assessment represents an important direction in the development of assessment practices within the context of competence-based education. In an educational system oriented toward the formation of transferable competences and toward the development of learning that is relevant to real-life situations, assessment can no longer be limited to the fragmented verification of isolated knowledge. Instead, it must capture how pupils mobilize diverse resources in order to solve meaningful tasks.

The analysis carried out highlights that integrated assessment allows learning to be evaluated in a more complex manner and in closer connection with the reality of the educational process. Through the use of authentic contexts, cross-curricular themes, and real-life learning situations, pupils have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in concrete activities while simultaneously developing cognitive, social, emotional, and practical competences. In this way, assessment becomes an instrument that supports the transfer of learning and contributes to the development of competences essential for adaptation and active participation in society.

Integrated assessment also offers teachers the opportunity to observe pupils' progress in a more nuanced way, to identify the difficulties they encounter, and to adapt teaching strategies according to their needs. The use of diverse products – such as projects, portfolios, presentations, experiments, or problem-solving tasks – makes it possible to capitalize on the diversity of learning styles and creates favourable conditions for pupils' active engagement in the assessment process.

At the same time, the implementation of integrated assessment requires careful planning and solid methodological preparation on the part of teachers. The design of assessment tasks, the establishment of evaluation criteria, and the management of integrated activities involve a reflective approach and continuous adaptation to pupils' characteristics and to the educational context. In this respect, continuous professional development for teachers and the promotion of examples of good practice become essential conditions for consolidating an assessment culture centred on competences.

In conclusion, integrated assessment can be regarded not merely as a methodological alternative to traditional assessment, but as an essential component of modern education oriented toward functional, reflective, and contextualized learning. By capitalizing on authentic learning contexts and by assessing transferable competences, it contributes to the development of a coherent educational experience in which assessment becomes a process that supports learning and pupils' development.

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MODELS AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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This study focuses on the development of summative assessment competence among teachers in vocational and technical education, viewed through the lens of well-established models in the specialized literature. The paper analyzes, from both theoretical and practical perspectives, the professional development and training models proposed by V. Mislitchi, L. Desimone, D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, and B. Joyce and B. Showers. Based on these models, the study highlights the key stages, characteristics, and dimensions that serve as theoretical and methodological benchmarks for designing training strategies tailored to the current educational context. The article provides operational guidelines for planning professional development programs, facilitating the transfer of best practices and enhancing the quality of summative assessment.

Keywords: *competence, summative assessment, models, strategies, professional development, vocational-technical education, teachers.*

MODELE ȘI STRATEGII PENTRU DEZVOLTAREA COMPETENȚEI DE EVALUARE SUMATIVĂ LA CADRELE DIDACTICE DIN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PROFESIONAL-TEHNIC

Studiul de față vizează procesul de dezvoltare a competenței de evaluare sumativă la cadrele didactice din Învățământul profesional-tehnic, prin prisma unor modele consacrate în literatura de specialitate. În lucrare sunt supuse analizei, din perspectivă teoretică și aplicativă, modelele de formare și dezvoltare profesională propuse de V. Mislitchi, L. Desimone, D. Clarke și H. Hollingsworth, respectiv B. Joyce și B. Showers. În raport cu aceste modele sunt evidențiate etapele, caracteristicile și dimensiunile definitorii, care constituie repere teoretice și metodologice pentru fundamentarea unor strategii de formare adaptate contextului educațional actual. Articolul oferă repere operaționale pentru proiectarea programelor de dezvoltare profesională, facilitând transferul de bune practici și consolidarea calității evaluării sumative.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competență, evaluarea sumativă, modele, strategii, dezvoltare profesională, învățământ profesional-tehnic, cadre didactice.*

Introduction

In the summative assessment process, teachers assume the responsibility to choose or develop appropriate assessment methods, to administer and interpret the assessment results, to use the assessment results by capitalizing on them in decision-making, to develop and apply scoring procedures, to communicate the assessment results considering various categories of audience (students, parents, administration, community), to recognize and avoid the unethical, illegal implications, and distorted effects of some assessment procedures. In this context, the summative assessment competence of teachers in vocational-technical education is outlined [10, p. 77].

Starting from these aspects, the summative assessment competence is defined as an integrative professional competence, which involves the coherent mobilization of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in real educational contexts. Strategies for developing this competence aim to consolidate all constitutive dimensions.

Each of these dimensions can be strengthened and deepened by applying theoretical and methodological models of professional training, which provide the necessary support for the development of summative assessment competence.

Theoretical Models and Applicative Strategies for Development of Summative Assessment Competence

A valuable explanatory framework for the progressive development of competence is provided by *the professional competence training model proposed by researcher V. Mislitchi* [9], which includes five successive phases:

- *The cognitive phase* involves familiarizing teachers with the content and structure of the summative assessment competence. This is achieved by theoretically explaining key concepts, illustrating assessment models and analyzing relevant case studies.

- *The analytical phase* involves the fragmentation of the competence into smaller components, which are learned sequentially: developing items, applying grids, interpreting results, etc. This stage is characterized by increased effort, the occurrence of errors and intense concentration.

- *The organization and systematization phase* consists of the gradual integration of these components into a coherent system, through sustained practice of the assessment sequences and correction of errors.

- *The synthesis and automation phase* involves the formation of a functional, fluent and adaptable competence, in which teachers apply summative assessment methods in an efficient and natural way, with reduced conscious supervision.

- *The refinement phase* marks the achievement of an advanced level of competence, characterized by speed, accuracy and adaptability in various educational contexts.

These phases can be integrated into the following strategies for developing summative assessment competence of teachers in vocational-technical education:

1. *Deepening knowledge* about summative assessment and specific standards in Technical Vocational Education (TVE), especially through continuous training and individual study.

2. *Strengthening operational skills*, through applied practices, internships, workshops and assessment simulations.

3. *Developing value awareness and professional attitudes*, such as fairness, evaluation ethics, transparency and responsibility.

4. *Adapting evaluation to real contexts*, through collaboration with social partners and the use of digital tools for the design and application of authentic tests.

In essence, the integration of the model proposed by V. Mislitchi into the strategy for developing summative evaluation competence provides a coherent, phased and applicable framework that supports the authentic and sustainable professional development of teachers in vocational and technical education.

Research over the past two decades has established a solid consensus in the literature on the *essential characteristics of professional development* that can lead to increased teacher competence and, implicitly, improved student learning outcomes [3]. Landmark studies, such as those by M. Kennedy [8] and S. M. Wilson & J. Berne [11], highlight five fundamental dimensions:

- a. *focus on content*;

- b. *active learning*;

- c. *coherence*;

- d. *duration*;

- e. *collective participation*.

These dimensions are considered critical elements in the design of continuing education programs [3]:

Focus on content is the central pillar of effective professional development. Empirical analyses - from case studies and correlational research at the national level to meta-analyses [8] - confirm that activities focused on disciplinary content enhance teachers' professional competence and lead to visible improvements in pedagogical practice, positively influencing student performance.

Active learning involves teachers' direct and engaged participation in processes of exploration, application and reflection, as opposed to passive transmission of information. Specific forms include observation of model lessons followed by interactive feedback and discussion, analysis of student work, facilitated discussions and pedagogical co-creation activities [3]. This approach stimulates the real transfer of knowledge into classroom practice.

Coherence refers to the congruence between teachers' training experiences, beliefs and prior knowledge, as well as alignment with educational policies at institutional and national levels [3]. Lack of coherence between these levels can diminish the impact of training.

Duration of training is also a critical determinant. Research indicates that programmes delivered over extended periods (minimum 20 contact hours) and distributed over a semester, accompanied by monitoring and feedback activities, foster sustainable changes in practice [3].

Collective participation involves the involvement of groups of teachers from the same institutional context (school, chair, department) in common training activities, stimulating the exchange of experience and the consolidation of an organizational learning culture [3].

Based on these characteristics, we highlight **a Conceptual Model of Professional Development proposed by L. Desimone** [3] (Figure 1), recommended for use in all empirical causal studies of professional development. The model represents interactive, non-recursive relationships between critical characteristics of professional development, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, classroom practice and student outcomes.

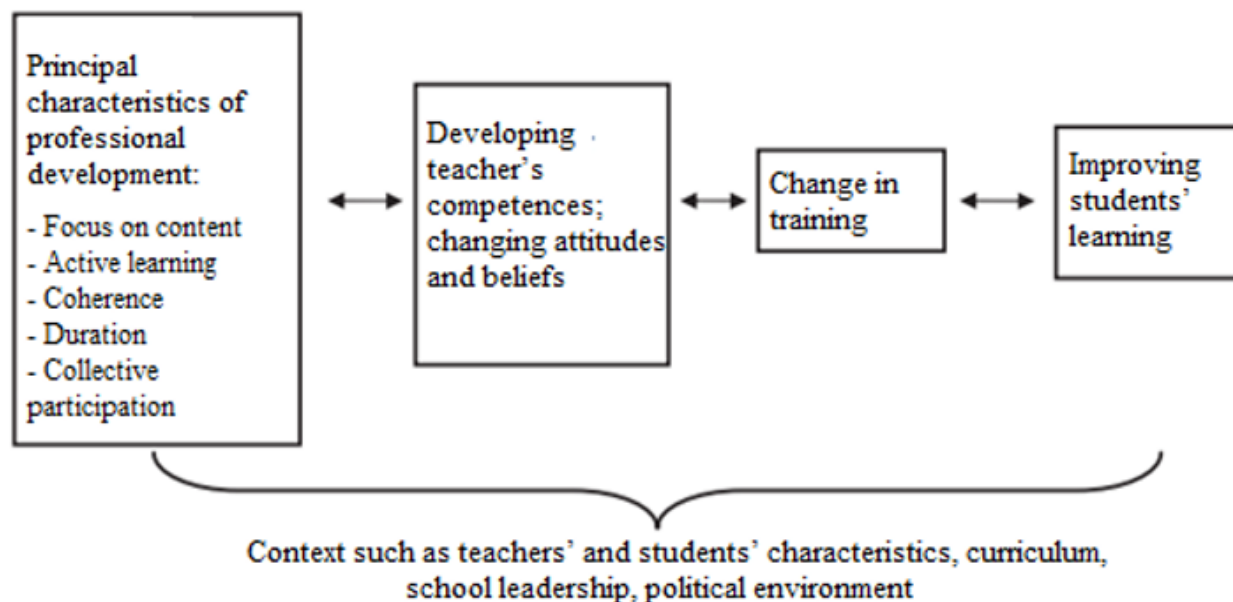


Figure 1. Basic Conceptual Framework Proposed for Studying Effects of Professional Development on Teachers and Students [3]

The figure illustrates how a basic theory of action on professional development generally unfolds through a succession of stages:

1. Teachers' participation in effective training programs;
2. Development of knowledge, skills and, eventually, change in professional beliefs;
3. Transfer of these acquisitions into teaching practice through adjustments to content and methodology;
4. Improvement of student learning outcomes as a result of pedagogical transformations.

The basic conceptual framework proposed by L. Desimone [3] represents a robust and empirically grounded theoretical scheme, intended to guide studies on the impact of professional development on teachers and, ultimately, on students. The fundamental characteristics of effective training - namely content relevance, active involvement, coherence, adequate duration and collective participation - directly influence the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of teachers, generating changes in pedagogical practices and contributing to the improvement of learning outcomes, within a context determined by individual factors, curricular structure, institutional leadership and the political environment. The model brings a major methodological and theoretical value, providing a unified framework for testing causal relationships and for developing methods for rigorously measuring the effectiveness of training programs.

Referring to the conceptual framework proposed by L. Desimone (2009), the development of summative assessment competence in teachers in vocational-technical education can be guided by the following strategies:

1. **Focus on Content.** In this sense, training programs should integrate modules dedicated to modern summative assessment methodologies, such as standardized tests, practical tests, portfolios or integrated assessments. At the same time, assessment strategies must be adapted to the specifics of vocational-technical education, with an emphasis on practical competences and simulations of real situations. In addition, it is necessary to develop methodological guides and digital resources designed to support teachers in developing assessment items and calibrating scales.

2. **Active Learning.** Training must include workshops and practical laboratories, in which teachers create, apply and analyze summative tests based on case studies or simulated situations, which would facilitate the exchange of experience and strengthen competences through professional collaboration. This process can be strengthened by practicing providing post-assessment feedback and using the results obtained to adjust teaching.

3. **Duration.** Instead of isolated interventions, it is recommended to implement modular, medium- and extended-term training that would favor immediate applicability in the classroom and continuous reflection on progress. Summative assessment should be conceived as a competence that is systematically strengthened within continuous development plans.

4. **Coherence.** Teacher training should be aligned with educational policy documents, both the National Assessment Standards and the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework. In addition, the application of principles related to fairness, equity and transparency is fundamental to the validity of the assessment process.

5. **Collective Participation.** Inter-institutional projects, in which teachers collaborate to develop and validate summative assessment tools, can generate both standardization and innovation. Mentoring and peer review are also ways in which experienced teachers support the training of novice colleagues. In parallel, online platforms can facilitate the provision of mutual feedback and the continuous improvement of the tools used.

In this context, according to the framework proposed by L. Desimone, it is necessary to highlight *the impact on teachers and students*. Teachers gain confidence and professional competence in the design and application of summative assessments, which leads to rigorous and equitable teaching practice. Students, in turn, benefit from clear, objective and relevant assessments for the development of their professional careers. In addition, the summative assessment process becomes a tool through which the shared responsibility between teachers and students in relation to school progress and performance is strengthened.

Another perspective is found in *the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth formulated by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth* [2], which represents one of the most influential contemporary conceptual frameworks in the field of professional development of teachers. Designed in response to the limitations of traditional linear models, this model proposes a dynamic vision of professional change, recognizing the complexity, contextual nature and multidirectionality of the process.

The authors' approach is based on a solid theoretical foundation, built on the contributions of leading researchers, such as M. G. Fullan & S. Stiegelbauer [4] and T. R. Guskey [5]. D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth [2], emphasize that professional development does not occur through a rigid sequence of stages, but through constant interactions between distinct domains of professional experience. These interactions are mediated by two key processes:

- *reflection* - critical analysis and reinterpretation of experiences and results;
- *enactment* - the transfer of new meanings and knowledge into effective practice.

The model includes four interdependent domains [2]:

1. *Personal domain* - includes the teacher's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and disposition towards change. The transformations produced here are essential for supporting sustainable changes in practice.

2. *Practice domain* - brings together the strategies, methods and techniques used in the educational process. It is the space where change becomes tangible and innovations can be tested and adjusted.

3. *Consequences domain* - reflects the observable results of student learning, including academic performance, motivation, engagement and acquired competences. This domain provides essential data for validating and recalibrating pedagogical changes.

4. *External domain* - integrates external sources and factors, such as training programs, educational policies, material resources, professional networks and the support of the educational community.

The conceptual structure of the model, represented in figure 2, [2, p. 951] highlights the bidirectional connections between the domains, as well as the fundamental processes that support professional change.

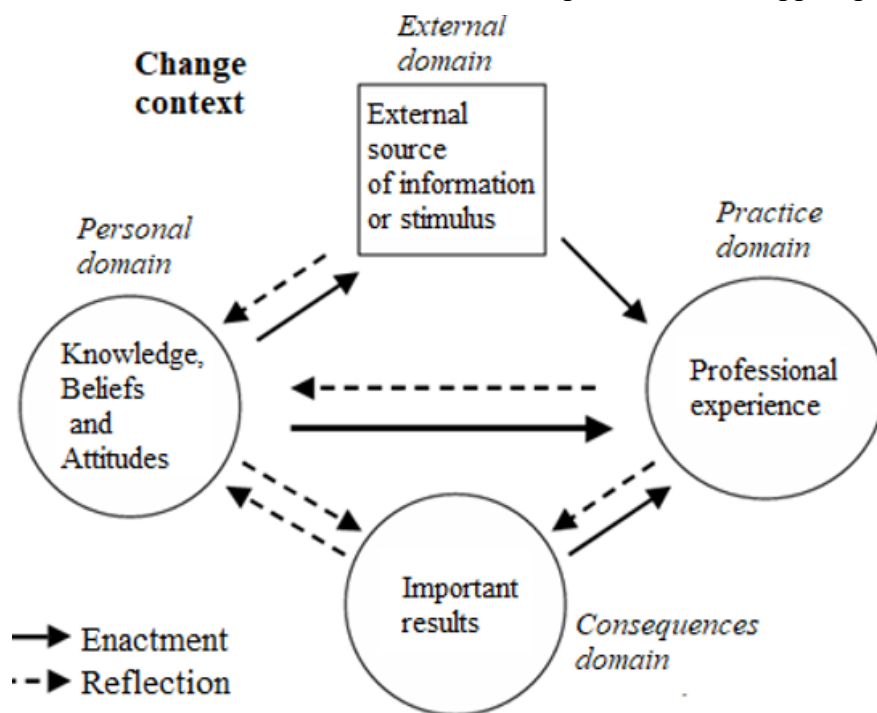


Figure 2. Interconnected Model of Professional Growth [2]

The model performs at least three major functions, each with distinct relevance in research and in the design of continuing education programs [2]:

1. *Analytical function* - constitutes a robust tool for classifying data on professional change of teachers, allowing:

- organizing information according to the four domains of change;
- identifying processes through which transformations in one domain correlate with changes in another domain;
- detecting structural patterns in the professional evolution of teachers.

2. *Predictive function* - facilitates the anticipation of possible sequences of change and development networks that may escape direct observation, supporting:

- formulating hypotheses regarding the mechanisms that can stimulate change;
- identifying innovative directions for professional development.

3. *Interrogative function* - generates relevant research and practice questions, such as:

- “What are the possible paths leading to changes in teachers’ knowledge, skills, values or attitudes?”
- “How does the pre-existing theoretical framework affect the way in which classroom outcomes are interpreted?”
- “What outcomes of a new practice are perceived as significant in the specific context of the teacher?”
- “What are the institutional factors that may limit teachers’ reflection on the effectiveness of their own practices?”

Through these functions, the model avoids both prescriptive rigidity and descriptive passivity, offering a flexible framework that is adaptable to various educational contexts.

A central element of the model is *the change paths*, which do not follow a single pattern, but are configured according to the context of each teacher. The initiation of change can start from the external domain (for example, participation in a training program), determining transformations in the personal domain, which, in turn, influence practice and, consequently, student outcomes.

Starting from the aspects presented above, we conclude that the interconnected model of professional growth constitutes a strategic framework for developing summative assessment competence in teachers in vocational-technical education.

The integration of this model involves:

- Strengthening the personal domain through training programs focused on deepening the concepts, methods and standards of summative assessment;
- Innovating the practical domain by applying summative assessment tools and methods adapted to the specifics of subjects and professions taught;
- Monitoring the consequences domain by analyzing and capitalizing on the real performances of students in order to optimize the instructional-educational process;
- Capitalizing on the external domain by establishing partnerships with the economic environment and using modern educational resources, including digital ones, to ensure the relevance of the assessment in relation to the requirements of the labor market.

Thus, the model developed by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth goes beyond the status of a simple explanatory scheme and constitutes an applicable operational framework, through which the process of developing summative assessment competence in TVE teachers is oriented towards coherence between personal development, innovations in summative assessment practice and improving student learning outcomes.

Another conceptual landmark is *the Model for Effective Teacher Development developed by B. Joyce and B. Showers* [7], which constitutes an essential pillar in the field of continuous teacher training. Its purpose is *to ensure the efficient transfer of knowledge and skills acquired in training programs to pedagogical practice*, so that the impact of training is visible and measurable in student progress.

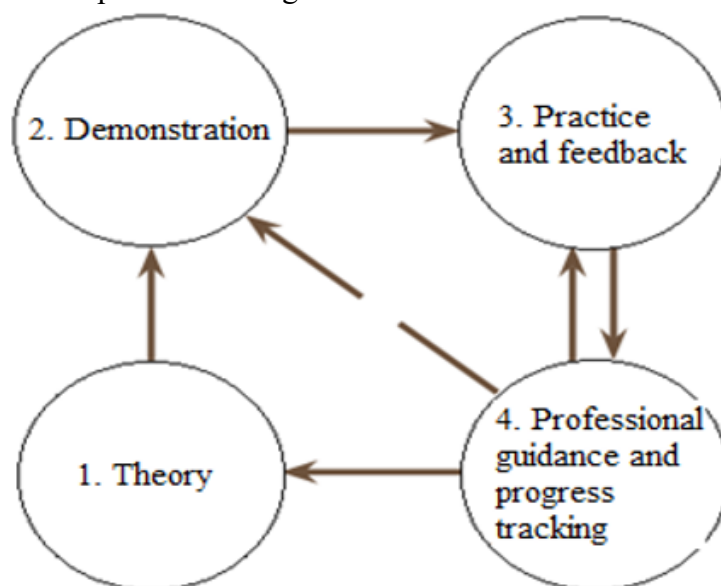


Figure 3. Model for Effective Professional Development elaborated by B. Joyce and B. Showers [7]

The authors identify four fundamental components [1], whose interaction decisively determines the efficiency of the training process and its applicability in real teaching situations. Figure 3 summarizes these components:

1. *Theory* – has the role of providing the conceptual foundation of teaching practices, by defining terms, explaining pedagogical principles and specifying the optimal conditions for implementing innovative strategies. It ensures a deep understanding of the pedagogical foundations and the optimal conditions for application [7].

2. *Demonstration* – involves observing an exemplary practice, through which the trainee can clarify his/her application mechanisms and acquire a concrete representation of the targeted strategies. It provides a concrete and replicable image of the targeted competence, supporting self-assessment [7].

3. *Practice and feedback* – provides the opportunity to practice the demonstrated strategies in a controlled setting, allowing for the receipt of constructive feedback and facilitating the progressive consolidation of skills. It allows the consolidation of skills in a protected context, with the possibility of immediate feedback [7].

4. *Professional guidance and progress tracking* – is based on continuous and reflective peer collaboration, which supports the sustainable integration of new strategies into current practice and fosters their permanent adjustment. It creates a peer framework for reflection, support and continuous adjustment for effective integration [7].

Although professional guidance and progress monitoring are central to the process, it is essential to emphasize that *all components of the model are indispensable for the acquisition of competence*. Without a combination of theoretical study, demonstrative observations, and opportunities for practice with feedback, the development of the skills necessary to apply new pedagogical strategies remains extremely limited. This approach does not imply that the components must be used in a fixed or completely separate sequence [6]. Teachers can initiate the implementation of a new method by analyzing the theoretical rationale, continuing with additional observations and practical exercises under controlled conditions, accompanied by constant feedback. Thus, the transfer of the strategy into the active teaching repertoire is achieved gradually, concomitant with continued participation in pedagogical training and reflection.

In the context of vocational-technical education, the development of teachers' competence in the field of summative assessment can be effectively addressed by applying the components of the Professional Development Model developed by B. Joyce and B. Showers. Based on the above, the following strategies are outlined:

1. *Theory*, which offers specialized modules that present the principles of summative assessment, the types of available tools and techniques adapted to the specifics of vocational-technical education. This stage includes the presentation of case studies and practical examples that illustrate how to apply summative assessment in real teaching contexts, as well as the development of digital resources and methodological guides designed to support teachers in the design of assessment tests.

2. *Demonstration*, consists of sessions in which experienced teachers apply summative assessments in front of colleagues, highlighting pedagogical reasoning, calibration of scales and interpretation of results. This stage allows for the observation of the integration of summative assessments with practical activities and professional competence objectives, providing a concrete model of good practices.

3. *Practice and feedback*, involves the effective practice by teachers of the design and application of assessment tools, both individually and in teams, with immediate feedback from mentors or experienced colleagues. This allows for rapid adjustment of strategies and development of competences through direct experience, reinforcing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for summative assessment.

4. *Professional guidance and progress tracking*, involves mentoring, pedagogical assistance and continuous reflection. More experienced teachers support teachers at the beginning of their careers, monitoring the application of assessments, providing personalized recommendations and facilitating the adjustment of teaching strategies according to the needs of students. Also, monitoring the impact of training on teachers' competencies and student performance, together with the analysis of assessment results, reinforces a culture of continuous improvement and shared responsibility in the educational process.

The model for effective professional development proposed by B. Joyce & B. Showers is distinguished by its robust and scientifically substantiated character, being applicable in diversified training contexts, such as continuing professional development. Thus, by capitalizing on each component within a coherent and systematic whole, the model provides a solid methodological framework for developing teachers' competence to effectively use summative assessment in vocational-technical education, implicitly contributing to increasing the quality of the educational act.

Conclusions

In summary, the analysis of the models presented above reveals that the development of summative assessment competence in teachers in vocational-technical education requires a complex approach, which combines the theoretical with the practical, individual and organizational dimensions. Although the models analyzed differ in their structure and proposed stages, they converge in supporting the idea that continuous training, peer support and critical reflection are fundamental pillars for strengthening summative assessment competence. In addition, several essential directions are outlined: the need to calibrate and harmonize training strategies with the realities of practice; the integration of mentoring processes and interprofessional collaboration as mechanisms to support development; the valorization of experience and critical reflection as ways to internalize change; as well as the creation of a flexible organizational framework, capable of encouraging innovation and adaptability.

In this sense, the models should not be viewed in isolation, but in a complementary relationship, offering theoretical and methodological benchmarks that, when adapted to the specifics of vocational-technical education, can underpin a coherent and sustainable approach to professional training. Thus, the development of summative assessment competence is not only a goal of continuous training, but also a premise for increasing the quality of the educational act and the professional prestige of the teaching staff.

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FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE INTERSECTORAL EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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The intersectoral educational partnership is a key mechanism for addressing complex issues related to child protection and well-being. Effective collaboration among education, health, social assistance, and child protection sectors is essential for risk prevention and integrated support. This study provides a theoretical and methodological foundation for assessing the functionality of such partnerships. It is grounded in the regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova (Government Decision no. 143/2018; Joint Order no. 96/1006/1158/2022) and integrates relevant theoretical perspectives, including collaborative governance, interactionist constructivism, and systems theories. A conceptual evaluation model is proposed, structured across five dimensions: structural, procedural, relational, outcome, and adaptive, with collaborative synergy as an additional indicator. The study also introduces a 30-item analytical tool for assessing interinstitutional collaboration. The proposed framework supports both research and practical evaluation of partnerships aimed at enhancing child well-being.

Keywords: *intersectoral educational partnership, partnership functionality, functionality indicators, referential for evaluating functionality, child well-being.*

REFERENȚIAL DE EVALUARE A FUNCȚIONALITĂȚII PARTENERIATULUI EDUCAȚIONAL INTERSECTORIAL

Parteneriatul educațional intersectorial reprezintă un mecanism esențial pentru abordarea problemelor complexe legate de protecția și bunăstarea copilului. Colaborarea eficientă între domeniile educației, sănătății, asistenței sociale și protecției copilului este indispensabilă pentru prevenirea riscurilor și asigurarea unui suport integrat. Studiul de față oferă o fundamentare teoretică și metodologică pentru evaluarea funcționalității acestor parteneriate. Demersul este ancorat în cadrul normativ al Republicii Moldova (HG nr. 143/2018; Ordinul comun nr. 96/1006/1158/2022) și integrează perspective teoretice relevante, precum guvernarea colaborativă, constructivismul interacționist și teoriile sistemice. Este propus un model conceptual de evaluare, structurat pe cinci dimensiuni: structurală, procesuală, relațională, rezultativă și adaptativă, completate de sinergia colaborativă ca indicator suplimentar. De asemenea, studiul include un instrument analitic de 30 de itemi pentru evaluarea colaborării interinstituționale. Cadrul propus sprijină atât cercetarea, cât și evaluarea practică a parteneriatelor orientate spre îmbunătățirea bunăstării copilului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *parteneriat educațional intersectorial, funcționalitatea parteneriatului, indicatori de funcționalitate, referențial de evaluare a funcționalității, bunăstarea copilului.*

Introduction

In the context of the complexity of social and educational problems that can affect child development, cooperation between institutions responsible for education, health, social assistance and child protection becomes an essential condition for ensuring their well-being. Contemporary approaches in the field of public policies emphasize the fact that problems affecting child development are multidimensional in nature and require integrated interventions, carried out through collaboration among multiple institutional systems. In this sense, the intersectoral educational partnership is conceptualized as a mechanism for coordinating institutional actions and integrating professional resources in order to prevent risk situations and support child development.

However, the existence of a regulatory framework governing inter-institutional cooperation does not automatically guarantee the effective functioning of the partnership. In practice, the level of collaboration between institutions may vary depending on the clarity of institutional roles, the quality of professional communication, the degree of coordination of interventions and the capacity of the system to produce

concrete outcomes for child well-being. From this perspective, it becomes necessary to develop indicators of functionality that allow for the systematic evaluation of how the intersectoral educational partnership functions in practice.

Determining such indicators allows transforming the concept of intersectoral collaboration into an operational construct, amenable to empirical analysis, facilitating the identification of factors that facilitate or constrain the effectiveness of institutional cooperation. At the same time, functionality indicators can have the status of items for a useful analytical tool in monitoring and improving intersectoral cooperation mechanisms, contributing to the development of more effective interventions aimed at ensuring child well-being.

Theoretical and normative foundations of the indicators of the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership

In the process of developing a set of indicators of the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership, the starting point is the current normative framework, which defines the formal mechanisms of cooperation between the relevant areas for child protection and development. The identification of indicators is not carried out arbitrarily, but derives from the provisions of the normative acts that regulate institutional cooperation and the responsibilities of the actors involved in ensuring the well-being of the child.

The analysis of the relevant legal and policy documents highlights the fact that the intersectoral partnership is conceived as a structured institutional mechanism of cooperation, intended to coordinate educational, social, medical and child protection interventions. The legal regulations treat the collaboration between institutions not merely as an administrative interaction, but configure it as an essential tool for preventing risk situations and promoting the well-being of the child.

Government Decision no. 143/2018 [9] on the mechanism of intersectoral cooperation for the primary prevention of risks to the well-being of children is the central pillar of the national regulatory framework. It institutionalizes cooperation between the sectors of education, health, social assistance and public order, establishing clear responsibilities, referral procedures and coordination mechanisms. From a systemic perspective, this regulatory act supports the structural dimension of the functionality of the partnership, as the clarification of competences and the regulation of the information flows contribute to the stability and coherence of institutional cooperation.

The joint order of the relevant ministries no. 96/1006/1158 of 2022 [11] operationalizes the intersectoral mechanism by standardizing the stages of observation, evaluation and intervention planning. The introduction of the joint intervention plan and the responsibility of the case manager strengthens the procedural dimension of the partnership functionality, providing common tools and documented procedures that allow monitoring and evaluation of interventions.

Law no. 140/2013 [10] places the principle of the best interests of the child at the top and establishes the responsibility of public authorities in preventing and managing risk situations. The Education Code [8] establishes collaboration between the educational institution, family and community, strengthening the role of education in the early identification of situations of vulnerability and in coordinating intersectoral interventions.

Therefore, the regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova creates the structural and procedural conditions for inter-institutional cooperation, providing the necessary legal basis for the development of functional indicators of intersectoral educational partnership.

The integration of the normative framework with relevant theoretical perspectives allows for the understanding of intersectoral educational partnership as a complex social system of institutional interactions, normatively regulated and supported by professional cooperative relationships, oriented towards producing sustainable results in the field of child protection. In this sense, the partnership can be conceptualized as a functional system operating within society, bringing together different institutional actors around a common goal - ensuring the development and well-being of the child.

This perspective is also based on theoretical approaches in systems theory, according to which complex social processes are the result of the interaction between interdependent subsystems. In Bertalanffy's vision [2], social systems are made up of elements in dynamic relationships of interdependence, and their functionality depends on the ability of the components to cooperate and exchange information and resources. Applied in

the field of educational and social policies, this perspective highlights the fact that child protection and development cannot be effectively achieved by a single institution, but rather requires the coordination across multiple institutional sectors.

A similar interpretation is also attested in the social systems theory, where Luhmann [6] describes society as a set of interconnected functional systems, which operate through communication and cooperation processes. From this perspective, intersectoral partnership can be understood as a mechanism of integration and coordination between distinct institutional systems - education, health, social assistance or child protection - facilitating the flow of information and the harmonization of interventions. Thus, institutional cooperation becomes an essential condition for the management of complex social problems, thereby strengthening child welfare provision.

In the contemporary literature on collaborative governance, this idea is explicitly developed through the concept of inter-institutional collaboration. Ansell and Gash [1] define collaborative governance as a process in which actors from different sectors participate in joint decision-making processes to solve complex public problems. In the same vein, Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh [4] show that collaborative governance systems represent institutional structures in which organizations cooperate to generate collective results that could not be achieved individually. Within this conceptual framework, the intersectoral educational partnership can be interpreted as a functional collaborative structure, in which only the interaction between institutions produces institutional synergies oriented towards the best interests of the child.

In the field of education, the need for cooperation between different social systems is also highlighted by the ecological theory of human development, developed by Bronfenbrenner [3], which demonstrates that child development is influenced by the interaction between several environmental systems - family, school, community and social institutions. This perspective emphasizes the fact that child well-being is the result of the interaction between different social contexts, which justifies the need for mechanisms for institutional collaboration. Similarly, Epstein's research [5] on the school - family - community partnership highlights the role of cooperation between educational and social actors in supporting child development and creating favorable conditions for educational success.

Therefore, the scholarly literature supports the idea that intersectoral educational partnership is not just an administrative form of collaboration, but can be conceptualized as a functional social system of institutional interaction, within which different institutions cooperate to integrate resources, skills and responsibilities in order to ensure the harmonious development and well-being of the child.

From this perspective, the functionality of the partnership is not reduced to the formal existence of collaboration, but reflects the quality of interactions, the coherence of coordination mechanisms and the capacity of the system to produce relevant results for beneficiaries. This approach allows for the scientific substantiation of the partnership evaluation through specific indicators, which capture the dynamics of institutional relations and the efficiency of cooperation processes.

The relational and cognitive dimensions of collaboration is complemented by the contribution of interactionist constructivism developed within the Geneva School, especially through the works of Jean Piaget [7], which emphasizes that social structures and professional consensus are built through processes of negotiation and progressive balancing of different perspectives. In this sense, the functionality of intersectoral partnership involves not only procedural coordination between institutions, but also the building of a common understanding of the best interests of the child, through professional dialogue and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Within this integrative model, the concept of collaborative synergy becomes a central element in understanding the functionality of the partnership. According to the literature on collaborative governance [4] synergy represents the emergent effect of authentic collaboration, manifested through results that exceed the sum of the individual contributions of the actors involved. It reflects the level of real integration between institutions and the systemic maturity of the partnership.

Thus, including synergy in the conceptual structure of functionality allows capturing the emergent and performative dimension of intersectoral collaboration, highlighting the partnership's capacity to generate integrated and sustainable solutions for complex child welfare issues.

Overall, integrating the normative framework with the theoretical perspectives presented above provides a solid foundation for the formulation of functional indicators capable of integrating both the structural and processual dimension of the partnership, as well as the relational and emergent dimension of intersectoral cooperation. This approach allows the development of a comprehensive analytical model and evaluation of intersectoral educational partnership, oriented towards ensuring the well-being of the child.

The conceptual model of the referential for evaluating the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership is built on the basis of integrating the national regulatory framework with relevant theoretical perspectives in the field of collaborative governance, systems theory and interactionist constructivism. The proposed model conceptualizes the functionality of the partnership as a result of the interaction between institutional structures, cooperation processes, professional relationships and outcomes oriented towards the well-being of the child. In this perspective, the intersectoral educational partnership is analyzed as an open social system, characterized by institutional interdependence, intersectoral communication and adaptive capacity.

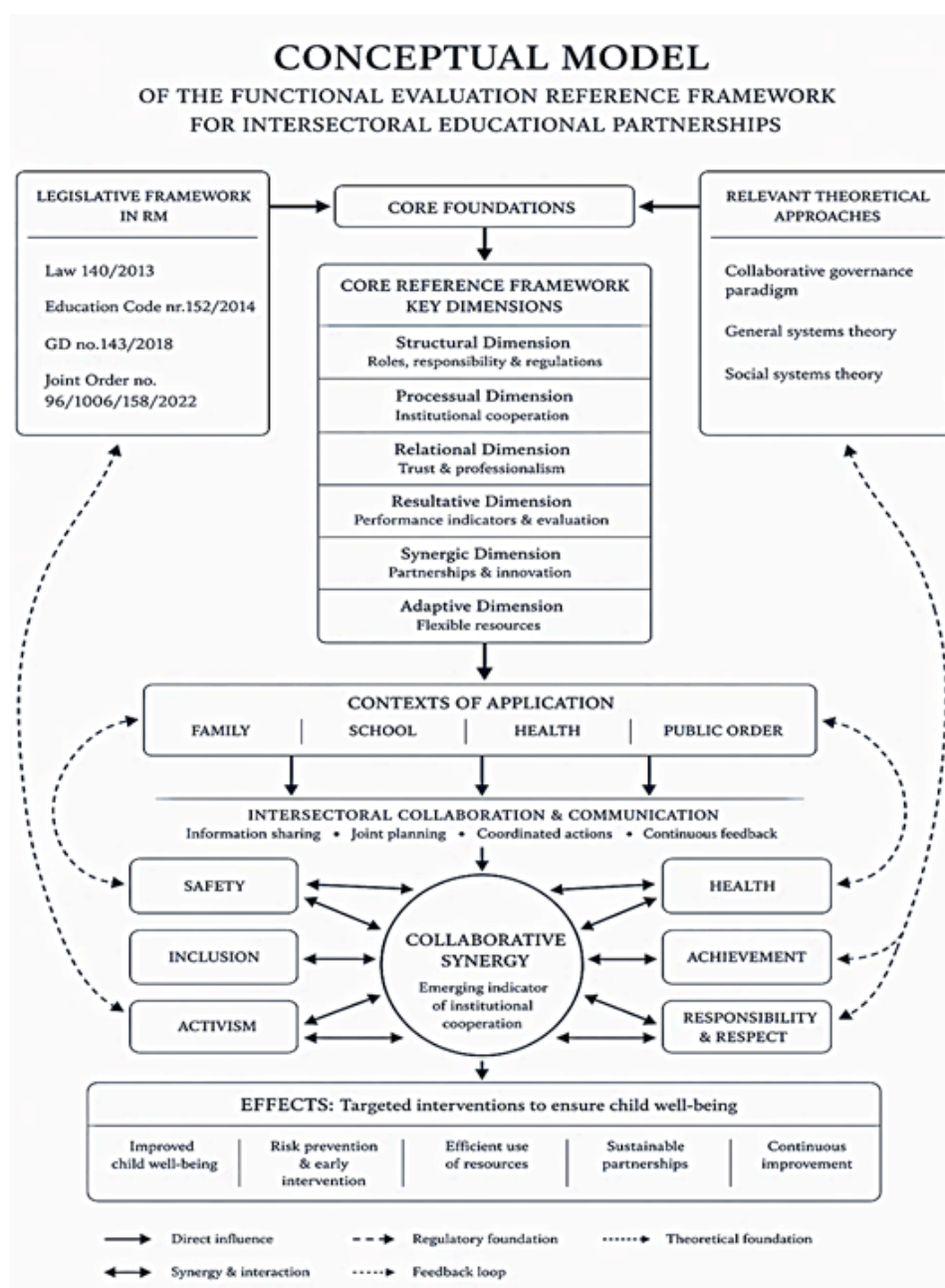


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the framework for evaluating the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership

The conceptual model of the referential for evaluating the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership is developed based on the integration of the national regulatory framework and relevant theoretical perspectives from the specialized literature. The model reflects the systemic approach to institutional collaboration, according to which the functionality of the partnership results from the interaction between the organizational structure of cooperation, inter-institutional coordination processes and professional relationships between the actors involved.

From this perspective, the structural dimension provides the institutional framework of collaboration, the process dimension reflects the dynamics of inter-institutional interactions, and the relational dimension highlights the level of trust and professional consensus. The interaction of these dimensions generates collaborative synergy, conceptualized as an emergent effect of institutional cooperation. Synergy facilitates the production of concrete results on child well-being, reflected in the outcome dimension of the model.

At the same time, the adaptive dimension expresses the partnership's capacity to adjust to legislative, social and institutional changes, ensuring the sustainability of intersectoral cooperation in the long term. Overall, the conceptual model highlights the systemic and dynamic nature of the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership, oriented towards achieving the fundamental objective of public policies in the field of child protection - ensuring the well-being of the child.

These dimensions are justified both theoretically and normatively, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of intersectoral educational partnership.

1. Structural dimension

The structural dimension assesses the organizational and normative framework of the partnership, including the clarity of roles, the delineation of responsibilities, and the existence of formal cooperation mechanisms.

From the perspective of general systems theory [2], the functionality of a system depends on the coherence of its structure and the clearly regulated interdependence of its components. A system with ambiguous roles or overlapping responsibilities generates structural dysfunctions that affect overall performance. Similarly, social systems theory [6] emphasizes the importance of stability of communication and functional delimitation.

The central argument for including this dimension is that without a clear structural framework, collaborative processes become unstable and responsibility becomes diffuse. In a normative context, the provisions of Government Decision no. 143/2018 [9] strengthen this dimension by defining cooperation mechanisms and institutional responsibilities.

2. The procedural dimension

The process dimension examines the dynamics of interactions between institutions: the frequency of communication, the existence of common plans, the implementation of decisions, and the use of standardized tools.

The collaborative governance paradigm [1] defines collaboration as a deliberative process, based on repeated interaction and consensual decision. Emerson and Nabatchi [4] show that collaborative performance is dependent on the quality of the processes, not just the formal existence of the partnership.

The inclusion of this dimension lies in the fact that functionality is not a static attribute, but a result of interactive processes of communication, negotiation and coordination. Quantitative indicators (e.g. frequency of meetings, percentage of joint plans) give objectivity to the process assessment.

3. The relational dimension

The relational dimension aims at the level of trust, consensus and integration of different professional perspectives.

Interactionist constructivism [7] argues that social and cognitive structures are built through negotiation and progressive balancing of differences. In an intersectoral context, effective collaboration requires the ability of actors to overcome sectoral perspectives and build common sense. The relational dimension advocates the idea that without trust and consensus, structural and process mechanisms remain formal and uninternalized. Authentic functionality requires relational coherence and mutual recognition of competencies.

4. Resultant dimension

The outcome dimension evaluates the concrete impact of the collaboration on the child: the effectiveness of interventions, the prevention of risk escalation, and the stability of decisions.

In the collaborative governance regime model [4], performance is assessed in terms of outcomes. Thus, functionality is validated through observable effects, not just intentions or processes.

The argument for this dimension is teleological in nature: a partnership is functional only to the extent that it produces measurable results on the child's well-being. Quantitative indicators (e.g. percentage of decisions implemented, need for revisions) reduce the bias of perceptual assessment.

5. Adaptive dimension

The adaptive dimension analyzes the partnership's ability to adjust to legislative, social and contextual changes, as well as the continuity of collaboration over time.

Systems theory [2] and social systems theory [6] conceptualize social systems as open structures, subject to change and self-regulation. Functionality requires adaptive capacity, otherwise the system becomes rigid and vulnerable. The argument for including this dimension is that sustainability is an essential condition for long-term performance. Indicators such as the duration of the team's operation or the number of joint trainings reflect systemic maturity.

6. Synergistic dimension (intermediate indicator)

The synergistic dimension expresses the emergent level of collaboration, that is, the extent to which common results exceed individual contributions.

Emerson and Nabatchi [4] conceptualize synergy as an emergent effect of collaborative dynamics. From a systemic perspective, synergy represents the emergent property of an integrated system.

The argument for including synergy as a distinct dimension lies in its mediating role between processes and outcomes. Synergy indicates collaborative maturity and advanced level of inter-institutional integration.

Internal consistency of the instrument

The six dimensions are not independent, but interrelated:

- the structure facilitates the process,
- the process influences relationships and communication,
- relationships generate synergy,
- synergy enhances results,
- adaptability ensures sustainability.

This logic reflects a circular systemic model, in which functionality is the result of an integrated dynamic.

In order to highlight the conceptual foundation of the dimensions of the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership and to demonstrate that they derive from theoretical frameworks validated in the specialized literature, it is necessary to correlate them with the main explanatory perspectives that analyze institutional cooperation and the functioning of social systems. In this sense, the following table summarizes the relationship between the relevant theories, the representative authors and their implications for the conceptualization of the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership.

Table 1. Theoretical perspectives on the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership

Theory / theoretical perspective	Representative authors	Central concepts	Implications for partnership functionality	Examples of indicators
General systems theory	Ludwig von Bertalanffy	interdependence, systemic structure, integration	the partnership functions as a system made up of institutional sub-systems	clarity of institutional roles; coherence of the cooperation structure
Social systems theory	Niklas Luhmann	systemic communication, self-regulation, adaptation	functionality depends on the stability of information flows	transmission of information between institutions; regularity of communication

Collaborative governance	Chris Ansell, Alison Gash	deliberative decision, participation, legitimacy	collaboration produces joint decisions and collective responsibility	participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process; professional consensus
Collaborative governance regimes	Kirk Emerson, Tina Nabatchi	collective action, collaborative capacity, results	collaboration produces collective, beneficiary-oriented results	efficiency of inter-institutional interventions; coordination of services
Interactionist constructivism	Jean Piaget	cognitive negotiation, balancing, construction	cooperation involves developing a common understanding between professionals	level of professional consensus; integration of institutional perspectives
Collaborative synergy	Emerson et al.	emergent effect, resource integration	collaboration produces results superior to individual contributions	the impact of joint interventions; the efficiency of collaboration

The correlation of the presented theoretical perspectives allows the identification of the central concepts that underlie the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership. In order to transform these concepts into empirical variables susceptible to measurement, they are transposed into operational indicators of interinstitutional collaboration. The following table presents the process of operationalizing the functionality indicators, highlighting the relationship between the conceptual dimensions, the derived indicators and their theoretical and normative substantiation.

Table 2. Operationalization of the indicators of the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership

Functionality dimension	Indicator	Exemplary item (research instrument)	Theoretical foundation	Relevant regulatory act
Interinstitutional communication	Efficient transmission of information between institutions	“The institutions involved transmit relevant information about the children’s situations in a timely manner.”	Social systems theory - communication as a mechanism for the system’s functioning (Luhmann)	GD 143/2018 - cooperation and exchange of information between institutions
	Clarity of communication channels	“There are clear procedures on how to communicate between education, health and social care specialists.”	Systems theory (Bertalanffy) - structural coherence of subsystems	Government Decree 143/2018
Institutional coordination	Coherence of intersectoral interventions	“The interventions of the institutions involved are coordinated and complementary.”	Collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash) - coordination of collective actions	Government Decree 143/2018
	Clearly defined responsibilities	“The roles and responsibilities of the institutions involved are clearly established.”	Systems theory - delimitation of subsystem functions	Government Decree 143/2018

Use of common tools	Application of the observation and evaluation sheet	“Specialists use common tools to assess the child’s situation.”	Collaborative governance - common tools for collective action	Order 96/1006/1158/2022
	Systematic documentation of cases	“The observation, evaluation and planning process is consistently documented.”	Social systems theory - stability of institutional processes	Order 96/1006/1158/2022
Participation and collaborative decision-making	Involvement of relevant stakeholders	“All relevant institutions participate in the assessment and intervention process.”	Collaborative governance - participation and deliberation (Ansell & Gash)	Government Decree 143/2018
	Professional consensus in decisions	“Decisions on interventions are made in consultation with all specialists involved.”	Interactionist constructivism (Piaget) - negotiating perspectives	Government Decree 143/2018
Integration of interventions	Coherence of the intervention plan	“Intervention plans reflect the contribution of all institutions involved.”	Systems theory - subsystem integration	Order 96/1006/1158/2022
	Continuity of interventions	“The institutions’ interventions are carried out continuously and in a coordinated manner.”	Collaborative governance - the effectiveness of collective action	Government Decree 143/2018
Collaborative synergy	Efficiency of joint actions	“Collaboration between institutions produces more effective results than separate interventions.”	The concept of collaborative synergy (Emerson, Nabatchi)	Government Decree 143/2018
	The impact of collaboration on child well-being	“Inter-institutional collaboration contributes to improving the child’s situation.”	The collaborative governance paradigm - results orientation	Government Decree 143/2018

The indicators thus identified constitute the basis of the methodological operationalization process of the Framework for the Evaluation of the Functionality of Intersectoral Educational Partnership. In order to highlight the direct relationship between the theoretical concepts, the normative framework, the dimensions of functionality and the items used in the evaluation instrument, an operationalization matrix was developed. This synthesizes the correspondence between the theoretical and normative frameworks, the functionality indicators and the formulation of the empirical items of the evaluation instrument. The methodological approach adopted in this evaluation follows a deductive logic:

Theoretical concept and normative act → Functional dimension → Indicator → Measurable items

Table 3. Operationalization matrix of the functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership

Theoretical concept and Normative Act	Functional dimension	Indicator	Measurable items (representative example)
Ludwig von Bertalanffy; GD 143/2018	structure	Clarity of roles	“The roles of the institutions involved are clearly defined.”

Government Decree 143/2018	structure	Recording responsibilities	“In what percentage of cases were the assignments recorded in writing?”
Niklas Luhmann	structure	Stability of the procedural framework	“There are formal approved procedures for cooperation.”
Chris Ansell; Alison Gash	Procedural	Frequency of interactions	“How many intersectoral meetings have taken place in the last 6 months?”
Kirk Emerson & Tina Nabatchi	Procedural	Joint intervention plan	“In how many cases was there a common plan?”
Government Decree 143/2018; Order 96/1006/1158/2022	Procedural	Implementation on time	“What percentage of interventions were completed on time?”
Jean Piaget	Relational	Inter-institutional trust	“There is mutual trust between institutions.”
Piaget (constructivism)	Relational	Integrating perspectives	“Different professional perspectives are negotiated.”
Collaborative governance	Relational	Decision-making consensus	“The opinions expressed influence the final decision.”
Emerson & Nabatchi (2015)	resultative	Impact on the child	“The interventions produce visible results for the child.”
UNICEF Framework	resultative	Risk prevention	“Collaboration helps prevent risk escalation.”
Emerson & Nabatchi	resultative	Stability of decisions	“How many decisions required review?”
Luhmann (self-regulation)	Adaptive	Adjustment capacity	“The partnership adapts to legislative changes.”
Systems theory	Adaptive	Operating time	“How long has the team been operating?”
Government Decree 143/2018	Adaptive	Continuity of collaboration	“To what extent does collaboration continue after the intervention?”
Emerson & Nabatchi	Synergy (intermediate)	Complementarity	“Collaboration produces superior results than separate actions.”
Emerson & Nabatchi	synergy	Institutional integration	“Institutions complement each other’s competences.”

The analysis carried out within the operationalization matrix highlights how the concept of functionality of intersectoral educational partnership is transposed from a theoretical and normative level into operational indicators susceptible to empirical measurement. By simultaneously reporting to the relevant theoretical perspectives - general systems theory, social systems theory, collaborative governance paradigm and interactionist constructivism - as well as to the national normative framework regulating inter-institutional cooperation in the field of child protection, the identified functional dimensions were converted into concrete indicators of cooperation between institutions. Although the conceptual model also includes the synergistic dimension, it is not treated as an independent dimension in the structure of the empirical instrument, but as an emerging indicator of the interaction between the structural, processual and relational dimensions.

In this logic, each indicator derived from theoretical concepts and provisions of normative acts has been transformed into a set of measurable items, capable of capturing the observable manifestations of intersectoral

collaboration. Thus, elements such as the clarity of institutional roles, the frequency of interactions, the level of professional trust, the effectiveness of interventions or the capacity to adapt the partnership are operationalized through items that reflect concrete situations encountered in the practice of interinstitutional cooperation.

Therefore, the operationalization matrix presented above constitutes the conceptual and methodological foundation of the evaluation tool, demonstrating the direct relationship between theoretical and normative frameworks, functionality indicators, and empirical item formulation.

The operationalization matrix highlights how the theoretical concepts and functionality indicators are translated into empirical items of the research instrument. Continuing this methodological approach, the derived items are integrated into a framework for evaluating the integrated framework of functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership. The framework presented in the following table represents the empirical instrument used in the research to measure the level of functionality of inter-institutional cooperation. The conceptual validity of the instrument is supported by deriving the indicators directly from established theoretical frameworks and from the provisions of normative acts regulating intersectoral cooperation. The correlation between theoretical concepts, functional dimensions and empirical items allows ensuring the internal coherence of the analyzed construct. In this sense, the tool reflects the multidimensional structure of the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership and allows for the integrated investigation of the structural, procedural, relational and outcome components of institutional cooperation.

Reference for evaluating the integrated framework of functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership

Scale used for evaluative items:

1 - Totally disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neither agree nor disagree; 4 - Agree; 5 - Totally agree.

D1. STRUCTURAL DIMENSION

(clarity of roles, formal mechanisms, stability of the regulatory framework)

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
1	The roles of the institutions involved are clearly defined.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Responsibilities are respected according to the regulatory framework.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	There are formal approved procedures for intersectoral cooperation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	In what percentage of cases were the assignments recorded in writing? ☐ below 50% ☐ 50-70% ☐ 71-90% ☐ above 90%					
5	In how many situations did overlapping responsibilities occur? ☐ frequently ☐ occasionally ☐ rarely ☐ never					
6	Each institution fulfills its duties established in the intervention plan.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D2. PROCEDURAL DIMENSION

(frequency of interactions, decision-making transparency, use of common tools)

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
7	Relevant information about the child is transmitted in a timely manner.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	There are formal and informal channels used constantly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	In how many cases in the last 6 months was there a joint intervention plan? ☐ below 25% ☐ 25-50% ☐ 51-75% ☐ above 75%					
10	How many intersectoral meetings have taken place in the last 6 months? ☐ 0-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ over 6					
11	In what percentage of cases were the interventions implemented within the established deadline? ☐ below 50% ☐ 50-80% ☐ 81-95% ☐ above 95%					
12	Decisions are taken through real consultation between institutions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D3. RELATIONAL DIMENSION

(trust, consensus, usefulness of collaboration)

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
13	There is mutual trust between institutions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Different professional perspectives are negotiated and integrated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	The opinions expressed effectively influence final decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Professional disagreements are managed constructively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Collaboration is perceived as useful in managing complex cases.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	The best interests of the child are promoted as a common principle.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D4. RESULTATIVE DIMENSION

(effectiveness, impact on child well-being)

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
19	Intersectoral interventions produce visible results for the child.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	In what percentage of cases were decisions formally recorded? ☐ below 60% ☐ 60-80% ☐ 81-95% ☐ above 95%					
21	In how many cases was the child/family consulted before the decision was made? ☐ never ☐ rarely ☐ frequently ☐ almost always					
22	How many decisions required further review? ☐ none ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-5 ☐ over 5					
23	Interventions are adapted to the evolution of the child's situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	Collaboration helps prevent risk escalation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D5. ADAPTIVE DIMENSION / SUSTAINABILITY

(adjustment capacity, continuity, systemic learning)

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
25	Continuous collaboration is supported by consolidated professional relationships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	There are procedures that ensure continuity of collaboration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	How long has the team been operating in this formula? ☐ under 1 year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ over 5 years					
28	How many joint training activities have taken place in the last year? ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ over 3					
29	In what percentage of cases did collaboration continue after the initial intervention? ☐ below 40% ☐ 40-60% ☐ 61-80% ☐ above 80%					
30	The partnership demonstrates the capacity to adapt to legislative or social changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SCORE KEY

Dimension score: 6-30 points

Total instrument score: 30-150 points

Functionality levels: 30-69 → Low functionality; 70-109 → Moderate functionality; 110-150 → High functionality

The framework for evaluating the integrated framework of functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership was built on the basis of a multidimensional approach, which allows investigating institutional cooperation both from the perspective of the formal structure of the partnership, and from the perspective of interaction processes, professional relationships and the results generated on the well-being of the child. Such an approach is justified by the complexity of the phenomenon analyzed, since the functionality of the

intersectoral partnership cannot be reduced to the existence of institutional regulations or to the procedural compliance of the actors involved, but involves the integration of several dimensions that reflect the real dynamics of cooperation between institutions.

In this sense, the referential structure was organized into five complementary dimensions: the structural dimension, the process dimension, the relational dimension, the outcome dimension, and the adaptive or sustainability dimension. Each of these dimensions captures an essential component of the functionality of the partnership and contributes to the configuration of an integrative perspective on how inter-institutional collaboration supports the assurance of child well-being.

From a methodological point of view, the proposed referential combines Likert-scale items with frequency or proportion items, which allows capturing both the perceptions of professionals involved in the partnership and concrete manifestations of inter-institutional cooperation. This combination contributes to increasing the validity of the instrument, as it reduces the risk of an exclusively perceptual assessment and allows the correlation of subjective assessments with operational indicators of collaboration.

Overall, the developed framework presents an analytical tool capable of identifying the functionality of intersectoral educational partnership in a systemic and integrated manner. By simultaneously investigating the structural, processual, relational, outcome and adaptive dimensions, the tool allows for a complex assessment of institutional cooperation and the identification of factors that facilitate or limit the efficiency of intersectoral interventions aimed at child well-being.

Conclusions

1. Intersectoral educational partnership can be conceptualized as a functional social system, in which institutions in the fields of education, health, social assistance and child protection interact to integrate resources, skills and responsibilities in order to ensure the well-being of the child. This systemic perspective allows for the understanding of inter-institutional collaboration as a dynamic process of coordination and adaptation between interdependent social subsystems.

2. Integrating the national normative framework with theoretical perspectives from the specialized literature - the collaborative governance paradigm, interactionist constructivism, General systems theory, social systems theory provides a solid conceptual basis for analyzing the functionality of intersectoral educational partnerships. This interdisciplinary approach allows for the explanation of how institutional mechanisms and professional relationships contribute to the effectiveness of intersectoral cooperation.

3. The functionality of the intersectoral educational partnership is manifested through the interaction of several complementary dimensions, namely the structural, processual, relational, resultative and adaptive dimensions. The integrated analysis of these dimensions highlights the fact that the efficiency of institutional collaboration depends both on the existence of formal cooperation mechanisms, and on the quality of professional relationships and the capacity of the system to produce concrete results for beneficiaries.

4. Collaborative synergy is an emerging indicator of partnership functionality, reflecting the level of real integration between institutions and their capacity to generate results superior to individual interventions. Therefore, assessing synergy allows identifying the degree of maturity of inter-institutional collaboration and its potential to produce integrated and sustainable interventions.

5. Operationalizing the functionality of the partnership through indicators and empirical items allows the transformation of the theoretical concept into a measurable construct, facilitating the systematic analysis of intersectoral cooperation. The tool developed within the research offers the possibility of multidimensional evaluation of institutional collaboration and identification of factors that influence the efficiency of cooperation mechanisms oriented towards child well-being.

6. The multidimensional approach to the functionality of intersectoral educational partnerships contributes to the development of an analytical framework relevant to research and institutional practice, providing premises for improving cooperation mechanisms between institutions involved in child protection. In this sense, the systematic assessment of the functionality of the partnership can support the development of more effective educational and social policies, oriented towards risk prevention and strengthening child well-being.

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TEACHERS' TRAINING AS A MECHANISM OF STRENGTHENING COMPETENCES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENT CREATIVITY

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The article analyzes the continuous professional development of teachers as a strategic mechanism for strengthening the competencies necessary for fostering creativity among primary school students. Based on the normative framework of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the study highlights the transformation of institutional mechanisms of professionalization, marked by the transition from the traditional model of territorial pedagogical circles to integrated training structures within educational institutions. Continuous professional development is interpreted as a systemic process of updating and operationalizing professional competencies in correlation with professional standards and the orientations of the National Curriculum. The analysis includes examples of formative practices that employ inductive, deductive, transductive, and mixed educational strategies integrated with digital resources, aimed at stimulating cognitive flexibility and creative problem solving. The results indicate that the development of students' creativity depends on the coherence between curricular design, teachers' competencies, and the implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: *continuing education; professional skills; creativity; educational strategies; national curriculum; pedagogical innovation; primary education.*

FORMAREA PROFESORILOR CA MECANISM DE CONSOLIDARE A COMPETENȚELOR PENTRU DEZVOLTAREA CREATIVITĂȚII ELEVILOR

Articolul analizează formarea profesională continuă a cadrelor didactice ca mecanism strategic de consolidare a competențelor necesare dezvoltării creativității elevilor din învățământul primar. Pe baza cadrului normativ din România și Republica Moldova, studiul evidențiază transformarea mecanismelor instituționale de profesionalizare, prin trecerea de la modelul tradițional al cercurilor pedagogice teritoriale la structuri formative integrate la nivelul instituțiilor de învățământ. Formarea continuă este interpretată ca proces sistemic de actualizare și valorificare a competențelor profesionale, în corelație cu standardele profesionale și cu orientările Curriculumului Național. Analiza include exemple de practici formative care utilizează strategii educaționale inductive, deductive, transductive și mixte, integrate cu resurse digitale, orientate spre stimularea flexibilității cognitive și a rezolvării creative a problemelor. Rezultatele indică faptul că dezvoltarea creativității elevilor depinde de coerența dintre proiectarea curriculară, competențele profesorului și implementarea abordărilor pedagogice inovatoare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educație continuă; competențe profesionale; creativitate; strategii educaționale; curriculum național; inovare pedagogică; învățământ primar.*

Introduction

The continuous professional training of the teaching staff is part of the general paradigm of designing, developing and implementing the curriculum, constituting a systemic and permanent process of updating, consolidating and operationalizing the professional skills necessary to achieve the educational goals defined at the level of the National Curriculum. In the context of the profound transformations of contemporary education, marked by accelerated digitalization, orientation towards competences, the imperatives of sustainable development and the dynamics of the knowledge society, the efficiency of the educational process can no longer be conceived exclusively through the prism of the designed curriculum or the individual experience of the teacher, but it is conditioned by the coherence between the curricular design, the professional skills of the teacher and his ability to implement innovative educa-

tional strategies ‘, oriented towards developing students’ creativity. The National Curriculum explicitly formulates the graduate profile as autonomous in learning, creative, cognitively flexible, able to integrate diverse experiences and respond to the challenges of contemporary society [1]. In this respect, continuing education becomes a strategic mechanism of professionalization, organically integrated into the curricular architecture, as the competences of the students are the result of the way in which the curricular ends, being transposed into practice through the teaching strategies-learning.

Research methodology as a structural component

The methodological design of this study is grounded in the epistemological principles of educational sciences, integrating both documentary analysis and the examination of applied pedagogical practices. The research adopts a descriptive analytical approach, aiming to investigate the relationship between continuous professional development and the development of student creativity in primary education. The methodological framework is structured around three complementary dimensions.

First, the study employs **document analysis** of the normative frameworks regulating teacher professional development in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, including professional standards, curricular documents, methodological guidelines, and institutional regulations [1; 3; 6; 7; 10; 12]. This analysis enables the identification of conceptual orientations, structural transformations, and institutional mechanisms that shape the professionalization of teachers and their capacity to foster creativity.

Second, the research integrates **content analysis of training programs** completed by teachers, focusing on the structure, objectives, competencies targeted, and pedagogical strategies promoted within the courses “Creativity – a necessity in school and nonformal activities”, “Digital education – a new challenge” and “Creative teacher in the digital age”. This methodological step allows the examination of how inductive, deductive, transductive, and mixed strategies are operationalized in professional development contexts and how they contribute to strengthening teachers’ creative pedagogical competencies.

Third, the study includes **analysis of applied pedagogical activities**, such as the demonstration lesson presented within the Pedagogical Meeting and the methodological activities conducted in the Curriculum Committee. These activities are examined as empirical evidence of how continuous training translates into classroom practice, particularly in relation to the integration of digital tools, interdisciplinary approaches, and active participatory strategies aimed at stimulating divergent thinking and creative problem solving among students.

The triangulation of these methodological components ensures the coherence and validity of the research, offering a comprehensive perspective on the structural role of continuous professional development in enhancing teachers’ competencies for fostering creativity. By correlating normative analysis, training program evaluation, and applied pedagogical practice, the study provides a robust foundation for understanding the systemic mechanisms through which teacher training contributes to the development of creative capacities in primary education.

Continuous training as an object of curricular development

In the logic of the modern curricular paradigm, the curriculum is defined as an educational theory and practice that systemically orientates and integrates educational goals, content, instructional strategies and evaluation strategies, expressing the indissoluble unity between these components. This perspective allows the understanding of continuous training as a constituent part of the curricular process, or as the competencies of the teaching staff, the strategies used in the teaching activity and the capacity for pedagogical innovation being directly reflected in the taught curriculum, an essential component in the evaluation of curricular implementation. Professional standards for the teaching career, developed in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova, configure the profile of the teacher as a planner and organizer of the teaching process-learning evaluation, facilitator of learning, developer of educational resources, evaluator, mentor and promoter of innovation [9; 12; 13]. The exercise of these roles requires a systematic training process, correlated with curricular goals and real needs of students, which justifies the integration of continuous training into the whole curricular development mechanisms.

The efficiency of student's skills development can no longer be conceived exclusively through the prism of the designed curriculum and the experience of the teacher, the impact on student performance is conditioned by the continuous updating of the professional skills and of the ability to adapt to contemporary educational dynamics. The constant and permanent development of the professional competences of the teachers becomes an important mechanism in ensuring the quality of the educational process, while the competences of the pupils are the result of the way in which the curricular ends and are operationalized through adequate educational strategies and grounded pedagogical interventions [9].

From this perspective, efficiency is an essential criterion for assessing the quality of pedagogical intervention and its impact on student's progress. Orientation towards educational performance requires teachers to assume a coherent set of professional skills necessary to carry out the teaching activity at quality standards. The competence-centered paradigm underlines the set of professional standards for teaching functions, which structure the professional profile of the teaching staff and define, in Article 167, the main roles assumed in the profession: a. planner and organizer of the teaching-learning-evaluation process; b. facilitator of learning; c. connector between all beneficiaries of the education process, direct or indirect; d. developer of educational resources and current assessment tools; e. support for students, through counseling and mentoring; f. promoter of innovation in education [9, p. 6], [12].

These dimensions cannot be maintained at an optimal level without a systematic training process, allowing to update pedagogical skills in relation to the new educational paradigms (student-centered learning [11], education for sustainable development [15], professional skills development [13], digitization [14]. In this conceptual context, the analysis will focus on the role „of the permanent professional development of the teaching staff” [6], considered a strategic mechanism for strengthening pedagogical skills, oriented towards the development of students' skills, and an objective of continuing professional training.

A central element of the theoretical foundation is the relationship between curriculum and continuing education. The curriculum, in the current sense, is not just a normative document, but an educational paradigm that integrates the goals, contents, instructional strategies and evaluation strategies into a coherent and dynamic ensemble. This paradigm assumes a holistic approach to the educational process, in which all components are interdependent and influence each other. In this respect, continuing education becomes a constituent element of curricular development, as the teacher's competences directly influence the quality of curriculum implementation, and the implementation of the curriculum in turn determines the training needs of a teacher [11].

Creativity, as curricular finality and transversal competence, occupies a central place in the architecture of the National Curriculum for primary education, being considered an essential dimension of the graduate's profile. The curricular documents emphasize that the student must become autonomous in learning, able to manifest cognitive flexibility, originality and innovative problem-solving ability, integrate diverse experiences and adapt to the challenges of contemporary society [1]. This vision of creativity presupposes a pedagogical approach aimed at stimulating divergent thinking, developing cognitive flexibility, cultivating imagination and encouraging free exploration, experimentation and expression.

In this context, the continuous training of teachers becomes a fundamental mechanism for developing the creativity of students, as it is the teacher who designs and implements educational strategies aimed to stimulating creativity. Specialized literature highlights that the development of student's creativity is conditional on the teacher's competencies to create open, flexible and stimulating learning contexts, to use actively participatory methods, to integrate digital resources and to capitalize on the interdisciplinary potential of content [8].

From a theoretical perspective, creativity is defined as a complex, multidimensional ability that involves cognitive, affective and motivational processes, as well as environmental and experiential factors. Creativity involves cognitive flexibility, divergent thinking, originality, innovative problem-solving, ability and the ability to integrate diverse experiences into new knowledge structures. This definition highlights the fact that the development of creativity cannot be reduced to the use of isolated methods, but requires a coherent, integrated and systemic pedagogical approach, aimed at stimulating the creative potential of each student [8].

At the same time, the development of student creativity presupposes the existence of a teacher capable of harnessing the creative potential of students, creating stimulating learning contexts and using educational strategies oriented towards the development of creativity. The professional standards for the teaching career emphasize that the teacher must be able to design and implement innovative educational strategies, use digital resources, create collaborative learning contexts and evaluate student progress through alternative methods such as portfolios, projects and creative products [9; 12].

In this respect, continuous training becomes an essential mechanism for developing the professional skills of teachers, oriented to stimulate the creativity of students. Continuous training programs must be designed in accordance with curricular goals, professional standards and the real needs for teachers, integrated with innovative educational strategies, harness of digital resources and promoted interdisciplinary approaches. Continuing training must also be a permanent, systemic and coherent process, integrated into the institutional development mechanism and supported by structures such as the Commission for Training and Development in Didactic Career [10].

Applied dimensions of continuous training and their relevance for the development of student creativity

In Romania, the School curriculum committee is responsible for advising teachers in the elaboration of didactic planning and designing periodic analysis of school's performance and the elaboration of remedial plans, having a permanent character, with activity throughout the whole school year. Pedagogical meetings are structures organized at the county or regional level and bring together teachers from the same specialty or field of activity in order to provide a framework for collaboration and exchanging the experiences between the teachers, facilitating the updating of knowledge and promoting good practices in education. „Periodic training/skills improvement programs in the field/specialization areas corresponding to the teaching functions through initial training”, provided in the Methodology of continuous training of the teaching staff in the pre-university education (since 20 October 2009) [3], were renamed, in the Framework Methodology from the 5th of May 2025, „programs for development in the teaching career”, based on professional standards for the teaching profession and on professional skills appropriate to the teaching roles and professional profile of the teacher.

A transversal dimension of personality, indispensable for adapting and innovation in a knowledge society, having a central role in the architecture of the National Curriculum, and also integrated at the level of key competences and educational goals, is creativity. The National Curriculum explicitly formulates the conditions which can help each child in the educational system become:

- autonomous in learning, able to manage its own formative path;
- creative, showing cognitive flexibility, originality and innovative problem-solving ability;
- open to lifelong learning, integrating formal and non-formal experiences into a continuous process of personal development; and
- ready to face the challenges of the ever-changing global society, the knowledge economy and the imperatives of sustainable development [1].

The achievement of these curricular endings is conditioned by the competences of the teaching staff to design and implement educational strategies systematically oriented towards valorization and stimulating the creative potential of each student. In this perspective, the professional training of the teachers is configured as a „structural framework of professionalization” [13] through which the curricular objectives regarding the development of creativity are operationalized and integrated into coherent pedagogical approaches, ensuring the congruence between the educational ideal, the curricular design and the teaching practices.

Pedagogical meetings, in the Methodology of continuous training for teaching staff in pre-university education in 2009 [3], defined as „synthesis forums, evaluation of the results of the educational process and the factors that determine its effectiveness, communication and capitalization of didactic experiences and conclusions of pedagogical research carried out by teachers, critical and constructive evaluation of teaching-learning methods of the content and ways of organizing the educational process, launching educational projects with impact at the area and county level” (art. 8), the task of organizing the methodological-scientific

tific and psych pedagogical activities at local, area or county level, by the status granted by „main form of organization of continuous training/improvement of teaching staff in the pre-university education” (art. 12).

The continuous training of the teaching staff has a special relevance when analyzed in terms of its applied dimensions, as they represent the space where the didactic professionalization becomes visible, measurable and with direct impact on the development of the students’ creativity. In the current context of education, marked by accelerated digitalization, curricular reconfigurations and orientation towards competences, continuous training can no longer be conceived as a theoretical or occasional approach, but as a systemic, coherent and integrated process that directly influences the quality of the educational act and the way in which students develop their creativity, their cognitive flexibility and their autonomy in learning [1; 11]. The applicative dimension of continuing education thus becomes an essential indicator in the efficiency of teaching professionalization, whereas it reflects the way in which teachers manage to translate into practice the competences acquired in the framework of up-skilling programs.

Within the Pedagogical Meeting of teachers, held at the Gymnasium School. Cantacuzino” from Pascani, was presented a mathematical demonstration lesson according to the integrated approach model of educational strategies designed within the research carried out in order to develop the creativity of primary school pupils (date 24.11.2023). The theme established by the Iasi County School Inspectorate in 2023, “Adapting the curricular design to the context of blended-learning”, generated a framework of reflection and pedagogical analysis, challenging the teachers to reconfigure their didactic approach by integrating digital tools, interactive strategies and learning situations centered on activating the creative potential of students. This activity was attended by teachers from all schools in the Pascani area and from the suburbs assigned to the center where the Iordache Gymnasium School belongs. The integrated lesson from the subject „Mathematics and exploring the environment” had as theme the consolidation of the notions of addition and subtraction in the 0-10 concenter (1st grade). During the lesson there were integrated the subjects Communication in Romanian language, Personal development, Music and movement and Visual arts and practical skills. The combination of traditional methods with online digital resources (Jigsaw Planet, Chatter Kids, liveworksheets, Wordwall, YouTube) gave the participating teachers a practical example of how to develop students’ creativity, using the educational strategies directives, non-directive and semi-directive.

In the framework regulation from 6th of August 2024 on the organization and functioning of pre-university education units, [10] the structure closest to the tasks of the Pedagogical Meeting is the Commission for Training and Development in the Didactic Career (CFDCD), established with a permanent character at the level of educational units (art. 71). Through its tasks, the Commission for training and development in the teaching career „identifies the continuing training needs of the teaching staff, the programs and the projects aimed at the continuous training of the teaching staff and monitors the career development of the teaching staff, the participation of the teaching staff in programs and projects of continuous training”, „plans, organizes and carries out workshops, seminars, lessons learned collaboratively, interactions, case studies, exchanges of experience, and so on at the level of the educational establishment” (art. 71, pct. 15, letter d) and „are active throughout the school year” (art. 71, pct. 14).

The essential difference between the two structures lies in the level of the organization and of the way of the continuous training’s institutional integration. Pedagogical meetings operate mainly at territorial level (city’s or county’s area), configuring a coordination framework external to the educational establishment. The commission for training and development in the teaching career is established annually at the level of each school unit and is permanent. This transformation reflects an institutional reconfiguration of the professionalization mechanisms, by internalizing the formative functions previously exercised within the pedagogical circles. The CFDCD takes over the tasks of analyzing, planning, organizing and monitoring the training activities, integrating them into a stable structure, with a strategic role in the management of professional development. In this context, the dynamics of continuous training evolves from a territorial model of coordination to an institutional model centered on school unity, where responsibility for the development of professional skills is assumed directly at the level of the educational organization.

The Commission that has retained its permanent function, according to the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of pre-university education units (2024), is the Commission for the curriculum,

also established by the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of pre-university education units since 2020. The tasks of the Curriculum Committee concern „activities related to the process of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum at the level of the educational establishment, ensuring coherence between national curricular documents and their application in the institutional context” [7].

In the Commission for curriculum of 3rd and 4th grade teachers, from 20th of May 2022, the report entitled „Develop the creativity of the small school by using active-participative strategies” was sustained. The presentation of the report within the Commission of the curriculum focused on the phenomenon of creativity and highlighted aspects of relevance of educational content and strategies applied in the educational process, corresponding to the curriculum plan developed for the primary education cycle. Through the presented methodology, it was emphasized that the development of creativity is an actionable approach that facilitates problem solving and emotional development of the student of small school age. Active-participatory strategies such as play, project learning, brainstorming and the technique of the six thinking hats have been subject to analysis in terms of developing the creative profile of the young school-age student, stimulating student engagement and divergent thinking. These methods encourage collaboration, experimentation and free expression of ideas, thus contributing to forming a dynamic educational environment and to the development of skills essential to the future success of students.

In Romania, the main structural form of professionalization certifying career progress is the didactic degrees (Definitivat, 2nd Degree, 1st Degree) and the professional conversion/reconversion programs [4]. The Framework methodology from 5th of May 2025 on the type of programs for development in the teaching career, program quality assurance and the system for acquiring transferable credits for pre-university education teachers [3] established the type of professional development programs in the teaching career, as well as the general, institutional, conceptual and procedural framework for quality assurance of these programs and their categories of providers.

The applied dimensions of *continuous training* are also directly reflected in the training programs that we have supported as a trainer, programs that have contributed to the teachers’ professional skills development and to the transformation of the pedagogical approach into a creative, innovative and tailored process for the students’ needs.

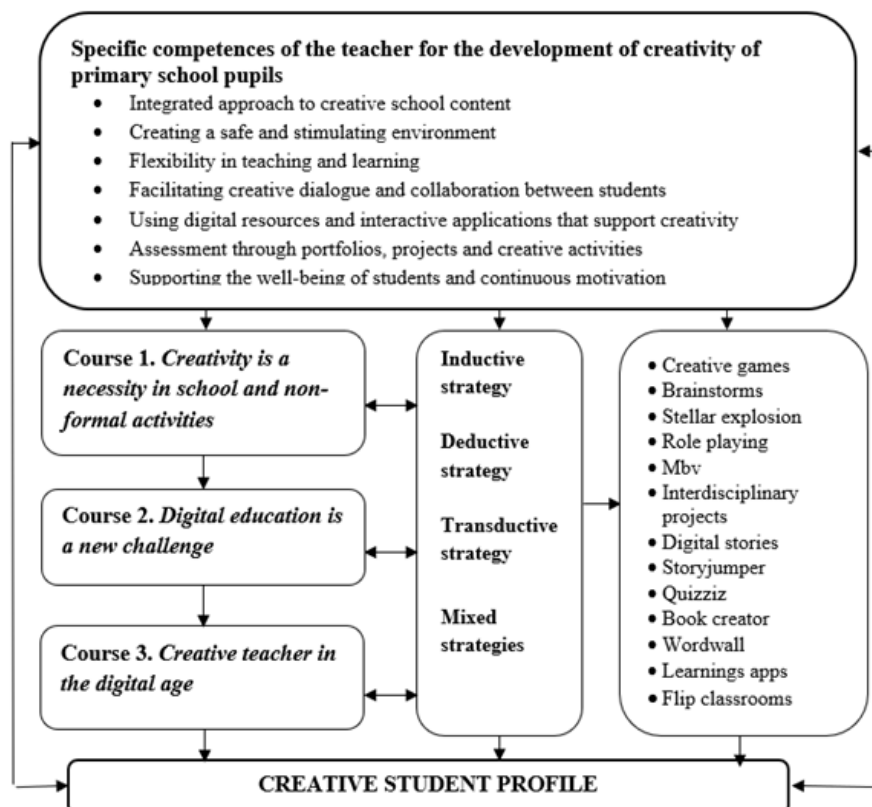


Figure 1. Continuous training of teachers through refresher courses

The improvement programs gathered the teachers from the whole county to develop the specific competences regarding the application of educational strategies and to develop the creative profile of the primary educational student by following three courses:

1. Creativity is a necessity in school and in non-formal activities.
2. Digital education - a new challenge.
3. Creative teacher in the digital age.

Distinct elements from *educational strategies*, were designed to be implemented, as *inductive, deductive and transductive reasoning strategies*, following the technology of the systemic approach, generated by the objectives and tasks of the creative learning activity: the structure of the creative learning activity; types of educational relationships in the creative learning activity; ways of approaching the creative learning activity; the results of the approach to the creative learning activity (after D. Patrascu [8, p. 397]).

„Creativity – a necessity in school and in non-formal activities”, held in the school year 2021–2022, during 30 hours, was integrated in the offer of the Iasi Teaching Corps’ House and had a modular structure designed to develop the teachers’ competencies in stimulating student’s creativity. *Module 1* (10 hours), was dedicated to the theoretical benchmarks of creativity, and approached the concept in multiple acceptances, presenting the main explanatory theories and paradigms, the facilitation factors and blockages of creativity, as well as the difference between creativity as a process and creativity as a product. *Module 2* (10 hours), focused on creativity in school, and on organizational forms that favor the development of creativity, on the role of the creative teacher and on the methods to stimulate creativity in formal educational contexts. *Module 3* (8 hours), was dedicated to the methods of developing creativity through non-formal activities, and included topics such as non-formal education, learning framework, specific ways to stimulate creativity in non-formal contexts and the use of creative games.

The course offered an integrated approach to teaching creativity, harnessing mixed strategies that combine inductive, deductive and transductive elements, allowing teachers to customize the learning process according to the students’ needs. Inductive strategies have facilitated the autonomous discovery of concepts, deductive ones have allowed participants to apply the known principles in new situations, and the transductive strategies have stimulated the participants to realize the connections between different areas of knowledge.

A relevant example is interdisciplinary projects, where students collaborate to solve complex problems using knowledge from art, science and technology. Through this course, teachers have acquired skills to organize and facilitate the creativity of students both in formal and non-formal contexts; have learned to use various methods and strategies (inductive, deductive, transductive and mixed), to stimulate latent creativity; and have integrated play methods and non-formal activities in teaching, contributing to the creation of an educational environment that promotes free thinking, innovation and expressiveness of students. Non-formal activities and creative games have become fundamental elements in building an educational space oriented towards originality and creative problem solving, and applied mixed strategies that have strengthened the ability of students to use creativity in a systematic and multidisciplinary way.

The second program, „Digital education – a new challenge”, held during July–August 2021 aimed to form digital skills at teachers by integrating technology into the teaching process-learning. The course harnessed inductive, deductive, transductive and mixed strategies, supporting primary education teachers in developing student’s creativity through the use of digital resources. The training included training in using the „Scratch” app, through which teachers learned to use trial and error programming as a way of stimulating the students’ creativity, and being encouraged to explore combinations, create animations, stories or original solutions to problems (inductive strategy). Deductive strategy has been practiced through activities in which students apply general rules and principles in practical contexts, such as solving arithmetic problems by using educational software-. Transductive strategies have been developed using the „Book Creator” application, which allows the creating illustrated stories that combine knowledge of Romanian language, visual arts and technology, stimulating the transfer of knowledge between domains and of course „thinking outside the box”.

Applying mixed strategies has allowed the combination between free exploration with the use of rules and the realization of interdisciplinary connections, providing a flexible and personalized learning environment. Learning management platforms such as Google Classroom have been used to integrate inductive, deductive, and transductive activities into complex lessons, where students discover a topic, apply principles, and create their own projects. For example, in their final projects, students used graphic design applications to create interactive presentations on science topics, creatively applying the acquired knowledge. The course provided teachers a diverse set of digital pedagogical tools and strategies, helping to stimulate student creativity, develop autonomy and increase their confidence in the ability to generate innovative ideas.

The course structure „Digital education – a new challenge” included three modules: Module 1 (14 hours) – Introduction and planning in digital education, with topics such as the context of digital education, digital technologies in education, digital lesson planning, digital teaching and learning strategies and hands-on exercises; Module 2 (14 hours) – Use and evaluation of digital tools, including online educational platforms (Google Classroom Microsoft Teams, Moodle), digital resources, digital evaluation methods and real-time feedback; Module 3 (12 hours) – Security, ethics and future of digital education, with topics on online safety, technology use ethics, trends and innovations in digital education and the development of digital skills for the future.

The third program, „Creative teacher in the digital age”, which lasted 30 hours [5], aimed to train teachers to use the inductive, deductive, transductive and mixed strategies in digital contexts, in order to stimulate the creativity of both teachers and students. The course has harnessed interactive platforms and educational applications that facilitate the discovery of abstract principles through educational games and gamified activities (Kahoot, Quizizz), transforming theoretical concepts into practical experiences.

The course’s structure included three modules: Module 1– Education in Digital Era (9 hours), approached themes like the educational evolution, the relation between technology and education and the labor market perspectives; Module 2– The teacher in the digital era, focused on the differences between the traditionalist teacher and the digital teacher, the role of creativity in the teaching–learning–assessment process, and the digital resources in the teacher’s portfolio; Module 3 – Successful creative strategies (6 hours) with practical applications. The use of media resources – educational animations, videos, storytelling applications – allowed teachers to create lessons in which concepts are explained by visual and narrative metaphors. The „Storybird” platform has been used to develop digital stories, stimulating student’s creativity through analogies and symbolic images and collaborative platforms such as Google Classroom and Padlet have facilitated interactive group projects where students develop original ideas and sensitivity to the issues addressed.

The „*Creative Teacher course in the digital age*” has prepared teachers to effectively combine inductive, deductive, transductive and mixed strategies to create a modern, stimulating and creative thinking-oriented educational environment, enhancing teachers’ ability to use technology in an expressive and innovative way.

Conclusion

The analysis highlights that teacher’s training is an important mechanism for strengthening the skills needed to develop the creativity of primary school pupils. In the current context of didactic professionalization education should be understood as a systematic process of updating, integrating and capitalizing pedagogical skills in relation to curricular ends, and reconfiguring the institutional mechanisms of continuous training by moving from the territorial model of pedagogical circles to the institutional model centered on the Commission for training and development in the teaching career, and reflecting an internalization of the responsibility for professional development at the level of the educational establishment. This transformation reinforces the strategic dimension of continuous training, integrating the analysis of training needs, the organization of methodological-scientific activities and the monitoring of the impact on teaching practices in a permanent and coherent framework.

The examples presented (demonstration lesson within the Pedagogical Meeting, the activities within the Commission for the curriculum, as well as the completion of refresher programs „*Creativity – a necessity in school*”, „*Digital Education – a new challenge*” and „*Creative teacher in the digital era*”) demonstrate that the development of student creativity becomes operational when teachers structure their pedagogical intervention on integrated strategies (inductive, deductive, transductive and mixed), supported by the use of digital resources and active-participative approaches.

Strengthening the teacher's skills for developing student creativity is an approach, based on pedagogical innovation and the integration of educational technologies. In this respect, the efficiency of pedagogical intervention and the performance of students are directly correlated with the level of continuous professionalization of the teaching staff, which gives the permanent training the status of essential condition for the quality of contemporary education.

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STRATEGIES FOR HARNESSING BILINGUALISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOLERS' SOCIAL SKILLS

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Bilingualism in preschool can be harnessed not only for language development but also for enhancing social skills and effective group interaction. This paper aims to bring to attention a set of psycho-pedagogical strategies designed to develop social skills through bilingual activities, highlighting an applied and innovative approach in early education. In this context, we analyse current theoretical perspectives on the relationship between bilingualism and socio-emotional development, elucidating the essential components of social interaction in bilingual settings. This study outlines the characteristics of strategies for harnessing bilingualism, including: engaging pre-schoolers in cooperative bilingual activities, developing empathy through role-playing in both languages, raising awareness of cultural diversity, and emotional self-regulation in a bilingual context. Thus, the proposed strategies optimise, intensify, and support the development of pre-schoolers' social skills for harmonious group integration.

Keywords: *bilingualism, social skills, pre-schoolers, educational strategies, early education, social competence, emotional self-regulation, inclusion.*

STRATEGII DE VALORIFICARE A BILINGVISMULUI ÎN DEZVOLTAREA ABILITĂȚILOR SOCIALE ALE PREȘCOLARILOR

Bilingvismul la vârsta preșcolară poate fi valorificat nu doar pentru dezvoltarea limbajului, ci și pentru stimularea competențelor sociale și a interacțiunii eficiente în grup. Lucrarea de față urmărește să aducă în atenție un set de strategii psihopedagogice care au ca scop dezvoltarea abilităților sociale prin intermediul activităților bilingve, evidențiind astfel o abordare aplicativă și inovativă în cadrul educației timpurii. În acest context, analizăm perspectivele teoretice actuale privind relația dintre bilingvism și dezvoltarea socio-emoțională, elucidând componentele esențiale ale interacțiunii sociale în mediul bilingv. Prezentul studiu reliefează caracteristicile strategiilor de valorificare a bilingvismului, printre care: implicarea preșcolarilor în activități cooperative bilingve, dezvoltarea empatiei prin jocuri de rol în ambele limbi, conștientizarea valorii diversității culturale și autoreglarea emoțională în context bilingv. Astfel, strategiile propuse optimizează, intensifică și susțin dezvoltarea abilităților sociale ale preșcolarilor pentru o integrare armonioasă în grup.

Cuvinte-cheie: *bilingvism, abilități sociale, preșcolari, strategii educaționale, educație timpurie, competențe sociale, autoreglare emoțională, incluziune.*

Introduction

At the current stage, under conditions of increasing mobility and cultural diversity, educational environments are increasingly becoming spaces where different languages and cultures meet. We observe that bilingualism in preschool is no longer an exception, but a natural component of the reality of many communities [6, 10]. In this sense, when organising the educational process in kindergarten, we direct our attention not only to the transmission of linguistic knowledge but, more importantly, to the creation of procedures and methods that facilitate the harmonious development of the child's personality, including their social competences. In line with recent research, socio-emotional learning skills play an essential role in early school success, and pre-schoolers who demonstrate strong social competences are more likely to adapt successfully to the demands of the educational environment [3, 12].

Pre-schoolers' social skills are defined in the specialist literature as a set of learned behaviours that allow the individual to interact effectively with others, express emotions appropriately, and resolve conflicts [12]. Researchers emphasise that the preschool period represents a critical stage for the development of these skills, given that between the ages of 3 and 6, a dramatic transformation occurs across multiple developmental domains, including cognitive and socio-emotional areas [8; 9]. In the study conducted by Denham and his collaborators, four distinct profiles of socio-emotion-

al learning in pre-schoolers were identified, each having significant implications for later school success [3]. During this period, the prefrontal cortex develops rapidly, facilitating socio-cognitive processing, including self-regulation, emotion management, and attention. Luciana and Nelson discuss the fact that the functional development of the prefrontal cortex in early childhood is fundamental for acquiring behavioural and emotional self-regulation skills [8; 9].

Drawing from the perspective of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, child development occurs through interaction with others, with language playing a central role in this process, acting as a mediator of thought and social behaviour [12]. In this context, the use of two languages in interactions between children and with the educator can act as a powerful tool for mediating social relationships, facilitating mutual understanding and collaboration [7; 10]. Additionally, Liu highlights that multilingual educational environments offer unique opportunities for developing social competences, as children are naturally exposed to situations requiring negotiation, cooperation, and intercultural understanding [7].

Research conducted in recent years has highlighted that socio-emotional development and linguistic competences are deeply interconnected in preschool children [2; 12]. In Mortimore's view, socio-emotional learning has been described as “the substance of education itself”, and the beneficial effects on young children's well-being are profound and long-lasting [10, p. 903]. The author draws attention to the fact that the classroom environment and the quality of interactions are determining factors for the effective implementation of socio-emotional learning, and in the context of bilingual education, these aspects become even more relevant. We note, alongside Mortimore, that well-established pedagogical strategies can be mutually beneficial for both the development of bilingual education and the socio-emotional well-being of young children [10]. This finding justifies, in our opinion, the need to develop specific strategies for harnessing bilingualism in the development of social skills.

The longitudinal study conducted by Rojas demonstrates that, within free-play activities, emergent bilingual children develop their socio-emotional skills through authentic linguistic interactions, using their entire linguistic repertoire. The researcher emphasises that during free play, emergent bilingual children use their entire linguistic repertoire to negotiate meanings, resolve conflicts, and build social relationships [11]. These interactions allow them to build cooperation skills in problem-solving, understand their peers' emotions, and interpret their life experiences. Thus, free play represents an important context for negotiating lived experiences using the entire linguistic repertoire [11].

In the view of contemporary researchers, bilingualism does not represent merely the knowledge of two languages, but a specific way of processing reality, which develops cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness [1; 6]. A study conducted in Spain revealed that, after one year of primary education, children who followed bilingual programmes obtained significantly higher scores than monolingual children on a set of cognitive and social skills [2]. The results highlight that early exposure to a second language in an educational context can confer significant advantages both cognitively and socially, surpassing mere linguistic acquisition [2, p. 1778]. These results suggest that exposure to a second language in an educational context can generate considerable social benefits.

Educational practice indicates that social skills are influenced by the linguistic environment in which the child operates [12]. Halbach and Iwaniec have highlighted that bilingual educational programmes can contribute to the development of a sense of belonging and social responsibility in pupils, aspects essential for forming a balanced personality [5]. The authors argue that the integrated approach to content and language promotes not only linguistic competence but also the development of a sense of belonging to the community and social responsibility [5, p. 1610]. Their study shows that this approach can have a levelling effect, offering all children, regardless of their background, equal chances for social and cognitive development. Halbach and Iwaniec explain this phenomenon by the fact that bilingual programmes create a context in which linguistic diversity is valued, and all pupils are placed on common ground, thus fostering inclusion and social cohesion [5, p. 1620].

Research Methodology

The present study represents a theoretical synthesis research, based on the analysis and integration of specialist literature from the fields of developmental psychology, psycholinguistics, and educational sci-

ences. Starting from relevant bibliographic sources published in recent years, we analysed longitudinal studies, experimental research, and review articles from internationally rated specialist journals. Based on this analysis, we identified the essential characteristics of strategies for harnessing bilingualism and proposed a set of psycho-pedagogical strategies adapted to the specific nature of preschool age. The approach is applied, focusing on harnessing bilingualism as an active factor in the development of social skills, not just linguistic ones.

Results and Discussions

In the context of analysing the various activities undertaken by pre-schoolers in the educational environment, we identify the concept of strategies for harnessing bilingualism [6]. These are self-regulation and interaction strategies, used by subjects to increase or maintain the motivation to achieve social activities [12]. In our view, the development of social skills in a bilingual context unfolds under the influence of complex sets of factors, involving the child in authentic interactions, planning integrated activities for the formation of social competences, building positive expectations, and consolidating self-confidence [3; 11; 12].

Analysing the strategies for harnessing bilingualism in the development of social skills, we identified the following essential characteristics: (1) the active involvement of the child in authentic social interactions; (2) the alternation of linguistic codes according to the social context; (3) the mediation of conflicts through the use of both languages; (4) the development of intercultural empathy; (5) the consolidation of positive relationships within the group [1; 7; 10].

Starting from these theoretical foundations, we next propose a set of strategies for harnessing bilingualism in the development of pre-schoolers' social skills.

Strategies for cooperation and teamwork. Bilingual group activities involve assigning pre-schoolers to linguistically mixed teams, participating in cooperative projects or games in both languages [6]. The aim of these activities is to develop empathy, mutual respect, and the ability to negotiate roles and tasks. The novelty of the approach lies in the fact that bilingualism is used as a tool to facilitate collaboration, not just as a linguistic objective. Research shows that during free play, emergent bilingual children build their cooperation skills in problem-solving, using their entire linguistic repertoire to negotiate and collaborate effectively with peers [11]. Linguistically mixed pair learning involves children helping each other to understand words, instructions, or rules in the secondary language, aiming to increase mutual trust, stimulate communication, and consolidate interpersonal relationships [7; 12].

Strategies for developing empathy and emotional expression. Bilingual discussions and role-plays with social themes offer children the possibility to interpret scenarios in which they must recognise others' emotions, resolve conflicts, or support peers [10; 12]. A strategy we propose consists of using puppet theatre to explore simple social situations, accessible to children aged 3-5 years. For example, a puppet who is not allowed to join a game, another who is sad because they have lost their favourite toy, or two friends who argue over a toy. The puppets "speak" alternately in the two languages, using short, repetitive phrases. Children are invited to identify the characters' emotions (e.g. "How do you think the puppet feels?"), suggest solutions for resolving conflicts, and later re-enact the scenarios using the puppets. Given that at preschool age thinking is predominantly intuitive and tied to action, scenarios are accompanied by exaggerated facial expressions and visual support [12]. The aim of these activities is to develop the ability to perceive others' feelings, manage conflicts, and encourage prosocial behaviour. The novelty lies in the fact that alternating languages between game roles stimulates cognitive flexibility and intercultural empathy. Moreover emphasises that the classroom environment plays a key role in the effective implementation of socio-emotional learning through bilingual education, with well-established pedagogical strategies being mutually beneficial for both the development of bilingual education and the socio-emotional well-being of young children [10, p. 908]. Expressing emotions in both languages allows for the creation of a safe environment for expressing emotions and consolidating authentic social relationships.

Strategies for social integration and inclusion. Bilingual cultural projects represent activities in which children are familiarised with songs, customs, or objects specific to a language [1; 6]. A strategy we propose consists of organising a "cultural week" adapted to the preschool age. Children can be encouraged to share

their experiences through practical activities. For example, modelling a traditional object from plasticine, colouring a specific drawing, or learning a simple song in the respective language. To maintain the interest of children aged 3-5 years, we suggest that activities be of short duration. Through this strategy, we aim to develop respect for diversity and awareness of the value of intercultural collaboration. The aim is to develop respect for diversity and awareness of the value of intercultural collaboration. The novelty of the approach lies in transforming bilingualism into a bridge between cultures that facilitates inclusion and social communication. Halbach and Iwaniec observe that bilingual educational programmes contribute to the development of a strong sense of belonging to the community and the formation of positive attitudes towards cultural diversity, the levelling effect of these programmes consisting of creating a common ground on which all pupils can interact on equal terms [5, p. 1615]. Bilingual cooperation games involve pre-schoolers collaborating and making decisions using both their mother tongue and the secondary language, aiming to develop negotiation skills, active listening, and group decision-making [11; 12].

Strategies for the educator: Modelling bilingual social interactions involves the educator mediating conversations between children, using both languages to subtly correct mistakes and facilitate effective communication [7; 10]. Liu's research indicates that multilingual teaching positively influences the social behaviours of preschool children, especially when educators adopt an immersive approach and create an inclusive learning environment [7]. Liu highlights that the successful implementation of multilingual education among pre-schoolers requires not only adequate linguistic resources but also a pedagogical approach that harnesses the social potential of bilingual interactions [7]. A strategy we propose for teaching staff consists of adopting an active role in modelling bilingual social interactions. The educator does not limit themselves to speaking the two languages but explicitly mediates conversations between children, reformulating messages when necessary, subtly correcting mistakes, and facilitating mutual understanding. Given that at preschool age imitation is a fundamental learning mechanism, the educator uses simple, repetitive formulae, accompanied by gestures and facial expressions: “Now Maria says: Please give me the red cube. And Andrei replies: Here you are, Maria!”. Through this strategy, the educator becomes a model of communicative flexibility and respect for linguistic diversity [1; 5]. Creating a stimulating bilingual social environment, which includes visual materials, games, and tasks that involve interaction in both languages, supports active engagement and collaboration [7; 11]. Another strategy we propose consists of arranging the educational space in such a way as to support bilingual social interactions. For example, setting up a ‘story corner’ with board books illustrated in both languages or a “friendship corner” [6; 12].

Our proposed approach is applied, focusing on harnessing bilingualism as an active factor in the development of social skills, not just linguistic ones [2; 6]. The strategies are structured along social dimensions of cooperation, empathy, negotiation, and inclusion, which constitutes, in our opinion, a holistic perspective on the role of bilingualism in preschool education [10; 12]. This approach offers educators tools to transform bilingualism into an engine of social and interpersonal development [5; 7]. As Rojas synthesises, understanding how emergent bilingual children use their entire linguistic repertoire in social interactions is essential for designing educational interventions that simultaneously support linguistic and socio-emotional development [11].

Conclusions

Based on the above, we can conclude that:

1. Bilingualism at preschool age constitutes an educational resource that can be significantly harnessed for socio-emotional development, there being a bidirectional relationship between linguistic and social competences. Language interactions offer emergent bilingual children unique opportunities to develop both categories of competences in an integrated manner.
2. The strategies for harnessing bilingualism for the development of social skills optimise, intensify, and support positive interactions between pre-schoolers, contributing to the formation of intercultural empathy, cooperation, and inclusion. The integration of socio-emotional learning into early bilingual programmes represents a promising direction for optimising children's holistic development.

3. The novelty of the proposed approach lies in the change of perspective: bilingualism is no longer just a context or a learning objective, but becomes an environment and an active tool for facilitating social interactions, contributing to the formation of pre-schoolers who are more empathetic, more cooperative, and better prepared for life in a diverse society. Well-designed bilingual programmes can contribute to the development of responsible, competent citizens with a strong sense of belonging to the community.

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EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH ON THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MASTER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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This article addresses general aspects related to the concept of inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream education classes, at a general level, as well as in particular, the benefits that the actors involved. Also important are the challenges that the inclusion of students with special educational needs requires, both in the school environment, in the instructional-educational process, and out of school, in the social context. Aspects from Romania are presented regarding the degree of integration of students of inclusion of students with special educational needs, in academic, social and behavioral aspects, both from a theoretical point of view and concrete praxiological examples, by highlighting the level of inclusion, within the own research, respectively of the scientific experiment, by comparing the results obtained in the initial diagnosis and recording the final successes, noting the differences and the degree of improvement of some aspects related to the inclusion process.

Keywords: *students with special educational needs, inclusion, social, school, behavioral level.*

CERCETAREA EXPERIMENTALĂ PRIVIND INCLUZIUNEA ELEVILOR CU CERINȚE EDUCATIONALE SPECIALE ÎN INSTITUȚIILE DE ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT DE MASĂ

Acest articol abordează aspecte generale legate de conceptul de incluziune a elevilor cu nevoi educaționale speciale în clasele de învățământ de masă, la nivel general, precum și, în particular, beneficiile pe care le au actorii implicați în procesul de incluziune. De asemenea, importante sunt provocările pe care le necesită incluziunea elevilor cu nevoi educaționale speciale, atât în mediul școlar, în procesul instructiv-educativ, cât și în afara școlii, în contextul social. Sunt prezentate aspecte din România privind gradul de integrare a elevilor în incluziunea elevilor cu nevoi educaționale speciale, sub aspect academic, social și comportamental, atât din punct de vedere teoretic, cât și prin exemple praxiologice concrete, prin evidențierea nivelului de incluziune, în cadrul cercetării proprii, respectiv al experimentului științific, prin compararea rezultatelor obținute în diagnosticul inițial și înregistrarea succeselor finale, notând diferențele și gradul de îmbunătățire a unor aspecte legate de procesul de incluziune.

Cuvinte-cheie: *elevi cu nevoi educaționale speciale, incluziune, social, școală, nivel comportamental.*

Introduction

Inclusive education is an essential pillar of modern educational systems, aiming at the efficient integration of students with special educational needs in mainstream education institutions. The inclusion process goes beyond the simple physical presence of students in the classroom and involves active participation, the development of social and cognitive skills, as well as the strengthening of self-esteem and a sense of belonging to the collective.

Conceptually, inclusion goes beyond the integration paradigm, as it does not only involve adapting the student to the requirements of the education system, but also transforming the school environment so that it responds to the diversity of needs of all students.

In this context, special educational needs are defined as additional or different needs from those of the majority of students, generated by disabilities, learning disorders, socio-emotional difficulties or socio-cultural factors, which require curricular, methodological and evaluative adaptations [7, p. 26].

Inclusion involves creating a positive school environment, based on acceptance, cooperation and mutual respect. The aim is to prevent stigmatization and facilitate the social integration of students with special educational needs in the classroom [3, p. 72].

Recent research highlights the complexity of interactions between individual, contextual and pedagogical factors that influence the degree of integration of students with SEN. In this context, the development and application of effective psycho-pedagogical strategies become imperative for optimizing inclusion, ensuring both academic progress and the socio-emotional development of students.

Access to assistive technologies, adapted materials and accessible infrastructure (ramps, appropriate furniture) contribute to the elimination of physical and functional barriers [5, p. 112].

Stigmatization, social isolation or the student's low self-esteem can negatively influence school adaptation and educational progress [4, p. 88].

This paper presents the results of an experimental approach structured in three stages – observational, formative and control – which aims to investigate the particularities of the inclusion process of students with SEN in primary grades and propose a methodology to facilitate educational and psychosocial inclusion.

Through the multidimensional analysis of the academic, social and emotional-attitudinal dimensions of inclusion, the study contributes to deepening knowledge on the determinants of the success of inclusive education and to the development of tools and interventions applicable in practice.

The experimental approach of the research was oriented towards the systemic investigation of the particularities of the inclusion process of students with special educational needs in general education institutions, with a focus on the primary school level. At the same time, the experiment aimed at the scientific validation of a Psychopedagogical Model for optimizing inclusion, as well as a methodology for facilitating/accelerating the educational and psychosocial integration of students with SEN in regular classes.

In accordance with the general purpose of the research, the following experimental objectives were formulated: determining the current level and particularities of the inclusion process of students with SEN in mainstream education; identifying and analyzing psychopedagogical, organizational and psychosocial factors that influence the dynamics of inclusion; highlighting the evolution (dynamics) of the level of inclusion under the conditions of the formative intervention; development and validation of the Psychopedagogical Model for the inclusion of students with SEN in general education, including the methodology for facilitating and optimizing the inclusion process at the primary level.

The selection of educational institutions included in the research was carried out based on the following criteria: the existence of an institutional policy favorable to inclusive education; the manifestation of managerial and pedagogical openness for the integration of students with SEN.

The experiment involved students with SEN from grades 3 and 4, aged 9-11, 32 boys and 16 girls. The status of a student with special educational needs was confirmed based on the initial and complex psychopedagogical assessment, carried out according to the regulatory framework in force. The sample structure included students diagnosed with the following types of disabilities (moderate intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties - 35 students, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) - 8 students and Down Syndrome - 5 students).

The experimental research was structured in three successive stages: the observation experiment (diagnostic approach), the training experiment (formative approach) and the control experiment (evaluative approach).

The ascertaining stage (2022-2023) aimed to assess the initial level of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education and analyze the influence of psychosocial and educational factors on this process. The following actions were carried out during this stage: selecting and substantiating the psychological and pedagogical tools for evaluating inclusion; establishing target groups; applying evaluation samples (tests, questionnaires, rating scales, systematic observation sheets); analyzing and interpreting the results obtained; determining the level of development of teachers' competencies regarding inclusive education; identifying the facilitating and inhibiting factors of inclusion. The results of this stage allowed the establishment of the initial profile of inclusion and substantiated the subsequent formative intervention.

The formative stage aimed at implementing and validating the Experimental Program designed to facilitate the inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream educational institutions.

The activities carried out during the 2023–2024 academic year included: identifying the target group of students with SEN as participants in the formative experiment; designing an experimental Program to facilitate the inclusion of students with SEN; establishing a target group of parents, teachers, and school psy-

chologists who participated in the formative intervention; implementing the formative experiment through the application of the Program for facilitating the inclusion of students with SEN; adjusting the formative experiment, including the introduction of new elements determined by the specific characteristics and dynamics of the implementation process.

The evaluative control stage consisted of carrying out retesting and comparing the results obtained with the initial ones, in order to determine the dynamics of the level of inclusion.

The research used theoretical and empirical methods specific to the field of educational sciences: analysis and synthesis of specialized literature; systematic pedagogical observation; psychological and pedagogical testing; questionnaires; analysis of students' activity products; pedagogical experiment method.

The data obtained were processed using appropriate statistical methods, including: calculation of average values and percentages; one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) for comparing means; Spearman correlation coefficient for analyzing relationships between variables; quantitative and qualitative interpretations differentiated by experimental groups.

The interpretation of the results was carried out based on the hypothetico-deductive method, ensuring logical coherence between the hypothesis, empirical data and the formulated conclusions.

To validate the hypothesis, standardized and adapted techniques were selected and applied, capable of measuring the inclusion process multidimensionally (academic, social, relational and attitudinal dimensions). The tools used allowed both the quantification of the level of inclusion and the qualitative analysis of the transformations produced following the formative intervention.

Description of the research methods used

In this article, we briefly present some of the research methods employed. In order to systematically record the behaviors relevant for the inclusion of students with special educational needs, a school behavior **observation** sheet was developed [6, p. 31]. The instrument aimed to identify and record the behavioral manifestations and skills of the child with SEN, related to three fundamental areas of inclusion:

Table 1. The behavioral manifestations and skills of the child with SEN

Domain of educational participation (academic inclusion):	Relational-social domain (social inclusion):	Emotional-attitudinal domain (psychosocial inclusion):
- active involvement in learning activities; - accomplishment of school tasks; - manifestation of autonomy in learning; - development of cognitive and functional skills.	- interaction with colleagues; - cooperation in group activities; - respect for the rules of the collective; - initiation and maintenance of positive relationships.	- self-esteem; - feeling of belonging to the collective; - emotional self-regulation; - attitude towards school and towards oneself.

The form allowed the analysis of the student's behavior in natural contexts of the school environment – during teaching activities, during breaks and in relationships with colleagues – ensuring an authentic assessment of the level of integration and participation.

The School Inclusion Study Scale (adapted from C. Crețu) is presented in two versions: one for *parents* and one for *teaching staff*.

The School Inclusion Study Scale addressed to *parents* includes the following criteria:

- success in completing learning tasks;
- effort required by the child to complete learning tasks at school;
- independence in performing learning tasks at school;
- emotional state when attending school;
- relationships with peers;
- overall assessment of inclusion.

The School Psychosocial Inclusion Scale, addressed to *teachers, psychologists, or support teachers*, focuses on four main criteria (adapted from C. Crețu) [1, p. 168]:

Table 2. Inclusion criteria for students with SEN

Criterion 1. Learning Effectiveness	Criterion 2. Compliance with Behavioral Norms	Criterion 3. Success in Social Relationships	Criterion 4. Emotional Well-Being
- engagement in learning activities; - acquisition of knowledge.	- behavior during lessons; - behavior during breaks.	- relationship with class-mates; - attitude toward teachers.	- emotional state

Thus, the identified instruments for studying the inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN) in educational institutions ensure the collection of valid information regarding the following variables: learning effectiveness, school behavior, relational framework, and emotional well-being.

The **psychopedagogical assessment** includes the analysis of psychomotor development, cognitive processes and work style, targeting dimensions such as thinking, memory, language and communication, attention, motivation for learning, receptivity, degree of participation and involvement, social relationships, as well as the level of school acquisitions (skills, interests) [2, p. 25].

In addition, the student's school and extracurricular results are analyzed, the subjects in which he/she has recorded outstanding performances, involvement in extracurricular activities, as well as the explanatory factors of success or difficulties encountered during schooling. The educational path of the student with SEN is also taken into account, in order to ensure continuity and coherence of educational interventions.

The **Inclusion Study Scale** (adapted from C. Crețu) [1, p. 167]. The research instrument aims to assess the level of training of primary school teachers for the implementation of the principles of inclusive education in the case of students with special educational needs. It is structured in the form of a questionnaire that includes multiple-choice and open-ended items, with the aim of investigating previous participation in training programs in the field of inclusive education, interest in continuous professional development, the typology of S.E.S. encountered in the classroom, as well as the modalities of interprofessional collaboration. The tool also explores the existence of relevant institutional resources (support teacher, specially designed spaces for support services), the types of teaching strategies used, the ways of organizing and designing learning activities, the evaluation methods applied, as well as perceptions regarding the benefits of continuous training and the transfer of theoretical acquisitions into pedagogical practice.

Diagnostic approach to the level of inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream education institutions

Within the framework of the observation experiment, aimed at identifying the particularities of the inclusion of students with special educational needs, the research hypothesis was operationalized through the following theses:

The degree of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions is influenced by a complex of interdependent factors: *individual factors* (age, category and severity of disability, level of cognitive and socio-emotional development); *contextual factors* (psychosocial climate in the school and family environment, quality of interpersonal relationships, attitude of the student body); *educational-pedagogical factors* (competence of teachers in the field of inclusive education, applied teaching strategies, curricular adaptation, use of differentiated and individualized methods). There are differences in the manifestation of inclusion depending on the interaction between individual and environmental factors, as well as the level of educational support provided to the student.

A favorable educational climate, characterized by acceptance, cooperation and adequate pedagogical support, contributes significantly to increasing the degree of participation and social integration of students with SEN.

To verify the formulated hypothesis, a detailed analysis of the particularities of the inclusion of students with special educational needs, by reporting to a set of specific inclusion indicators, was carried out. Comparing the indices obtained for each investigated parameter allowed identifying differences in the manifestation of learning difficulties, as well as determining the level of inclusion corresponding to each experimental group, consisting of students with different types of disabilities.

The Intervention Program highlighted the fact that the inclusion process of students with SEN has made significant progress in correlation with indicators of inclusion, the educational environment has become friendlier and more accessible, through the contribution of the actors involved in this process.

The intervention had a significant and positive effect on the performance of students with educational needs integrated into mainstream education institutions. In order to assess the impact of the educational intervention, the level of student performance was compared at the pre-test and post-test time.

Results Obtained from the Assessment of the Level of Inclusion of Students with SEN

In this article, we briefly present some of the results obtained from the assessment of the level of inclusion of students with special educational needs.

According to the centralization of the responses of the participants in this experiment among students with SEN, helped by their parents, when completing them, in the initial phase it was deduced that 31% are fully integrated into the educational institution, 54% of students with SEN are partially included in the school units, have a flexible schedule in the school unit, and occasionally 15% of the participating students are involved in only part of the educational activities. Which reveals the fact that 26 of the participating students with SEN are only partially included within the mainstream education institutions.

Table 3. Initial analysis of the degree of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions

Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
total	15	31%	31%
partially	26	54%	54%
occasional	7	15%	100.0%

The final diagnosis reveals that the degree of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions has improved, and 79% of participating students with SEN are fully integrated alongside typical students, while 13% of students with SEN are partially integrated and 8% of students with SEN are occasionally integrated, participating only rarely in a few educational activities.

Table 4. Final analysis of the degree of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions

Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
total	38	79%	79%
partially	6	13%	21%
occasional	4	8%	100%

The final results regarding the degree obtained attest to the fact that the number of students who are fully integrated in mainstream education classes has increased and a significant change has occurred following the intervention on the inclusion process of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions.

Following the parents' application of the questionnaire to assess the level of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions to identify the initial diagnosis, we obtained the following results regarding aspects related to psycho-pedagogical conditions 20%, facilitating an inclusive environment 7%, adapted and individualized training 33%, ensuring support services 38%, relationships and collaboration with those around them 31%, behavioral conduct 29%, involvement in extracurricular activities 23%, edu-

cational partnership 19%. The study of the continuous professional training needs of teachers participating in the experiment was examined from the perspective of the inclusive education approach based on a theoretical and methodological support that facilitates the efficient planning and structuring of the learning process.

Table 5. Initial analysis of the degree of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions

Indicators	Criteria	Yes	Partially	No
educational instructional approach	psycho-pedagogical conditions	5 (20%)	7 (28%)	36 (75%)
	inclusive environment	4 (7%)	19 (32%)	25 (61%)
	adapted and individualized training	16 (33%)	24 (50%)	8 (17%)
	support services	18 (38%)	21 (44%)	9 (19%)
behavioral-affective dimension	relationships and collaboration with others	15 (31%)	30 (63%)	3 (6%)
	behavioral conduct	14 (29%)	24 (50%)	10 (21%)
social integration	involvement in extracurricular activities	11 (23%)	20 (42%)	17 (35%)
	educational partnership	9 (19%)	27 (56%)	12 (25%)

In the end, we obtained the following results regarding the aspects related to psycho-pedagogical conditions 25%, facilitating an inclusive environment 44%, adapted and individualized training 92%, ensuring support services 75%, relationships and collaboration with those around them 88%, behavioral conduct 81%, involvement in extracurricular activities 69%, educational partnership 60%, noting considerable improvements in all the aspects presented.

Table 6. Final analysis of the degree of inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions

Indicators	Criteria	Yes	Partially	No
educational instructional approach	psycho-pedagogical conditions	12(25 %)	22 (46%)	14 (29%)
	inclusive environment	21 (44%)	25 (52%)	2 (4%)
	adapted and individualized training	44 (92%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
	support services	36 (75%)	8 (17%)	4 (8%)
behavioral-affective dimension	relationships and collaboration with others	42 (88%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)
	behavioral conduct	39 (81%)	4 (8%)	5 (10%)
social integration	involvement in extracurricular activities	33(69 %)	8 (17%)	7 (15%)
	educational partnership	29 (60%)	10 (21%)	9 (19%)

Thus, the final results highlight the high positive impact on the inclusion process of students with SEN. in mainstream education institutions, in accordance with the mentioned indicators, on the educational, behavioral-affective and social dimensions, regarding psycho-pedagogical conditions, inclusive environment, training and support services, relationships and collaboration with those around them, behavioral conduct, degree of involvement in extracurricular activities, degree of development of educational partnership, and all of these lead to the inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream education institutions, to the recording of school progress and to the improvement of the learning outcomes of the student with SEN.

The results obtained in the initial stage, by the teachers with parents, regarding the instructional-educational process of students with SEN: the initial situation in terms of psychomotor development 42%, cognitive processes 25% related to thinking, memory, language and communication, attention, learning motivation, receptivity, participation and involvement, social relations; the level of school acquisitions - skills, interests, 31%; managing emotions in different situations 21%, behavior during school breaks 23%, results obtained in extracurricular activities 17%, the educational path of the student with SEN, in terms of school success 31% of their development.

Table 7. Initial analysis of the results obtained following the application of the psychopedagogical sheet

Indicators	Scale	Develo- ped	Under- develo- ped	Unde- veloped
educational instructional approach	psychomotor development	20 (42%)	26 (54%)	2 (4%)
	cognitive processes	12 (25%)	32 (67%)	4 (8%)
	level of academic achievement	15 (31%)	30 (63%)	3 (6%)
	academic achievement	15 (31%)	28 (58%)	5 (10%)
behavioral-affective dimension	managing emotions in different situations	10 (21%)	29 (60%)	9 (19%)
	behavior during school breaks	11 (23%)	24 (50%)	13 (27%)
social integration	results recorded in extracurricular activities	8 (17%)	16 (33%)	24 (50%)

In the end, psychomotor development improved by 71%, cognitive processes by 84% related to receptivity, participation and involvement, social relationships; the level of school acquisitions (skills, interests), 79%; management of emotions in different situations 83%, behavior during school breaks 65%, results recorded in extracurricular activities 75%, the educational path of the student with CES, in terms of school success 88%.

Table 8. Final analysis of the results obtained following the application of the psychopedagogical sheet

Indicators	Scale	Develo- ped	Under- develo- ped	Unde- develo- ped
educational instructional approach	psychomotor development	34 (71%)	13 (27%)	1 (2%)
	cognitive processes	41 (84%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)
	level of academic achievement	38 (79%)	8 (17%)	2 (4%)
	academic achievement	42 (88%)	4 (8%)	2 (4%)
behavioral-affective dimension	managing emotions in different situations	40 (83%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)
	behavior during school breaks	31 (65%)	11 (23%)	6 (13%)
social integration	results recorded in extracurricular activities	36 (75%)	10 (21%)	2 (4%)

After completing the school performance observation sheet recorded by the 48 participating students with SEN, we obtained the following initial results regarding the degree of involvement in lessons/activities 40%, achievement and completion of the teaching task 27%, level of school knowledge 38%, level of practical knowledge 23%, well-being 46%, communication 31%, attitude towards other classmates 58% and relationships with adults 29%.

Table 9. Initial analysis of the results obtained following the application of the observation sheet

Indicators	Criteria	Develo- ped	Under- develo- ped	Unde- develo- ped
educational instructional approach	level of involvement in lessons / activities	19 (40%)	21 (44%)	8 (17%)
	completing learning tasks	13 (27%)	24 (50%)	11 (23%)
	level of academic knowledge	18 (38%)	23 (48%)	7 (15%)
	level of practical knowledge	11 (23%)	21 (44%)	16 (33%)
behavioral-affective dimension	well-being	22 (46%)	22 (46%)	4 (8%)
	communication	15 (31%)	31 (65%)	2 (4%)
	attitude towards other colleagues	28 (58%)	15 (31%)	5 (10%)
	adult relationships	14 (29%)	22 (46%)	12 (25%)
social integration	degree of adaptation in social context	17 (35%)	21 (44%)	10 (21%)

The results obtained indicate a significant improvement in student performance following the intervention, which suggests that the personalized educational program had a positive effect on the overall progress of students with SEN. Regarding the degree of involvement in lessons / activities by 73%, the achievement and completion of the didactic task by 79%, the degree of personal autonomy of students with SEN, socialization, the level of school knowledge by 73%, the level of practical knowledge by 71%, the products of the activity of students with SEN, which relate to the completion of tasks and worksheets, respectively the development of the student's personal portfolio.

Table 10. Final analysis of the results obtained following the application of the observation sheet

Indicators	Criteria	Developed	Undeveloped	Undeveloped
educational instructional approach	level of involvement in lessons/ activities	35 (73%)	10 (21%)	3 (6%)
	completing learning tasks	38 (79%)	6 (13%)	4 (8%)
	level of academic knowledge	35 (73%)	11 (23%)	2 (4%)
	level of practical knowledge	34 (71%)	8 (17%)	6 (13%)
behavioral-affective dimension	well-being	41 (85%)	6 (13%)	1 (2%)
	communication	35 (73%)	12 (25%)	1 (2%)
	attitude towards other colleagues	44 (92%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)
	adult relationships	42 (88%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)
social integration	degree of adaptation in social context	24 (50%)	17 (35%)	7 (15%)

Conclusion

The analysis highlights the fact that inclusive education is not just a direction of educational reform, but a complex and continuous process of transforming the entire education system. The positive results observed following the implementation of specific interventions indicate the real potential of inclusion to improve not only the performance of students with special educational needs, but also the general educational climate. By promoting diversity and mutual respect, the inclusive school contributes to the development of more open, empathetic and equitable educational communities.

The dynamic nature of inclusion derives from the constant interaction between the factors that support it and the barriers that limit it. Among the facilitating factors are the positive attitudes of teachers, the existence of coherent educational policies, access to adequate resources and effective collaboration between specialists. In turn, barriers can include social prejudices, the lack of adequate professional training, insufficiently adapted infrastructure or curricular rigidity. In this context, the success of inclusion depends on the system's ability to reduce these obstacles and to leverage existing resources in a strategic way.

Achieving authentic inclusive education requires interventions at the systemic level. It is not enough to physically integrate students into mainstream schools; a profound change in the way the educational act is conceived is necessary. This involves adapting the curriculum, using differentiated teaching methods, flexible assessment focused on individual progress, and creating a safe and stimulating learning environment for all students. In parallel, the development of teachers' professional skills becomes essential. Teachers must be prepared not only from a methodological point of view, but also from the perspective of managing diversity, empathetic communication and interdisciplinary collaboration.

A change in mentality is another fundamental pillar of inclusion. Acceptance of diversity must become a central value in the school's organizational culture. This involves moving beyond traditional models based on uniformity and selection, and adopting a perspective that values the uniqueness of each student. In this regard, educational leadership plays a crucial role, by promoting an inclusive vision and supporting innovative initiatives.

Also, the adequate allocation of resources – human, material and financial – is indispensable. The presence of specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, support teachers), access to adapted teaching materi-

als and the use of assistive technologies can make the difference between formal and real inclusion. At the same time, interdisciplinary collaboration and partnership with families and the wider community contribute to the creation of a coherent framework of support for the student.

The legislative dimension cannot be neglected. A clear, coherent and applicable normative framework provides the necessary basis for the effective implementation of inclusion. Educational policies must be aligned with international standards and reflect a commitment to children's rights and equal opportunities.

In essence, inclusion goes beyond the pedagogical sphere and becomes an expression of social responsibility. It reflects the way in which society assumes diversity and promotes equity. The inclusive school is not only a space for academic learning, but also an environment in which responsible citizens are formed, capable of respecting differences and actively contributing to a democratic society.

Therefore, building a school for all requires an integrated approach, in which policies, practices and values converge towards the same goal: ensuring a quality education for every student, regardless of their particularities. Inclusion thus becomes not just an educational ideal, but an essential condition for the development of an equitable and sustainable society.

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ANIMATION AS ACTING AND THE REDEFINITION OF ANIMATION PEDAGOGY THROUGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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The article examines the fundamental relationship between animation and emotional intelligence, proposing a reinterpretation of animation pedagogy through the integration of acting into the animator's training process. Starting from the idea that animation constructs an emotional reality through invented forms, the study argues that the credibility of an animated character depends on the coherence of intention and on the animator's ability to understand and translate inner states into gesture, rhythm, and design. The theoretical-analytical approach, based on the works of Ollie Johnston, Frank Thomas, Ed Hooks, and Don Bluth, explores the role of empathy, observation, nonverbal language, and self-awareness in shaping the character's visual identity. The study suggests that integrating emotional intelligence into animation education may contribute to developing the animator as an actor conscious of movement and dramatic meaning, reaffirming animation as an art of emotion and interpretation.

Keywords: *animation, acting for animation, emotional intelligence, animation pedagogy, cinematic language, empathy, character design.*

ANIMAȚIA CA ACTORIE ȘI REDEFINIREA PEDAGOGIEI ANIMAȚIEI PRIN INTELIGENȚA EMOȚIONALĂ

Articolul examinează relația fundamentală dintre animație și inteligența emoțională, propunând o reinterpretare a pedagogiei animației prin integrarea actoriei în procesul de formare a animatorului. Pornind de la ideea că animația construiește o realitate emoțională prin forme inventate, studiul argumentează că credibilitatea personajului animat depinde de coerența intenției și de capacitatea animatorului de a înțelege și traduce stările interioare în gest, ritm și design. Analiza teoretico-analitică, bazată pe lucrările lui Ollie Johnston, Frank Thomas, Ed Hooks și Don Bluth explorează rolul empatiei, observației, limbajului non-verbal și autocunoașterea în contextul de creare a identității vizuale a personajului. Studiul sugerează că integrarea inteligenței emoționale în educația animației poate contribui la dezvoltarea animatorului ca actor conștient al mișcării și al sensului dramatic, reafirmând animația ca artă a emoției și a interpretării.

Cuvinte-cheie: *animație, actorie pentru animație, inteligența emoțională, pedagogia animației, limbaj cinematografic, empatie, designul personajului.*

Introduction

Animation surprises with its unexpected power. Often, fiction films or documentaries are the audiovisual works that convince through their presence and execution, especially because they reflect images familiar to the human eye. In contrast, animation proposes a different type of imagery, drawings that only hint at a real form. For this reason, animation does not promise immediate visual conviction from the start, but rather requires the viewer's openness to perceive diverse artistic languages. Nevertheless, animation remains memorable and capable of leaving an emotional mark on the viewer. At the same time, a certain confusion remains for some viewers: by what means does animation manage to hold our attention, even though its form may inspire mistrust in its ability to reflect the visual reality of human existence?

The hypothesis of this article is grounded in the surprising power of moving drawings to emotionally affect the viewer through the arrangement of colors and forms created from memory and associated with shapes familiar to the human eye. These forms, figures, and spaces awaken dormant emotions in the viewer, sometimes unexpectedly, and contribute to the formation of new, yet lasting, emotional connections between the spectator and the narrative of the work.

Yuri Norstein, in his work “Snow on the Grass”, (2005), appears visibly surprised by the fact that animated film is a monstrous art [4, p. 7], although this realization is no longer new to him. Its existence must

be composed from scratch, from the very first line drawn on a blank sheet of paper to the final sound in the soundtrack. Everything is constructed from nothing so that it may conform as precisely and personally as possible to the author's intention. In this lies the monstrosity of this art form. Perhaps, for this reason, the surprise is even greater when the spectator, without immediately realizing it at a cognitive level, is struck by the emotions generated within them after watching drawn forms that are technically fictitious or, stereotypically speaking, considered childish and naive that they are often dismissed or, unfortunately, ignored.

Of course, this ignorant attitude is a matter of perception and of the way we perceive and relate to others, with regrettable effects and repercussions. Although this is not the central topic of the article, it touches on the very point that gives rise to its hypothesis, according to which emotion can transform the unreal into the reality of the observer.

In other words, *Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas*, in the “bible” of animation, “*The Illusion of Life*”, (1981), confirm that animation and the visual arts succeed in leaving an emotional mark on the spectator, even though their forms and colors are entirely invented from scratch. It is precisely this contrast that remains significant within the viewer: how a reality that is created, rather than found, can generate a profoundly real experience [3, p. 19]. This contrast can be unsettling, especially for a sensitive viewer, yet it can also suggest that the affective dimension is key to understanding and connecting with the human experience. Affective resonance may become both a path toward truth and a map of manipulation. In any case, the authors emphasize that emotion is the main factor that makes the contact between a living being and a stone possible [3, p. 15].

In this context, the pedagogy of animation cannot ignore this counterpoint of terms and therefore cannot exclude emotion as an instrument of study in deepening the practice of animation and the telling of a story. In other words, we may admit that the animator becomes an actor with a pencil, or with a mouse, a tablet, the frame itself, while the animated frame becomes his breath. Our aim is to understand what a character feels, why it moves in a particular way and, above all, what inner force compels it to move even when it appears to remain still.

We begin from the observation that animation, as a living artistic organism, does not start at the line drawn on the page, but at the first beat of the tension created between intention and action. Movement is merely the visible consequence of an invisible state. This perspective compels us to view animation not as a mere technique, but as a fully developed form of acting, organically integrated into cinematic language. From this point, our understanding of the animator's education inevitably expands, and emotional intelligence, considered in relation to the stages of creation, study, and even reception, can no longer be postponed.

Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas (1981) explain that the spectator should not merely see a hand being raised. The viewer must understand the desire behind that movement. The character must think before acting, and we must be able to perceive this intimate moment. The authors emphasize the primary purpose of any form of art, namely to convey a state of being, rather than to demonstrate skill or technical excellence.

According to the authors, the spectator, no matter how little aware they may be of it, or how complex and concealed their reaction might appear in certain cases, always responds emotionally, even if they may insist, out of a reflex of self-protection, that their response is purely intellectual. This occurs because art communicates directly with the affective dimension of human experience. For this reason, animation possesses a kind of magical power to evoke emotions, even though it may appear harmless or not to be taken seriously, merely colors and forms arranged on a sheet of paper [3, p. 15].

The text also draws attention to the responsibility of the animator as creator. The animator does not remain merely a technical draftsman; rather, they become an actor who must understand the intentions, conflicts, and emotions of the character in order to convey them through gesture, rhythm, and expression even before spoken language emerges [3, p. 15-16].

Ed Hooks, in his work “*Acting for Animators*”, (2003), presents the reasoning that demonstrates that animation is, in essence, a form of acting that can be even more complex than stage performance. The author draws a parallel between the actor and the figure of the shaman in ancient tribal societies, who created and wore masks, transformed himself, and invoked spirits in order to help the community survive.

This association suggests that acting is not merely entertainment, but a ritualistic and social act in which the actor creates the emotional foundation of a collective experience. The actor speaks to the “tribe,” that is, the audience. Thus, the actor must have something to say, because the audience expects direction. This is where the “theatrical contract” begins [2, p. 11].

By comparison, Ed Hooks (2003) points out that the animator lives through a similar dialogic experience, yet one that is far more meticulous, to the point that the same moment must be reconstructed countless times, frame by frame. The animation author must understand emotion in depth and then reproduce it consistently, with precision and conscious control. While a stage actor does not need to think about their eyebrows, because simply feeling the emotion and intention is enough to allow it to settle naturally in the face, the animator, by contrast, must think through every movement of the eyebrows and the way they appear in the drawing composition, so that, through them, another layer of meaning and interpretation of the character’s narrative and emotion can be communicated. For this reason, acting in animation can be even more difficult. It demands not only the lived experience of the moment, but also detailed analysis, repetition, and the fixation of emotion over time [2, p. 12-14].

This article develops a line of reasoning that aims to demonstrate the fundamental connection between the art of animation and emotional intelligence, which becomes a key instrument in the pedagogy of animation.

Methodological Framework: Phenomenological, Aesthetic, and Pedagogical Analysis

The present research employs an interdisciplinary theoretical-analytical methodology, based on the study of specialized literature in the fields of the psychology of emotion, acting theory, and animation pedagogy. The analysis is complemented by pedagogical reflection on the teaching practice of the course “Animation Techniques and Acting for Animation,” exploring the relationship between intention, movement, and emotional intelligence in the construction of the animated character, drawing on the studies of animator-authors *Ed Hooks, Don Bluth, Ollie Johnston, and Frank Thomas*.

Before a character takes a step, it must first have a thought. Movement does not originate in the joints, but in intention. If a character walks toward an apple, the goal is not “to walk,” but rather “I am hungry,” and this hunger determines the rhythm, direction, and energy of the steps. In animation, intention precedes action, while reaction often becomes more revealing than the initial gesture. The way a character responds to surprise, fear, or joy reveals its true dramatic nature, transforming the gesture into a visible form of thought [1].

This relationship between intention and movement is expressed through precise bodily instruments: internal rhythm, timing, weight, and counterpoint. If the character does not “feel” the weight of its own body or of the objects it interacts with, the illusion breaks and the movement becomes mechanical. Weight is not only physical but also psychological: a sad character appears heavy and burdened, while a character in love seems to float. Likewise, the speed of a head turn may reveal surprise, arrogance, or melancholy, while the contradiction between gesture and expression, when the body says one thing and the face another, becomes a sign of inner tension. These details constitute the subtle language of emotional intelligence in acting. Thus, animation is not merely a succession of correct movements, but a conscious organization of intention, reaction, gesture, and energy into a coherent language [3].

These insights and reflections, grounded in the extensive experience of the animators mentioned above, inevitably lead to a fundamental pedagogical question: what inner tools must the animator develop in order to construct movements that are authentic in meaning? The answer lies in the domain of emotional intelligence. Empathy allows entry into the inner world of the character, observation provides the material for gesture, nonverbal language translates emotion into cinematic expression, and self-awareness grants authenticity to the performance. Together, these capacities transform animation from a technical practice into a form of acting and provide the fundamental reference points for a pedagogy of animation oriented toward a deeper understanding of the relationship between emotion and movement, creator and spectator [2].

The concept of self-awareness constitutes the starting point of acting in animation. An animator cannot convincingly portray a character’s anger or joy without first recognizing these states within their own body,

in the rhythm of breathing or in the tension of gesture. At the same time, the character must be constructed on the basis of a clear intention: it does not simply “run,” but rather “hurries,” and it does not merely “remain still,” but “pursues a goal.”

Building upon the foundational principles of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Ed Hooks asserts that authentic acting is rooted in the belief that character and thought are the two primary „natural causes” of human action. He posits that since we essentially „live to act,” the craft of performance must move beyond mere movement to focus on the deep-seated connections between an internal mental process and its resulting physical expression. By prioritizing the dynamics of action over simple aesthetics, Hooks suggests that a performer, much like the characters envisioned by Walt Disney, only truly succeeds when their outward behavior is a direct, motivated consequence of their inner life [2, p. 20].

Taking a step further, within the stages of production, character design itself is not merely a decorative exercise, but a visible extension of the character’s inner state. Form, line, and color become carriers of emotional meaning, and design begins to communicate even before the character moves or “performs.” In this context, concepts such as lines of force, the emotional silhouette, and the color of feelings function as dramatic instruments rather than simple aesthetic choices [2].

As *Don Bluth* emphasizes in his work “*The Art of Animation Drawing*”, 2004, the psychology of forms is essential in the construction of a character, and design must reflect personality. Rounded lines suggest friendliness, kindness, and vulnerability, while sharp lines or triangular forms convey danger, agitation, or rigid determination. Character traits and the level of emotional intelligence are reflected in the shape of the body, posture, and clothing. For example, a character who is “withdrawn,” with low social awareness, may be drawn hunched over, with shoulders pulled inward and clothing that conceals them, as a kind of visual protection from the outside world. In this way, design becomes the character’s first act of acting: an emotional promise made to the spectator before the story even begins. The spectator “reads” these signals instinctively, before any explicit action takes place [1, p. 66].

Findings and Interpretations

Starting from the need to redefine the pedagogy of animation through the integration of acting and emotional intelligence, this article proposes, as a methodological solution, the exercise “The Map of Emotions,” conceived as a training tool for young animators. Inspired by the principles of acting for animation formulated by *Ed Hooks* and by the concepts concerning the psychology of forms discussed by *Don Bluth*, the exercise aims to transform inner emotion into visual and cinematic construction. It is structured in three successive stages: identifying the emotion and the way it manifests in the body, creating an initial sketch that translates emotional intention into the design of the character, and finally placing the character within a cinematic context in which the emotion intensifies into action [1; 2].

The application of the exercise “The Map of Emotions” highlights the decisive role of emotional intelligence in the construction of the animated character. Its structure promises artistic coherence on the part of the student, who develops the ability to first describe how the emotion is felt within their own body. Subsequently, they are able to construct movement that is more coherent and more dramatically motivated, with character design functioning as a visible extension of the identified inner state. The exercise emphasizes that empathy and self-awareness are not abstract concepts, but practical tools that enable the animator to transform intention into a readable gesture and that gesture into cinematic expression.

At the same time, “The Map of Emotions” functions as a method of integrating observation and non-verbal language into the pedagogical process. Placing the character within a frame that amplifies the emotional state highlights the relationship between emotion, design, and *mise-en-scène*. Such framing may appear as solitude in a wide shot, tension in a close-up, or conflict expressed through counterpoint in body language. As a result, students construct clearer emotional arcs and come to understand that credible animation does not depend solely on the technical correctness of movement, but on the emotional coherence of intention. The exercise can thus be proposed as a central pedagogical tool in training the animator as an actor, confirming the hypothesis that animation becomes more expressive when it is grounded in emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

The pedagogical proposal formulated in this article, namely the exercise “The Map of Emotions,” is not intended to be a definitive method, but rather a starting point for a pedagogy that shifts the emphasis from execution to understanding. It suggests that the training of the animator should begin not with software or technique, but with the recognition of emotion, the observation of the body, and the construction of dramatic intention. Within such a pedagogical framework, character design becomes the first act of acting, movement becomes the consequence of an inner conflict, and editing becomes the visible organization of an emotional transformation.

In the end, animation preserves its mystery: it remains a “monstrous” art not because it is excessive, but because it compels the creator to construct a world out of nothing and to charge it with human truth. Within this world, the spectator does not seek the realism of forms, but the sincerity of emotion. And if the pedagogy of animation succeeds in cultivating this sincerity, then the animator will no longer be merely a technician of movement, but an author capable of creating living presence from drawing, from light, and from time.

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INCURSION INTO THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF PERSONAL AUTONOMY

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Personal autonomy represents a central construct in philosophical, psychological, and educational reflection, essential for understanding personality formation and self-regulation. This article analyzes the conceptual evolution of autonomy across major theoretical paradigms, from classical moral-rational interpretations to contemporary perspectives based on self-determination and psychosocial development. The study adopts a theoretical-analytical approach grounded in comparative analysis of interdisciplinary literature. Findings highlight the multidimensional nature of autonomy and the interdependence of its moral, cognitive, affective, and educational dimensions. The results confirm that personal autonomy is not a fixed trait but a developmental process shaped by interaction between internal maturation and educational context, functioning as a key indicator of reflexive maturity and a fundamental objective of contemporary education.

Keywords: *personal autonomy, self-determination, moral development, educational autonomy, intrinsic motivation, self-regulated learning, personal identity, reflective competence.*

INCURSIUNE ÎN EVOLUȚIA CONCEPTULUI DE AUTONOMIE PERSONALĂ

Autonomia personală reprezintă un construct central în reflecția filosofică, psihologică și educațională, esențial pentru înțelegerea formării personalității și a autoreglării. Articolul analizează evoluția conceptuală a autonomiei în principalele paradigme teoretice, de la interpretările moral-raționale clasice la abordările contemporane bazate pe autodeterminare și dezvoltare psihosocială. Studiul are caracter teoretico-analitic și se bazează pe analiza comparativă a literaturii interdisciplinare. Rezultatele evidențiază caracterul multidimensional al autonomiei și interdependența dimensiunilor sale morale, cognitive, afective și educaționale. Se confirmă că autonomia nu este o trăsătură fixă, ci un proces de dezvoltare rezultat din interacțiunea dintre maturizarea internă și contextul educațional, constituind un indicator al maturității reflexive și un obiectiv fundamental al educației contemporane.

Cuvinte-cheie: *autonomie personală, autodeterminare, dezvoltare morală, autonomie educațională, motivație intrinsecă, învățare autoreglată, identitate personală, competență reflexivă.*

Introduction

Personal autonomy is a central concept in reflections on the human condition, situated at the intersection of freedom, responsibility, and identity formation. Rather than a univocal notion, it has undergone significant theoretical evolution across moral philosophy, developmental psychology, and education sciences. While classical traditions associated autonomy with moral self-legislation, contemporary approaches interpret it as a multidimensional process involving cognitive self-regulation, affective maturation, and decision-making competence.

Etymologically derived from the Greek *autos* (self) and *nomos* (law), autonomy denotes the individual's capacity for self-legislation. This meaning was systematically formulated by Immanuel Kant, who defined autonomy as “the property of the will of being a law to itself” [1], emphasizing that the will is autonomous only when determined by the moral law. Within the liberal tradition, John Stuart Mill expanded the concept by linking it to individual liberty and personal development, arguing that individuality is a fundamental element of well-being [2].

Later theoretical developments shifted the interpretation of autonomy from a strictly normative principle toward a developmental process. Piaget demonstrated that moral autonomy emerges through cooperation and cognitive maturation [3], while Erikson associated it with voluntary behavioral control and identity formation [4]. In educational thought, autonomy is connected to active participation in one's own formation:

Dewey defined freedom as the capacity to shape one's experience [5], and Montessori identified independence as the primary goal of education [6].

Contemporary perspectives, particularly self-determination theory proposed by Deci and Ryan, conceptualize autonomy as behavior that is self-initiated and aligned with internalized values, whose satisfaction supports optimal functioning and well-being [7]. Within this framework, personal autonomy is understood as an integrative construct uniting moral, psychological, and educational dimensions and representing a key objective of contemporary education.

Against this background, the present study analyzes the evolution of the concept of personal autonomy and proposes an integrative model for understanding its role in the development of autonomous and reflective personalities.

Research Aim

The study aims to examine the conceptual evolution of personal autonomy across major philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical paradigms in order to clarify its theoretical status and relevance for the sciences of education. The analysis seeks to identify the constitutive dimensions of autonomy and to formulate an integrative interpretative framework applicable to contemporary educational processes.

Research Methodology

The research adopts a theoretical design grounded in critical analysis and comparative synthesis of relevant scholarly literature addressing the problem of personal autonomy. The bibliographic corpus includes classical and contemporary works from moral philosophy, developmental psychology, and pedagogy, selected according to criteria of conceptual relevance and theoretical significance. This methodological approach enables the correlation of interdisciplinary perspectives and facilitates the identification of the multidimensional structure of personal autonomy as a complex construct situated at the intersection of normative, developmental, and educational frameworks.

Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Personal Autonomy

The conceptualization of personal autonomy in modern European thought is closely connected to the emergence of moral subjectivity and the affirmation of reason as an autonomous normative authority. Within the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, autonomy became a defining criterion of personhood, marking a rupture from heteronomous models of conduct grounded in external authority, tradition, or affective determinations. The modern subject came to be understood as an instance capable of grounding its own norms, and this capacity constitutes the core of human dignity.

In Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, autonomy acquires the status of a constitutive principle of morality. The philosopher asserts that autonomy of the will is the property by which the will is a law to itself [1], emphasizing that the will is autonomous only insofar as it determines itself according to the moral law. Kantian autonomy is inseparable from universality and responsibility: the moral subject acts according to maxims that can be universalized, and human dignity derives precisely from the capacity to act out of duty. Consequently, autonomy does not express empirical freedom but moral freedom – the rational capacity for self-determination – with direct implications for education, where the cultivation of autonomy entails developing critical deliberation and responsible judgment.

Within the liberal tradition, John Stuart Mill shifts the emphasis from the universality of moral norms to the individuality of the person. He argues that the exercise of power over an individual is legitimate only to prevent harm to others [2] and maintains that individuality is an essential component of well-being. In this perspective, autonomy becomes a condition of personal development and social progress, associated with freedom of choice and pluralism of life forms.

Comparatively, Kantian autonomy is normative and transcendental, whereas Millian autonomy is contextual and existential. Nevertheless, both perspectives converge in the idea that autonomy expresses personal maturity and responsibility. In contemporary analytic ethics, Ernst Tugendhat interprets autonomy as a form of reflexive responsibility grounded in the individual's capacity to rationally justify one's own ac-

tions. This dual philosophical tradition laid the foundations for later developments of the concept, which in contemporary reflection is analyzed not only as a moral principle but also as a formative process dependent on social and educational conditions of human development.

Autonomy in Developmental Psychology

The integration of autonomy into developmental psychology marks a shift from its normative philosophical meaning toward a process-oriented understanding of personality formation. Autonomy is no longer viewed solely as a moral attribute but as the result of cognitive maturation, social interaction, and identity development, allowing its analysis across developmental stages and contextual influences.

In Jean Piaget’s theory, moral autonomy represents the highest stage of moral judgment. He distinguishes heteronomous morality, based on obedience to authority, from autonomous morality grounded in cooperation and reciprocity, emphasizing that reciprocal respect is the condition of moral autonomy [3]. Children become autonomous when they understand rules as outcomes of mutual agreement, highlighting the role of cognitive development and social relations in moral reasoning.

Erik Erikson complements this view by linking autonomy to identity formation and self-confidence. In the stage of “autonomy versus shame and doubt,” the sense of autonomy arises from experiences of voluntary control over one’s actions [4], whereas excessively controlling environments may generate insecurity. Thus, autonomy is both cognitive and psychosocial, grounded in emotional security and supportive relationships.

Lawrence Kohlberg further develops this perspective through his theory of moral reasoning, showing that advanced moral development requires orientation toward internalized principles and critical evaluation of norms. Moral autonomy therefore involves reflective commitment to values rather than mere rule compliance.

Overall, these perspectives converge in viewing autonomy as a developmental construct that emerges gradually through interaction between internal maturation and environmental conditions.

Table 1. Psychological Models of Autonomy Development

Author	Central Dimension	Developmental Mechanism	Educational Implication
Piaget	Cognitive–moral	Social cooperation	Active participation
Erikson	Psychosocial	Confidence and initiative	Supportive climate
Kohlberg	Moral–rational	Internalization of principles	Reflective ethical education

Consequently, in developmental psychology autonomy is conceptualized as a multidimensional process integrating cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions. While Piaget emphasizes intellectual maturation and cooperation, Erikson highlights identity formation and volitional experience, and Kohlberg underscores the development of moral reasoning. The complementarity of these perspectives confirms the complexity of personal autonomy and supports the necessity of an integrative educational approach capable of simultaneously fostering reflection, initiative, and responsibility.

Autonomy in Pedagogy and the Sciences of Education

Within the field of education sciences, personal autonomy acquires a specific meaning, being analyzed not only as a psychological attribute or philosophical principle but as a fundamental outcome of the formative process. Whereas in philosophy autonomy denotes rational self-legislation and in developmental psychology it reflects progressive personality maturation, in pedagogy it becomes an indicator of educational effectiveness and of the degree to which cognitive, affective, and volitional competencies are internalized.

In the tradition of pragmatic pedagogy, John Dewey regards autonomy as the result of active participation in educational experience. He argues that freedom does not consist in the absence of constraint but in the power to participate intelligently in determining the conditions of one’s own experience [5]. Education must therefore cultivate individuals capable of independent reflection and responsible decision-making, since its aim is not the transmission of knowledge but the formation of the capacity for continuous learning [5].

Similarly, Maria Montessori develops an educational philosophy centered on independence and self-education, explicitly affirming that independence is the goal of education [6]. The development of autonomy depends on the child's freedom to act within a properly structured environment, as excessive adult intervention may inhibit initiative and responsibility. In this perspective, the educator's role is not to control activity directly but to organize conditions that enable independent learning.

From a critical-pedagogical standpoint, Paulo Freire interprets autonomy as the outcome of awareness and critical reflection on reality, arguing that authentic education must stimulate the learner's capacity to become the subject of one's own formation [8]. Contemporary approaches further associate educational autonomy with self-regulated learning, defined as a process through which learners set goals, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes.

Research literature conceptualizes self-regulated learning as an active process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's cognitive behavior, closely correlated with autonomy development and academic achievement. Empirical studies indicate that autonomous learners demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation, persistence, and performance, confirming that autonomy functions not only as a pedagogical ideal but also as a predictor of educational success. Theoretically, autonomy may be interpreted as the result of interaction among three fundamental variables: educational climate; teaching style; structure of learning tasks.

Psychopedagogical research shows that supportive instructional styles promote autonomy, whereas excessive control reduces initiative and individual responsibility [9].

Table 2. Pedagogical Paradigms of Autonomy Development

Paradigm	Representative Author	Conception of Autonomy	Role of Educator	Educational Implications
Pragmatist	Dewey	Autonomy through experience	Facilitator	Active learning
Developmental pedagogy	Montessori	Autonomy through independence	Environment organizer	Self-education
Contemporary pedagogy	Modern theories	Self-regulated autonomy	Reflective guide	Lifelong learning

Comparative analysis demonstrates that regardless of theoretical orientation, autonomy is consistently conceptualized as the result of active participation in one's own formative process. Differences among paradigms concern not the finality but the modality of realization: Dewey emphasizes reflective experience, Montessori highlights structured independence, and contemporary pedagogy stresses self-regulation competencies. The convergence of these perspectives confirms the status of autonomy as a central aim of modern education and is further supported by critical pedagogy, where autonomy is interpreted as the outcome of conscious reflection upon educational experience [8].

Personal Autonomy in Contemporary Motivational Theories

In contemporary psychological and educational literature, personal autonomy is reinterpreted through motivational theories and the paradigm of self-determination, being understood not only as a personality attribute but as a fundamental mechanism of psychological and social functioning. While classical perspectives associated autonomy with moral self-legislation and developmental psychology with personality maturation, current approaches conceptualize it as a basic psychological need and a condition of behavioral self-regulation.

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, defines autonomy as the experience of behavior that is self-initiated and congruent with the self. To be autonomous means to act with a sense of volition and choice [7], implying internalization of values and their integration into personal identity. Autonomy is therefore not equivalent to independence, but to behavioral regulation aligned with the authentic self [7].

Within this framework, autonomy and relatedness are mutually supportive rather than antagonistic, a clarification with important pedagogical implications, as supporting student autonomy promotes responsibility and internalization of norms.

Autonomy is considered one of the three basic psychological needs, alongside competence and relatedness, whose satisfaction leads to optimal functioning and psychological well-being [7]. Supportive educational environments foster intrinsic motivation, whereas controlling contexts tend to inhibit initiative. A key distinction of the theory concerns controlled versus autonomous behavior: the former is driven by pressures, while the latter results from personally endorsed choice, leading to authentic engagement rather than mere compliance [7].

Contemporary research consistently shows that supporting students' autonomy correlates positively with academic performance, persistence, and learning satisfaction. Thus, autonomy functions both as an educational objective and as an explanatory mechanism of learning effectiveness, being closely linked to self-regulated learning, reflexive identity formation, and the capacity to act responsibly in complex social contexts.

Results and Discussion

An Integrative Model of Personal Autonomy

The analysis of the evolution of personal autonomy highlights the need for an integrative theoretical framework capable of synthesizing major conceptual directions identified in the literature. The interdisciplinary complexity of the concept shows that autonomy cannot be explained through a single paradigm but must be understood as the result of interaction among moral, cognitive, affective, and educational dimensions. Such an approach reflects contemporary educational science, which favors multidimensional interpretations over reductive explanatory models. As Dewey noted, education is not preparation for life but life itself [5], and therefore autonomy must be understood within lived experience.

Philosophically, autonomy denotes the subject's capacity for moral self-legislation and responsible decision-making, constituting a foundation of human dignity. Kant emphasizes that the will is autonomous only when independent of external determinants [1]. Psychologically, autonomy results from cognitive maturation and internalization of norms; Piaget shows that children become autonomous when they understand rules as outcomes of mutual agreement [3]. From a psychosocial perspective, Erikson links autonomy to experiences of voluntary control, while Kohlberg demonstrates that advanced moral development requires internalized principles and critical evaluation of norms [4].

Pedagogically, autonomy functions both as an educational goal and as an indicator of formative effectiveness. Montessori argues that independence is the aim of education [6], and contemporary studies confirm that autonomy-supportive environments enhance intrinsic motivation and optimal functioning [7].

These perspectives converge in defining personal autonomy as a multidimensional construct structured along four interdependent axes: moral (internalized principles), cognitive (reflective reasoning), affective–volitional (self-control and competence), and educational (self-regulated learning). Their interaction confirms that autonomy is a systemic construct emerging from the integration of developmental processes and educational influences. Accordingly, the development of autonomy depends on learning contexts that foster reflection, responsible choice, and value internalization.

Conclusion

The analysis of the evolution of the concept of personal autonomy reveals its transformation from a normative philosophical principle into a multidimensional construct of major relevance for developmental psychology and the sciences of education. The theoretical trajectory of the concept demonstrates that autonomy does not constitute an isolated personal trait but rather the outcome of interaction among cognitive maturation, affective experience, value internalization, and educational influences.

Within pedagogical contexts, autonomy emerges as a fundamental goal of education, reflecting the individual's capacity for self-regulation, independent thinking, and responsible decision-making. Contemporary theoretical approaches conceptualize it simultaneously as an indicator of optimal personality functioning and as a prerequisite for self-regulated learning and adaptive social participation.

The convergence of philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical perspectives confirms the status of personal autonomy as a key indicator of reflexive maturity and as an essential conceptual reference for the design of modern educational practices. Future research directions may focus on the pedagogical operationalization of the proposed integrative model and its empirical validation in applied educational contexts, thereby contributing to the development of evidence-based strategies for cultivating autonomy in learners across diverse educational settings.

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL FREEDOM

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The present study is based on a systematic and comparative analysis of the specialized literature in the fields of philosophy, psychology and educational sciences and aims at the theoretical and methodological substantiation of the concept of emotional freedom in relation to general freedom and particular freedom. The investigative approach is structured on the theoretical coordinate and the methodological coordinate, in accordance with the rigors of doctoral research promoted within the Doctoral School of Educational Sciences. It is argued that emotional freedom constitutes the mature expression of personal autonomy and an indicator of the internalization of educational values. The theoretical results obtained can serve as a foundation for the further development of a pedagogical model for cultivating emotional freedom in students.

Keywords: *freedom, general freedom, particular freedom, emotional freedom, emotional education, emotional regulation.*

EVOLUȚIA CONCEPTULUI DE LIBERTATE EMOȚIONALĂ

Articolul este elaborat în baza analizei sistematice și comparative a literaturii de specialitate din domeniul filosofiei, psihologiei și științelor educației și vizează fundamentarea teoretico-metodologică a conceptului de libertate emoțională în raport cu libertatea generală și libertatea particulară. Demersul investigativ este structurat pe coordonata teoretică și coordonata metodologică, în conformitate cu rigorile cercetării doctorale promovate în cadrul Școlii Doctorale Științe ale Educației. Se argumentează faptul că libertatea emoțională constituie expresia matură a autonomiei personale și un indicator al interiorizării valorilor educaționale. Rezultatele teoretice obținute pot servi drept fundament pentru dezvoltarea ulterioară a unui model pedagogic de cultivare a libertății emoționale la elevi.

Cuvinte-cheie: *libertate, libertate generală, libertate particulară, libertate emoțională, educație emoțională, reglare emoțională.*

Introduction

Freedom is a concept that has evolved alongside society, from simple to complex, from an elementary meaning – such as the absence of chains – to a multivalent notion such as emotional **freedom**. If, for the ancient Greeks, freedom implied the fulfillment of external conditions, such as participation in the life of the city and independence from any form of constraint, without having a clearly defined emotional meaning, today the concept has undergone semantic transformations, acquiring a deeper significance related to emotional capacities, personal autonomy, emotional self-regulation, and the ability to manage one's own life.

Thus, multiple perspectives on emotional freedom can be observed, including philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, sociological, anthropological, biological, and legal approaches, addressed by various specialists whose viewpoints are presented in the present paper.

The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing importance attributed to emotions and by the increasingly rapid and profound transformations of contemporary society. Having become a foundation of inner life, emotion represents a central pillar in people's way of living through its influence on their actions, reactions, and attitudes. In this context, emotional freedom becomes a necessary capacity for improving inner life, with significant influence on external life as well.

Therefore, emotional freedom supports individuals in developing the competencies needed to adapt to the challenges of the modern world (marketing, digitalization, economic and political systems, etc.) and to remain resilient in the face of changes that may have negative effects on them.

Research Methodology

The study aimed to present and analyze the perspectives on the concept of emotional freedom in order to highlight the human capacity for holistic development. The investigation was conducted in accordance with the principles of research in the field of education sciences and involved an extensive theoretical analysis of specialized literature.

In order to illustrate emotional freedom as accurately as possible from the perspective of different disciplines, the methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, and scientific generalization, as well as the interpretative method, were employed. Through this approach, the viewpoints of specialists from different fields were identified, revealing a common element: the human capacity to transform one's life.

Etymology and Historical Background

The concept of freedom originates from the Latin word *libertas*, *-atis*, which means “not to wear chains” and represents a term opposed to slavery. The translation of the term highlights its connection with the idea of freedom, referring to the state of not being subjected to other people, ideologies, or constraints.

Philosophers have had varied perspectives on the concept of freedom. From Antiquity to the present day, numerous authors have proposed fundamental models that represent important moments in the evolution of this concept. In ancient Greek thought, freedom was appreciated through several dimensions: the absence of any form of submission, such as being a slave or a prisoner; the right to actively participate in civic life; and the degree to which an individual belonged to a society capable of self-governance.

Thus, it can be observed that the Greeks attributed an initial meaning to this notion, namely a political meaning, which differs from contemporary perspectives where freedom can be discussed from multiple viewpoints, such as sociological, psychological, legal, and others.

According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, freedom has several meanings, including “the possibility of acting according to one's own will,” “the state of a person who fully enjoys civil rights,” and other meanings referring to the absence of captivity.

Therefore, we can synthesize the semantic evolution of the word *freedom*, from “life in the *polis*” in ancient Greek society to “the capacity and power of an individual to lead their life according to their own beliefs and principles”.

Emotional Freedom from a Philosophical Perspective

Philosophers such as Aristotle, René Descartes, and Baruch Spinoza associate freedom with free will, in the sense that human beings have the capacity to choose among several possibilities without being constrained or influenced by internal or external factors. Thus, free will is expressed through a cognitive capacity for selection, which implies a certain level of autonomy and responsibility.

According to Aristotle, one of the most influential philosophers of Antiquity, a person manifests free will when they must choose between two antagonistic alternatives and possess the appropriate resources to carry out the action and assume its consequences [3].

From a modern perspective, Baruch Spinoza argued that “everything is determined by the necessity of the divine nature,” thus presenting a different viewpoint, according to which human beings are not truly free, since real power derives from universal natural causes [17, p. 224].

Descartes, another representative of modern philosophy, presents free will as a human quality that highlights an individual's moral and cognitive abilities, uninfluenced by the external environment, contributing to the awareness of one's level of responsibility.

On the other hand, Descartes argues that “*not making choices is also a choice*.” He associates freedom with indifference, suggesting that the more indifferent a person is, the freer they become, implying the usefulness of maintaining a minimal level of emotional involvement [17, p. 225].

Immanuel Kant defines freedom as the “*relationship between an intelligible cause and its phenomenal effect*,” emphasizing the necessity for individuals to understand the motives underlying their actions without being forced by various external factors. In this sense, the understanding and management of emotions, as well as emotional regulation, should be capacities previously developed by individuals [15].

Henri Bergson states that in order to be free, a person must possess self-knowledge. He views freedom as an internal mechanism of emotional reactions, manifested in spontaneous choices guided by affectivity rather than by rational deliberation, and not constrained by external pressures [6]. For the Stoics, emotional freedom arises from the mind's perception of reality. Epictetus explains that individuals should accept what they cannot change and use their minds to confront and adapt to reality, regardless of whether the structure of the universe is natural or divine [26, p. 1111].

Therefore, the perspectives presented show that emotional freedom consists in the capacity to understand life and to assume both decisions and their consequences.

Emotional Freedom from a Psychological Perspective

Paul Popescu-Neveanu, referring to the ideas of Michel de Montaigne, states that “true freedom means having great power over one's own being (...) a proof of self-mastery, knowledge of the world and of one's own self, connection to the highest level of values, and the promotion of these values” [23, p. 412–413]. From this perspective, a free individual is one who possesses the capacity for self-knowledge and understanding of the world, based on which they make decisions or act according to their own principles, without encountering internal limitations or constraints.

Viktor Frankl, a neurologist and psychiatrist, brings a distinctive perspective on emotional freedom grounded in his personal experiences in Nazi concentration camps. In his work *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl recounts events from that period, observing the reactions of prisoners and noting that those who had a purpose in life (such as love for someone or a sense of responsibility) were more likely to survive.

He concludes that the freedom to choose one's attitude toward life is the only thing a person cannot lose and that no one can take away [13].

According to Sigmund Freud, “unconscious psychic life determines conscious psychic life” [12], meaning that individuals often make choices dictated by the subconscious – a domain that cannot be fully controlled. This perspective suggests that complete emotional freedom is impossible because of automatic defense mechanisms operating at the unconscious level.

Abraham Maslow views emotional freedom as a consequence of the satisfaction of basic human needs, as these are essential for individuals to free themselves from fears or psychological blockages. Once these needs are fulfilled, individuals begin an upward journey through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In this process, they learn to cope with external pressures, develop emotional capacities, and base their actions and decisions on their own values, ultimately reaching the highest level: self-actualization. This process refers to achieving one's personal potential at the highest level [18].

According to Daniel J. Siegel, emotional freedom is conditioned by mechanisms such as mindful presence, mindfulness, and the space between stimulus and response. Conscious presence is a mental capacity that refers to the objective observation of lived experiences; in other words, the individual becomes aware of what they experience without identifying themselves with those emotions.

The “Wheel of Awareness”, an exercise suggested by the author for developing emotional freedom, functions in the following way: the center of the wheel represents the state of presence, while its spokes act like antennas through which the individual comes into contact with various experiences. The challenge is to return to the “center” in order to remain present and avoid becoming attached to any particular experience [27].

From a psychological perspective, emotional freedom is therefore conditioned by psychological abilities such as self-knowledge, meaning-making, and the management of one's own emotional experiences.

Emotional Freedom from a Pedagogical Perspective

According to Ion Neacșu and Mihaela Suditu, emotional freedom is developed through reflection, practice, and educational guidance [20]. In this sense, the earlier emotional–affective education begins, the easier it becomes for children to develop capacities for emotional control, awareness, and acceptance of emotions.

Once these abilities are acquired, students develop authenticity, meaning they are able to express their emotions appropriately without fear or pretense. In order to cultivate these capacities, the authors emphasize the crucial role of the teacher, who serves both as a model and as an emotional guide for students.

In their work, the authors propose sets of affective exercises designed to stimulate emotional development, based on educational methods such as retelling, group work, and conversation.

Sacaliuc L. [25] emphasizes the importance of developing emotional competencies from early childhood education, as this is the stage when preschool children learn mainly through play and imitation. This development is supported through several educational contexts: the routines within personal development activities, which create predictable environments where children know what follows; the existence of a calming space, which helps children develop emotional self-regulation; and the activities carried out in kindergarten that foster cooperation and empathy.

Last but not least, the teacher represents a strong emotional model. Similar to Ion Neacșu and Mihaela Suditu, Sacaliuc argues that the acquisition of emotional processes such as emotional awareness, appropriate emotional expression, self-regulation, and empathy contributes to the development of emotional freedom.

Through the work *Emile, or On Education*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau argues that it is healthy for a child to develop in accordance with their natural nature, since a child is inherently good at birth, while social influences often prevent authenticity. The author defines authenticity through states of emotional sincerity, spontaneity, and inner coherence. This means that each child should not feel forced to hide their emotions but should be able to express them as they truly are, react naturally rather than follow imposed behavioral patterns, and allow their actions to reflect what they genuinely feel [24].

In the author's view, these are the necessary conditions for the development of emotional freedom. Otherwise, emotional freedom may be lost, and the child learns to hide or fear their own emotional experiences.

Therefore, according to pedagogical perspectives, emotional education is beneficial from early childhood, as it develops competencies and capacities for autonomy and self-discipline, which ultimately lead to individual freedom.

Emotional Freedom from a Sociological Perspective

Michel Foucault considers that “the way people see the world,” reflected through behavior, thinking, or expression, is grounded in a dominant conceptual framework shaped by the historical period in which individuals live. Thus, people relate to a system of reference that constantly evolves, bringing changes in collective mentality. Foucault's perspective suggests that freedom is culturally conditioned by social values and practices [29, p. 13].

According to Eva Illouz, emotional freedom is constructed according to social models and is shaped by capitalism, in which emotions become instruments of marketing—emotions sell and are sold. At the same time, it is limited by cultural norms, within which relationships are negotiated according to costs and benefits, and love is no longer purely authentic but becomes subject to negotiation [16].

Therefore, the author's perspective shows that, in contemporary society, emotions often represent a form of staged authenticity, being processed and displayed in order to “perform emotionally” within a world dominated by consumerism, multinational corporations, and artificial intelligence. In line with Romanian sociological perspectives, George C. Homans and Peter Blau argue that emotions are “indicators of the quality of relationships and the distribution of power” [8]. From this viewpoint, an individual acquires emotional freedom when they possess emotional resources and an equal position within relationships. In other words, emotional freedom depends on the capacity to negotiate, to have options, and not to depend excessively on a partner. In contrast to other perspectives, these authors suggest that emotions may also be influenced externally by factors such as satisfaction, interaction, and power dynamics.

John Stuart Mill states that “a person is human because of their capacity to choose” [7, p. 589]. Thus, human emotional freedom lies in the capacity to make choices, although society may be justified in intervening in private life under certain exceptional circumstances, and human behavior is influenced by social norms.

Specialists therefore emphasize that emotional freedom is shaped by cultural conditions, values, and social practices. Consequently, it may differ from one society to another depending on the historical period and cultural context.

Emotional Freedom from an Anthropological Perspective

Bălăceanu-Stolnici C. considers emotions to be a complex product shaped by biology, culture, and spirituality. In other words, individuals understand their emotions but also shape and express them according to cultural influences and spiritual dimensions. According to the author, inner balance is achieved through reflection, emotional maturation, and awareness of human nature [4].

Gilbert Durand [10], professor emeritus of cultural anthropology and sociology, argues that human experience develops through imagination, archetypes, and symbolic structures, with emotions organizing the way individuals relate to the world. From this perspective, emotional freedom is conditioned by the capacity not to remain trapped within a single emotional or symbolic register, but rather to recognize symbolic structures, express emotions through cultural forms, and integrate them appropriately in order to navigate different experiential registers.

A similar perspective is presented by Ardelean [1, p. 447], who states that emotional freedom represents a form of liberation through which individuals express their emotions in a way that maintains both inner balance and social harmony.

Furthermore, Moanță [19, p. 139] considers that individuals use coping methods for emotional self-regulation once they become aware that the proper management of emotions brings significant changes in everyday life, improving both mental and overall health across different aspects of life.

In his studies, Georges Gurvitch relates freedom to the human capacity to succeed in accordance with both personal and cultural emotional norms. In this perspective, individuals shape their own life paths while building healthy relationships within their communities [14, p. 588].

From an anthropological perspective, emotional freedom is therefore seen as a construct formed within cultures and civilizations, achieved through self-knowledge, interpretation, and transformation of emotional experiences in accordance with cultural norms.

Emotional Freedom from a Biological Perspective

From a biological point of view, Ardelean [1] states that our ancestors play an important role in the development of emotions and positive attitudes, as they shape patterns that individuals tend to follow. For example, the development of optimism and acceptance depends on how we were raised, the experiences we had within the family, and the emotional models we observed, which gradually become neurobiological processes. Capacities such as awareness and self-regulation represent key premises for controlling emotions and their influence on biological reactions.

Paul Ekman [11], through his research, demonstrated how humans recognize basic emotions expressed through facial expressions, such as anger, disgust, contempt, joy, fear, sadness, and surprise. Within the same perspective, Ekman emphasizes that basic emotions are biologically conditioned, while emotional freedom develops when individuals are able to regulate their own emotions; suppressing or eliminating them produces the opposite effect. In other words, when people become aware of the triggers that generate emotional reactions, they gain freedom if they manage these emotions appropriately rather than surrendering to impulsive reactions.

From a biological perspective, specialists conclude that emotional freedom emerges when individuals recognize their emotional triggers, develop the capacity for self-regulation of reactions, and understand that certain emotional patterns are inherited.

Emotional Freedom from a Legal Perspective

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) does not provide a concrete definition of emotional freedom; however, it acknowledges that it is framed by certain legal limits such as freedom of expression, protection of private life and dignity, and the prohibition of degrading treatment (such as torture or bullying) [5, p. 507].

In their studies, Dabu and Gușanu [9] argue that a clear distinction must be made between rights and freedoms in order to determine the external exercise of the latter. Thus, rights are established by law and may be violated, while emotional freedom represents an intimate inner space that must be legally protected.

In this context, legal formulations should provide greater clarity so that inner freedom is not confused with its external expression, which may be subject to legal restrictions.

In an article published on a specialized legal website (drept.md.wordpress.com) [30], the issue of freedom is addressed from both an internal and an external perspective. In this context, a person may manage their emotions internally as they wish, without constraint, since these are considered intimate experiences. However, from an external perspective, emotional manifestations must be regulated in order not to infringe upon the rights of others. Thus, emotional autonomy is regarded as part of private life and freedom of conscience.

Legal scholars have also expressed opinions regarding emotions and freedom. Among them, Odină A. [21] states that emotions belong to the sphere of private life, which is legally protected. Emotional freedom, therefore, represents a personal right expressed through respect and legal protection. Consequently, emotional freedom is considered part of the right to private life.

Emotional Freedom from an Orthodox Perspective

Orthodox theology states that emotional freedom means liberation from passions and the attainment of inner peace. In this perspective, negative emotions (such as hatred, despair, and others) are considered passions that can be healed through spiritual practices such as fasting, prayer, and confession, through which individuals gain spiritual fruits such as peace, patience, and joy.

Antonie Plămădeală argues that emotional balance is achieved through community life, where individuals learn patience, obedience, respect, and order [22]. The Metropolitan defines freedom as an “inner state whose purpose is to transform for the better the way one lives in the world.”

This perspective is profound because it highlights a process of inner renewal and purification, through which individuals free themselves from what is considered negative and replace it with what represents goodness—namely the attainment of inner peace, forgiveness, and spiritual order.

According to Teodorescu [28], emotional freedom allows the external expression of emotions without constraints, yet it remains limited by morality and responsibility. For the author, true freedom represents the connection with God, achieved through the liberation from and healing of passions.

Conclusions

From the analysis of the presented information, the interdisciplinary nature of the concept of emotional freedom becomes evident. Each investigated field provides different perspectives that converge on the way individuals recognize, interpret, and manage their emotions. Essentially, these perspectives show that emotional freedom is a process within personal development, requiring time and experiences, rather than being an innate ability or a given fact. What emerges from the various perspectives is that emotional freedom is closely related to inner autonomy and the individual capacity to function in accordance with social and cultural norms and contexts.

As presented in this paper, emotional freedom is achieved once individuals develop significant emotional abilities, specific to the perspectives of each discipline. Thus, self-knowledge and free will, according to philosophy; self-regulation and emotional awareness, from a psychological perspective; the development of competencies, from a pedagogical viewpoint; sociology interprets emotional freedom in relation to the social context; anthropology emphasizes the cultural environment; biology highlights the role of the body and physiology; the legal perspective reflects the right to private life; while Orthodox theology understands freedom as a process of renewal and liberation from passions in order to achieve inner peace.

Therefore, emotional freedom represents the common point among these disciplines, reflected in the individual's capacity to shape and direct their own personal life.

In essence, the paper highlights the importance of acquiring emotional freedom as a necessary condition for human development, resulting from the interaction between biological elements, cultural influences, educational pathways, and processes of inner maturation. In other words, emotional freedom proves to be useful in helping individuals make their lives easier and learn to live in harmony both with themselves and with others.

Based on this synthesis, pedagogical models can be developed for any level of education, within which emotional and social education activities may be implemented with the aim of cultivating emotional freedom by forming autonomous, authentic individuals capable of appropriately managing life in the contemporary world.

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CONDITIONS THAT FACILITATE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

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The article highlights the importance of creating a motivating, accessible, and student-centered educational environment that fosters students' active participation in both the learning process and school life. It analyzes key conditions for meaningful participation, including trust-based relationships between students and teachers, adaptation of educational content to students' needs and interests, diversification of learning activities, and the development of autonomy, initiative, and responsibility. The study also examines the conditions through the lens of major participation theories and a set of standards on student participation in democratic decision-making process. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of informing students about opportunities for involvement and the need for continuous teacher training to support a participatory and inclusive educational climate.

Keywords: *participation, autonomy, student-teacher relationship, participation models, participation standard, decision-making process, participation condition.*

CONDIȚII CARE FACILITEAZĂ PARTICIPAREA ELEVILOR ÎN PROCESELE DECIZIONALE DEMOCRATICE

Articolul evidențiază importanța creării unui mediu educațional motivant, accesibil și centrat pe elev, care să stimuleze participarea activă a elevilor atât în procesul de învățare, cât și în viața școlii. Sunt analizate condițiile-cheie ale participării semnificative, inclusiv dezvoltarea relațiilor bazate pe încredere între elevi și cadrele didactice, adaptarea conținuturilor educaționale la nevoile și interesele elevilor, diversificarea activităților de învățare, precum și dezvoltarea autonomiei, inițiativei și responsabilității. Studiul examinează, de asemenea, condițiile prin prisma principalelor teorii ale participării și a unui set de standarde privind participarea elevilor în procesele decizionale democratice. Totodată, subliniază importanța informării elevilor despre oportunitățile de implicare și necesitatea formării continue a cadrelor didactice pentru susținerea unui climat educațional participativ și incluziv.

Cuvinte-cheie: *participare, autonomie, relație elev-profesor, modele de participare, standard de participare, proces decizional, condiție de participare.*

Introduction

Student participation in democratic decision-making processes within schools requires the creation of an accessible, motivating, and friendly environment where students can truly feel involved. Contemporary approaches to educational governance emphasize the role of stakeholder participation – students, teachers, parents, and the community – in the process of developing and implementing educational policies. Their active involvement contributes to increasing the relevance, transparency, and sustainability of educational decisions. In this regard, the specialized literature highlights that “participation is the cornerstone of effective strategies for education for all” [2]. This would imply equal access for all, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, academic performance, or disability, ensuring the process itself is supported with all necessary equipment, as well as spaces for organizing it, and promoting a positive climate where students feel welcomed, valued, appreciated, and heard. Participation is not reduced to mere behavioral involvement; rather, it is understood as a complex construct that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. It is directly correlated with motivation for learning, the development of competencies, and academic outcomes.

Methodological Framework

The methodology adopts a qualitative, conceptual-analytical approach, grounded in the interdisciplinary analysis of literature from the field of educational sciences, democratic theory, and international normative

frameworks concerning children's rights and student participation. The investigative process was oriented toward identifying and systematizing the conditions necessary for achieving meaningful student participation in school decision-making processes, understood as a complex process situated at the intersection of participation models, participation standards, institutional structures, and educational practices.

The analysis includes the study of relevant international normative documents, as well as conceptual frameworks underpinning student participation in education, with a focus on the right to expression and real influence in decision-making, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In parallel, a thematic analysis of academic literature on student voice, participatory governance, and school democracy was conducted, with the aim of highlighting recurring patterns of participation and the conditions that support or limit it.

Based on these sources, a conceptual modeling approach was developed, aimed at articulating the interdependence between the axiological, pedagogical, institutional, and professional dimensions of student participation. Thus, axiological conditions were identified, associated with a democratic culture of respect and the recognition of the student as a rights-bearing subject; pedagogical conditions, reflected in interactive, student-centered teaching practices; institutional conditions, targeting the existence of functional and legitimate participatory structures, such as student councils; as well as professional conditions, referring to teachers' competencies to facilitate participation and support student autonomy.

Results Achieved

Theoretical Models of Participation

An important reference point in conceptualizing the conditions for student participation in decision-making processes lies in participation models that integrate perspectives from developmental psychology, the sociology of childhood, democratic theory, participatory education, and the child rights-based approach. The student engagement model proposed by J. Fredricks and Ph. Blumenfeld outlines three interdependent components: behavioral participation, which involves presence and engagement in tasks; emotional participation, expressed through interest and attachment to school; and cognitive participation, reflected in intellectual effort and learning strategies [8]. This model highlights that mere active presence does not guarantee authentic learning unless it is supported by affective involvement and deep cognitive processing.

From a constructivist perspective, L. Vygotsky emphasizes the role of social interaction and the "zone of proximal development" [22], suggesting that student participation is enhanced when tasks are adapted to their developmental level and carried out collaboratively. In this sense, participation becomes a socially mediated process, in which dialogue and cooperation are essential conditions.

At the same time, the democratic participation model promoted by R. Hart, known as the "ladder of participation" [10], highlights different levels of involvement, ranging from symbolic participation to genuine engagement, in which students contribute to decision-making. This model emphasizes the need to create an educational climate that values the student voice.

The concept of democratic participation in education, as developed by J. Dewey, places the student at the center of the educational process, assigning them an active role in constructing their own learning [6]. From this perspective, education is understood as a process of experiential learning, in which students' direct involvement in meaningful activities and in the life of the school community becomes essential. Participation is not merely a means of organizing teaching activities, but a fundamental pedagogical principle that contributes to the development of democratic competencies, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Thus, through active involvement in learning and decision-making processes, students become co-constructors of knowledge, and the school is transformed into a space of authentic democratic practice.

The child participation model developed by H. Shier proposes a complex approach to student involvement in democratic decision-making processes, structured into five progressive levels of participation: children are listened to, are supported to express their views, their views are taken into account, they are involved in decision-making processes, and, at the most advanced level, they share power and responsibility for decisions [18]. These levels reflect a progression from limited participation to meaningful participation, characterized by real influence on decisions. The model integrates three essential institutional

dimensions – opening, opportunity, and obligation – which highlight the extent to which educational institutions are prepared to support student participation. Thus, the model does not only describe levels of participation but also provides an analytical framework for assessing the institutional capacity to create real conditions for student involvement, contributing to the understanding of participation as a process dependent both on the willingness of educational actors and on the existence of clear mechanisms and institutional commitments.

The child participation model developed by L. Lundy is considered one of the most applicable theoretical frameworks in education, as it operationalizes the child’s right to be heard. Unlike hierarchical models, it structures participation around four interdependent conditions: space, voice, audience, and influence. The model highlights that authentic participation requires the creation of institutional conditions that provide students with safe opportunities for expression, support in formulating their views, adults willing to listen actively, and mechanisms through which expressed opinions can influence decisions [15]. Due to its practical and operational nature, the model enables the integration of student participation into the institutional management of schools, strengthening the child rights perspective and emphasizing that participation is an institutional responsibility rather than merely an optional pedagogical practice.

Thus, the concept of student participation can be analyzed through the lens of participation theories, establishing a significant correlation between key elements, levels of participation, essential conditions, and theoretical foundations. The table below systematizes, alongside the aspects mentioned above, the main essence of the models used in the context of student participation.

Table 1. Theoretical Models of Participation

Model	Author	Esence/key elements	Key values for the research
Democratic participation in education	John Dewey	Experiential learning and active engagement [7].	Participation is treated as a fundamental pedagogical principle, in which the student plays an active role in the learning process.
Self-Determination Theory	Edward Deci & Richard Ryan	Intrinsic motivation and optimal individual development are based on the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness [17].	Participation is directly proportional to the student’s motivation and sense of responsibility.
Child participation model	Harry Shier	Five levels (<i>children are listened to, are supported to express their views, their views are taken into consideration, are involved in decision-making processes, and share power and responsibility for decisions</i>) and three institutional dimensions (<i>opening, opportunity, obligation</i>) [18].	The model not only describes the levels of student participation in democratic decision-making processes, but also indicates how prepared an institution is to support them.
Ladder of participation	Roger Hart	Eight levels of participation: <i>manipulation, decoration, tokenism, children are informed, consulted and informed, initiated by adults, shared decisions with children, initiated and led by children, and initiated by children with shared decisions with adults</i> [10].	The model transforms an abstract concept of participation into a concrete, measurable ladder with eight distinct levels. It allows the precise identification of the level at which student participation is situated within democratic decision-making processes in schools.
„Lundy” Model	Laura Lundy	Four dimensions: space, voice, audience, and influence [15].	The model clarifies the necessary conditions for authentic participation, not just its existence.

Standards of student participation in democratic decision-making processes in general education

Based on the results of the literature review and the main national and international policy documents on student participation, the system of **Standards of student participation in democratic decision-making processes in general education** was developed. This system is grounded in the identification of the necessary conditions for ensuring authentic student participation. The standards include four key domains designed to support schools in developing and implementing measures to uphold children's and young people's right to participate in democratic decision-making processes.

a. Management and democratic governance *refer to the set of requirements regarding institutional commitment, policy, structures, and key processes that ensure student participation in decision-making processes. The operationalization of this domain is achieved through the following requirements:*

- Institutional commitment to student participation in decision-making processes requires the school management team to promote a shared and coherent vision of student participation, and for leadership to consult students, parents, and staff on major decisions;
- An internal regulatory framework supportive of participation emphasizes that internal regulations include procedures on student participation, and that the school rules are developed in a participatory manner and operationalize democratic values in a dedicated chapter on student participation;
- Democratic student participation structures imply the existence of functional student bodies, student representation in institutional committees and councils, and a dedicated budget for the dimension of student participation.

b. Institutional capacity and professional development *include the range of conditions regarding the organization of key processes and the level of staff competence, so that student participation is supported through skills, resources, and collaboration. This domain includes the following dimensions:*

- Staff competence development through training programs on student participation;
- Mentoring, exchange of best practices, and learning communities refers to the existence of internal mentoring programs in the field of student participation, as well as functional professional learning communities, including topics related to student participation;
- Resources and partnerships for participation assumes that dedicated resources for student participation exist and that partnerships supporting student participation are in place;
- Equity and inclusion in participation involves the representation of vulnerable students and the accessibility of democratic processes.

c. Curriculum and educational process *refers to the group of requirements regarding the design and organization of curricular and extracurricular activities that develop participation competencies and create real contexts for student involvement. Within this domain, the following aspects are considered:*

- Student participation in curriculum development requires that lesson plans integrate competencies, content, and activities related to student participation;
- Participatory teaching and learning methods through the systematic use of participatory approaches;
- Participatory assessment through self-assessment and peer assessment;
- Community participation / school openness to the community through students' involvement in community-based projects.

d. Monitoring and evaluation *set out conditions and requirements for the continuous improvement of student participation. This domain includes the following requirements:*

- A monitoring system for participation, ensuring the collection of data on student participation;
- Student involvement in school evaluation, so that students take part in the institution's self-evaluation process;
- Reporting and transparency through the preparation of an annual report on student participation.

Overall, the presented domains outline the main components of the institutional framework necessary for promoting authentic student participation in decision-making processes. To ensure the practical applicability of this framework, each domain is structured through specific standards, operationalized via relevant indicators and descriptors that allow for the assessment of the level of student participation in decision-making processes. Furthermore, for each indicator, areas of institutional intervention are defined and con-

crete actions are proposed, aimed at ensuring the **conditions** necessary for authentic participation. In this regard, the developed system provides a coherent and applicable framework, facilitating both the diagnosis of existing practices and the guidance of educational interventions in order to achieve the standards related to the real involvement of students in the process of decision-making in education at school level.

Fundamental conditions of student participation

Authentic student participation in school decision-making processes requires a set of essential conditions, without which it risks remaining a formal exercise lacking real impact. First, **axiological conditions** are indispensable, reflecting the internalization and practice of fundamental democratic values such as mutual respect, recognition of the child's dignity, and valuing students' opinions as a legitimate resource within the educational space, in accordance with the child rights principles promoted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Second, **pedagogical conditions** involve the use of interactive, student-centered teaching strategies that facilitate free expression, authentic dialogue, and the development of argumentation and decision-making skills. Complementarily, **institutional conditions** refer to the existence of functional and legitimate democratic structures, such as student councils, as well as clear mechanisms for consulting and integrating students' opinions into school decision-making processes, in line with the described models of authentic participation. Finally, **professional conditions** are crucial and relate to teachers' preparation to assume the role of facilitators of participation, the development of democratic communication skills, and the adoption of open attitudes toward student voice, aspects also supported by motivational perspectives that emphasize the importance of autonomy and relatedness in students' active engagement. Thus, authentic participation is shaped as the result of the interdependence of these fundamental dimensions, which ensure the transition from formal participation to real and meaningful involvement in school life.

James P. Comer emphasizes the importance of **authentic relationships between teachers, parents, and students for educational success**, stating that “no significant learning takes place without a significant relationship” [4]. In J. Comer's view, the neurological architecture of learning is conditioned by emotional safety, highlighting the importance of the relational triad: student – teacher – parent. When a student perceives the school environment as hostile or indifferent, the brain activates the limbic system, prioritizing survival through defensive mechanisms such as withdrawal or aggression, at the expense of the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex, which are necessary for complex information processing. The teacher is not merely a content provider, but also a substitute attachment figure. When the student feels that the teacher cares, intrinsic motivation emerges. J. Comer argues that parents must be equal partners, not just passive attendees at meetings. If there is a conflict or disconnect between home values and school values, the child experiences cognitive dissonance that hinders their progress. Educational success is not defined solely by grades, but also by the internalization of community values and the ability to navigate social environments.

Also, “when students believe that their abilities can be developed, they participate more enthusiastically in learning, demonstrate greater perseverance, and achieve better results” [11]. An educational framework that supports the development of students' competencies through constructive feedback and encouragement of effort creates conditions for meaningful and authentic student participation. Thus, their involvement is not only driven by external motivation such as grades or praise, but also represents an expression of interest and responsibility toward their own learning process.

Student participation, according to K. Robinson, is deeply influenced by the relevance of the activities in which they are engaged, particularly when these align with their interests, curiosity, and needs. “Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the process and when their talents and interests are recognized and valued” [16]. Education must be shaped by the current context, actively involving students.

“If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow,” [7, p. 79] wrote J. Dewey. We observe that everything is changing rapidly – technology, information, and labor market demands are very different from the past. If teachers use the same outdated methods without adaptation, students will not be prepared for today's reality. Each generation has different needs, interests, and learn-

ing styles. At the same time, today's students are more connected to technology and accustomed to fast, interactive information. Therefore, traditional methods must be complemented with modern, creative, and practical approaches. Education should not remain rigid. If it does not adapt, it limits students and reduces their chances of future success. Teachers have the responsibility to prepare students for "tomorrow," not for "yesterday" [6].

Another important condition in ensuring student participation is teacher preparation. **Teachers require continuous training adapted to new educational demands.** Training programs should include interactive methods of working with students and the development of mentoring competencies to guide and encourage learners. Student participation in the educational process involves more than physical presence in a classroom; it implies cognitive, emotional, and social engagement. In this sense, the statement of M. Ionescu and V. Chis – "The instructional and learning activity, like any human action, is always situated within a specific and concrete context in which certain variables (factors, components, conditions) intervene. Some of these variables are well known, others identifiable; some can be kept under control and adapted to current needs..." [11] – this highlights the traditional organizational framework of the school, which, although effective from a logistical perspective, does not automatically guarantee active student participation. The organization into classes and lessons provides a necessary and predictable structure, facilitating the management of the educational process. However, meaningful student participation can only be ensured if this structure is complemented by student-centered pedagogical practices: differentiated instruction, interactive methods, and a positive student-teacher relationship. Thus, the lesson becomes a space for expression, collaboration, and initiative, and participation shifts from a formal obligation to a voluntary and valuable process for the student's personal development.

Structured and organized participation provides students with predictability, offers a familiar framework for learning, and creates conditions for ongoing monitoring and feedback. The Brazilian educator and philosopher P. Freire promotes the idea of participatory education in which the student plays the role of an active subject. "Education must begin with the resolution of the contradiction between teacher and student, through the reconciliation of the two poles of the contradiction, so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" [9].

Traditionally, the teacher is the one who provides knowledge, while the student merely receives it. This relationship creates a "contradiction," a distance between the one who knows and the one who learns. Reconciliation means bridging this gap between teacher and student through dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect. The teacher is no longer an absolute authority but becomes open to learning as well – from students' questions, ideas, and experiences. At the same time, the student is no longer passive but actively participates, contributes, asks questions, and may even offer new perspectives.

Thus, both become simultaneously teachers and students: the teacher continuously learns and adapts, while the student assumes an active role in the learning process. We emphasize that effective education is based on collaboration and exchange of ideas, not rigid authority. Only in this way does the learning process become dynamic, authentic, and relevant for both sides. The organization of the learning process into classes supports participation through differentiated approaches to students, taking into account the methods used and the space allocated for students' expression, cooperation, and initiative.

As early as 1897, J. Dewey, in his renowned work *My Pedagogic Creed*, stated that "... school must represent life – life as real and vital to the child as that which he lives at home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground" [6]. This reflects the belief of the American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer that school should not be an isolated place of theoretical learning only, but an **active and authentic environment in which students directly participate in community life**. Dewey emphasizes the importance of involving students in relevant and meaningful activities that reflect their everyday reality.

To stimulate student involvement in the life of the educational institution, it is necessary to **diversify participation activities** so that they respond to their interests and needs. "The strategy of complete learning draws teachers' attention to the need for differentiated instruction, based on a deep understanding of the students in the class, including from a motivational, affective, and attitudinal perspective, and to finding optimal solutions for combining different forms of extrinsic motivation and the gradual development of

students' intrinsic motivation" [1]. The idea of the Romanian teacher I. Miron highlights the essential role of motivation and the adaptation of the educational process to students' individual needs in order to ensure their active participation.

Known for her significant contributions to psycho-pedagogy, E. Joita emphasizes the importance of adapting the educational process to the real needs of students. In her view, "learning becomes effective if the following principle is respected: the principle of knowing and respecting students' age-related and individual particularities" [13].

Artistic, cultural, sports, and scientific activities provide students with the opportunity to express themselves in a non-formal setting where they can assert their abilities and strengthen their self-confidence. Interdisciplinary projects, participation in thematic debates, round tables, and discussion workshops help develop students' critical thinking and creativity. An advantage of these processes is the use of various platforms, digital technologies, and online competitions.

Another essential condition, the pedagogical one, states that participation involves the development of students' competencies to engage responsibly and effectively. "What a child is able to do today in collaboration, tomorrow he will be able to do independently" [22, p. 87].

Students must develop argumentative communication skills based on clear evidence to support their message or advocacy, and they must know their rights and responsibilities as members of the educational community. "Students communicate with each other without constantly receiving feedback from the teacher, which develops their initiative and responsibility" [12]. The approach of the teacher I. Junca highlights the active role of students in the learning process, promoting the development of autonomy, responsibility, and critical thinking. The author emphasizes student participation as a key element in improving the quality of education.

In an educational environment, it is beneficial for students to develop the competence to ask relevant questions and to approach a topic from multiple perspectives, to distinguish between facts and opinions, and between credible and questionable sources of information, to make informed decisions based on analysis, and to assume responsibility for their choices. "Self-regulated learners are proactive in their learning efforts because they are aware of their strengths and limitations and because they are guided by personally set goals" [11].

To develop students' competence in autonomy and independence, it is important that they know how to set their own objectives, plan their time and resources, demonstrating good organizational skills, and show initiative by proposing their own ideas and suggestions for involvement in school life or, more broadly, in the community. "A successful school must involve all people, all strengths, and all capacities within it" [19], stated A. Hargreaves, known for promoting the active involvement of students, teachers, and the community in the learning process and in educational reform.

According to the UNICEF Romania Report from April 2025, "students experience a lack of trust from teachers regarding their decision-making capacity. In schools where students are actively involved, better cohesion, discipline, and reduced absenteeism are observed" [21]. Therefore, meaningful student participation is far from fully realized; there is a need for a transformation of the student participation culture, which would also ensure effective conditions for this process.

Consistent student involvement in decision-making processes can be achieved through various means, particularly through class councils, student councils, as well as the presence of student representatives in school councils and committees, where they can freely express their views on the development and implementation of school policies and codes of conduct.

The sociological study "Evaluation of barriers and obstacles to the participation of young people and adolescents in Moldova in decision-making processes" shows that an adequate level of information provided to students regarding opportunities for involvement in school life is a fundamental condition for ensuring their participation. Young people's access to relevant information about participation structures and mechanisms, both at local and national level, is influenced by social and institutional factors such as the effectiveness of communication channels, the duration and consistency of information campaigns, the actors involved in message delivery, and the quality of disseminated content [5].

Although various tools are used to inform young people, disparities are observed between different groups of students regarding access to information related to formal participation, highlighting the need for more inclusive and equitable strategies in the information process.

Eliminating generational differences is essential when discussing participation, as promoting relationships with people of different ages helps children feel less intimidated when they propose or critique the viewpoint of an older person and, conversely, helps adults become more accustomed to understanding children's language and to listening to their thoughts and perspectives as citizens. This quality, highlighted by participating children, promotes equal respect for children of all ages [10], mutual respect among all participants who support one another, and ultimately generates opportunities for the gradual development of dialogue skills [1].

Diversity is one of the conditions that can be approached from two perspectives. On the one hand, experiences should be inclusive, allowing everyone to participate under their own conditions, and the individual potential of each child should be valued so that all can participate without a sense of frustration. On the other hand, participatory methodologies not only help address this diversity but also support the identification of each child's specific abilities, thus enabling more adapted/ personalized intervention [11]. Working on diversity means ensuring that no one feels excluded and that everyone finds a role in which they feel comfortable. When education is based on participation and each child's needs are identified, improvements are also observed in other aspects of children's lives.

Seeing the impact of participation is a strong source of motivation, as students realize that their efforts have been worthwhile, that they have been heard, and that they have influenced a specific reality. L. Chawla identifies, as a condition for competence, that participation should lead to tangible results and that there should be opportunities to contribute, to play a role in decision-making, and in achieving objectives. If it cannot be guaranteed from the outset that children's participation will lead to change, their expectations should not be manipulated in order to make them more "realistic" [3].

The Recommendation of the Council of Europe also takes into account the condition that participation should have concrete consequences within a timeframe that is not too long for children. Participation is a process that is personally experienced and involves a significant degree of engagement. If this condition is not met, it becomes difficult to consolidate learning associated with participation, because participation is learned precisely through participation. The experience of participation should promote the subjective well-being of the children involved. It should be a pleasant framework in which students can enjoy themselves and have fun [20]. Regardless of the field in which they are involved, it is essential that they are enthusiastic and motivated by the activity. Participation should not be limited to entertainment; they must feel that they have a valuable role, that they are an integral part of the process, and that their contribution is essential to the success of the project. At the same time, an authentic space for participation supports the building of relationships – it becomes a place where new friendships are formed, sometimes among very different children.

The experience of children's participation should provide "gateway" opportunities to future participatory experiences; it should promote the continuity of all learning accumulated during childhood related to participation, rather than being limited to a specific reality that ends with childhood. Beyond the characteristics that children consider essential for their participatory experiences, they generally express a desire for greater responsibility, calling on adults to trust their capabilities and recognize that they can be actively involved in all aspects of these experiences [14]. They request to be involved in managing financial resources, time management, logistical issues, etc., which are still typically considered adult responsibilities.

Conclusions

To ensure meaningful student participation in school decision-making processes, it is necessary to have a coherent set of interdependent conditions that go beyond the mere formal openness to their involvement. In this sense, real participation is grounded in axiological conditions, which concern democratic values such as respect, equity, recognition of students' voices, and their acknowledgment as relevant social actors within the educational space.

In addition, pedagogical conditions are indispensable, involving student-centered teaching practices, participatory learning methods, authentic communication, and the development of expression and argumentation skills. Furthermore, authentic participation depends on institutional conditions, reflected in school policies, open decision-making structures, and functional mechanisms for consulting and involving students. Last but not least, professional conditions play an essential role, including teachers' competencies in facilitating participation, positive attitudes toward dialogue, and the ability to transform student participation into a real, consistent, and sustainable educational process.

Thus, authentic participation emerges as the result of the interaction among these four fundamental dimensions, ensuring coherence and effectiveness in the participatory decision-making process within schools. Ultimately, it is important that this space provides students with the feeling that they are heard and that they can express themselves freely, distancing themselves from adult authority structures that dominate other aspects of their daily lives.

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EMOTIONAL LITERACY AS A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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The article examines emotional literacy from a pedagogical perspective, emphasizing its role in enhancing emotional intelligence in primary school students. Grounded in developmental and socio-constructivist approaches as well as contemporary models of emotional intelligence, the study conceptualizes emotional literacy as a systematic educational process integrating emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and constructive communication. The paper analyzes emotional literacy as a pedagogical problem generated by the discrepancy between policy-level recognition of socio-emotional competences and their insufficient operationalization in classroom practice. It is argued that emotional literacy represents a transversal pedagogical framework within primary education, contributing to the holistic development of the child and to the consolidation of a positive educational climate.

Keywords: *emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, socio-emotional competences, primary education, self-regulation, empathy, educational climate, personal development.*

ALFABETIZAREA EMOȚIONALĂ CA PROBLEMĂ PEDAGOGICĂ ÎN SPORIREA INTELIGENȚEI EMOȚIONALE LA ELEVII MICI

Articolul examinează alfabetizarea emoțională dintr-o perspectivă pedagogică, subliniind rolul acesteia în îmbunătățirea inteligenței emoționale la elevii din școala primară. Bazat pe abordări de dezvoltare și socio-constructiviste, precum și pe modele contemporane de inteligență emoțională, studiul conceptualizează alfabetizarea emoțională ca un proces educațional sistematic care integrează conștientizarea emoțională, autoreglarea, empatia și comunicarea constructivă. Lucrarea analizează alfabetizarea emoțională ca o problemă pedagogică generată de discrepanța dintre recunoașterea la nivel de politici a competențelor socio-emoționale și operaționalizarea lor insuficientă în practica din sala de clasă. Se susține că alfabetizarea emoțională reprezintă un cadru pedagogic transversal în cadrul învățământului primar, contribuind la dezvoltarea holistică a copilului și la consolidarea unui climat educațional pozitiv.

Cuvinte-cheie: *alfabetizare emoțională, inteligență emoțională, competențe socio-emoționale, învățământ primar, autoreglare, empatie, climat educațional, dezvoltare afectivă.*

Introduction

In a society characterized by rapid change, education can no longer be limited to the transmission of cognitive knowledge alone. In the document *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* (2015), it is stated that quality education must promote the social, emotional, and ethical competences necessary for responsible citizenship and social cohesion. UNESCO emphasizes that education should aim at the holistic development of the child, including the socio-emotional dimension. Although the term “emotional literacy” is not explicitly used, the document highlights the importance of developing non-cognitive competences, promoting students’ well-being, strengthening resilience, and fostering social responsibility. This indicates that emotional development is considered a systemic priority but it is not always clearly operationalized at the curricular level [28, p. 50]. Within the framework of the *OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills* (2018; 2021), it is emphasized that socio-emotional competences are predictive of academic and professional success. Schools bear the responsibility for their systematic development, while educational policies should include clear mechanisms for implementation. However, the OECD [19, 20] also identifies a major challenge: although many educational systems acknowledge the

importance of socio-emotional competences, they lack coherent strategies for their effective integration into classroom practice. This discrepancy justifies the consideration of emotional literacy as a pedagogical problem rather than merely a theoretical or policy-level concern. Contemporary socio-educational transformations highlight the necessity of developing students' socio-emotional competences from the early years of schooling. Schools are expected to contribute to the holistic development of balanced individuals capable of self-regulation, empathy, and constructive communication [30, p. 144]. Emotional intelligence is widely recognized as a key factor in academic success, social adaptation, and psychological well-being. However, it does not develop spontaneously, but requires structured pedagogical intervention adapted to students' developmental characteristics.

In this context, emotional literacy emerges as a relevant pedagogical concept that extends beyond the simple recognition of emotions and encompasses the ability to understand, express, and regulate emotional experiences appropriately. When approached as an integrated educational process, emotional literacy fosters emotional awareness, reflective thinking, empathy, and adaptive regulation strategies. The development of emotional literacy in primary education represents a foundational dimension of student's holistic formation, influencing academic achievement, psychosocial adjustment, classroom climate, and long-term life outcomes [26, p. 110]. Emotional literacy is not merely an auxiliary educational objective but a structural component of school readiness and adaptive functioning. In contemporary educational discourse, it is conceptualized as a mediating construct between emotional competence and educational outcomes. Emotional literacy enables students to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotions in socially appropriate ways.

Methodology of Research

This article is based on qualitative theoretical research of a documentary-analytical nature. The study relies on a set of research methods applied to the analysis of international policy documents, psychopedagogical studies, and scientific works cited in the bibliography, with particular attention to the concepts of emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, emotional competence, and socio-emotional development in primary education. The selection of sources was guided by criteria of scientific relevance, conceptual consistency, recency, and applicability to the field of primary education. Special attention was paid to interdisciplinary contributions from psychology, pedagogy, and educational policy in order to construct an integrated interpretative framework. The methodological approach combines literature review, comparative analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and pedagogical conceptualization. These methods were used to clarify the conceptual boundaries of emotional literacy, to identify its structural dimensions, and to justify its status as a pedagogical framework for enhancing emotional intelligence in primary school students. Although the study does not include an experimental component, it systematizes existing knowledge and outlines directions for future empirical research.

Theoretical Foundations of Emotional Literacy and Emotional Intelligence

Introduced by Saarni C. (1999) conceptualizes emotional competence as the ability to manage emotional experiences within interpersonal contexts, emphasizing the developmental and relational nature of emotional functioning [24, p. 200]. Similarly, Denham S. (2006) demonstrates that early emotion knowledge predicts peer acceptance and social adjustment in school settings [7, p. 58-60]. From a pedagogical perspective, Steiner C. (1997) frames emotional literacy as a learnable set of competencies that can be systematically cultivated through educational practice. Emotional literacy functions as the operational and educational dimension of emotional competence, translating psychological constructs into teachable skills [26, p. 150].

Emotional development is recognized as central to personality formation. Bocoș M. (2013) emphasizes the role of formative education in shaping socio-emotional balance and adaptive behaviors in school-aged students. Likewise, Neacșu I. (2010) highlights the importance of self-awareness and reflective processes in the development of learner autonomy, implicitly reinforcing the pedagogical relevance of emotional literacy.

The conceptual development of emotional literacy and emotional intelligence has evolved within the broader framework of socio-emotional learning and competence-based education. Emotional intelligence is commonly defined as the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions effectively. The model conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of interrelated cognitive-emotional processes by Mayer J. and Salovey P. including emotion perception, emotional facilitation of thinking, emotional understanding, and emotional regulation [16, p. 10]. This model emphasizes the educable and developmental nature of emotional competencies.

Complementing the ability-based perspective, Goleman D. introduced a competence-oriented model that integrates self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills [10, p. 160]. While broader in scope, this framework significantly contributed to the pedagogical operationalization of emotional intelligence, particularly in school settings. Together, these models demonstrate that emotional intelligence should not be interpreted as a fixed personal trait, but rather as a dynamic construct that can be systematically developed through educational intervention.

The notion of emotional literacy emerged as a pedagogical response to the need for structured approaches to emotional development. Scholars such as Steiner C. (1997), Saarni C. (1999) conceptualizes emotional competence as a abilities that enable effective emotional functioning within social interactions [24, 26]. Denham S. (2006) further argues that early and consistent intervention during primary school years plays a critical role in strengthening emotional regulation and prosocial behavior [7, p. 59]. These perspectives underline the importance of integrating emotional development into formal educational practice.

Empirical research also highlights the relationship between socio-emotional competences and academic achievement, classroom climate, and school adjustment [10, p. 220]. From this standpoint, emotional literacy becomes not merely an auxiliary educational component but a foundational dimension that supports both learning processes and interpersonal functioning. In pedagogical context, emotional and personal development is recognized as a core objective of holistic education. Neacșu I. emphasizes the necessity of grounding educational interventions in developmental psychology to ensure age-appropriate formative strategies [21, p. 245], while Bonchiș E. highlights the dynamic and progressive nature of affective development during primary school years [5, p. 124]. These contributions reinforce the argument that emotional literacy must be aligned with developmental particularities and integrated systematically within instructional practice.

The research conducted by Zins et al. (2004), Jennings P. and Greenberg M. (2009), Heckman J. (2012) and Rieffe C. (2016), demonstrates that the development of emotional competencies constitutes a significant predictor of school adjustment and long-term success, underscoring the necessity of integrating emotional literacy into the curricular framework of primary education [1, 14, 12, 23]. From a curricular perspective, Guțu V. underscores the importance of transversal competences in contemporary educational frameworks [13, p. 199]. Emotional literacy may therefore be conceptualized as a transversal pedagogical dimension that intersects cognitive, social, and axiological domains. In parallel, Dandara O. stresses the axiological dimension of education, emphasizing the formation of values and attitudes as essential goals of schooling [19, p. 12]. Emotional literacy contributes directly to value internalization, responsible behavior, and constructive social interaction. Beyond descriptive conceptualizations, emotional literacy can be understood as a structured pedagogical process that facilitates the acquisition of emotional vocabulary, reflective capacity, adaptive regulation strategies, and empathic engagement. It operates within socially mediated learning environments where emotional understanding is co-constructed through guided interaction, dialogic practices, and experiential activities. Emotional literacy should be regarded not as a supplementary educational initiative, but as a foundational pedagogical framework that supports the systematic development of emotional intelligence and enhances the overall quality of the educational climate in primary school settings.

Emotional illiteracy as a Pedagogical Problem

The importance of emotional literacy in primary education represents a foundational dimension of student's holistic formation, influencing academic achievement, psychosocial adjustment, classroom climate,

and long-term life outcomes. Emotional literacy enables students to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotions in socially appropriate ways. Saarni C. (1999) conceptualizes emotional competence as the ability to manage emotional experiences within interpersonal contexts, emphasizing the developmental and relational nature of emotional functioning [24, p. 58]. Similarly, Denham S. (2006) demonstrates that early emotion knowledge predicts peer acceptance and social adjustment in school settings [7, p. 88]. From a pedagogical perspective, Steiner C. (1997) frames emotional literacy as a learnable set of competencies that can be systematically cultivated through educational practice. Emotional literacy functions as the operational and educational dimension of emotional competence, translating psychological constructs into teachable skill [26, p. 44].

In Romanian educational research, emotional development is recognized as central to personality formation and school adaptation by Bocoș M. (2013) emphasizes the formative role of education in shaping socio-emotional balance and adaptive behaviors in school-age students, while Neacșu I. (2010) highlights the importance of self-awareness and reflective processes in fostering learner autonomy. These perspectives implicitly reinforce the pedagogical relevance of emotional literacy as a structured developmental framework. Within educational context, Sanda O. (2024) further argues that the development of emotional intelligence in primary school students requires intentional and systematically designed pedagogical intervention, identifying emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation as core competencies. These dimensions closely align with the conceptual structure of emotional literacy as a formative educational construct [29, p. 10]. In the absence of systematic pedagogical support, such competencies do not develop spontaneously or in a balanced manner. This deficit condition has been conceptualized by Steiner C. (1997; 2003) as *emotional illiteracy*, characterized by difficulties in recognizing, expressing, and constructively managing emotions, often resulting in relational dysfunction, poor conflict resolution, and maladaptive school behavior. From this perspective, emotional literacy emerges not merely as a desirable educational objective but as a preventive and corrective pedagogical response to the risks associated with emotional illiteracy in primary education [26, 27]. Emotional illiteracy in primary education may manifest through limited emotional awareness, inadequate self-regulation, and difficulties in empathetic communication, affecting classroom relationships and academic engagement. The main manifestations and relational consequences of emotional illiteracy, as synthesized from Steiner's perspective, are presented in Figure 1.

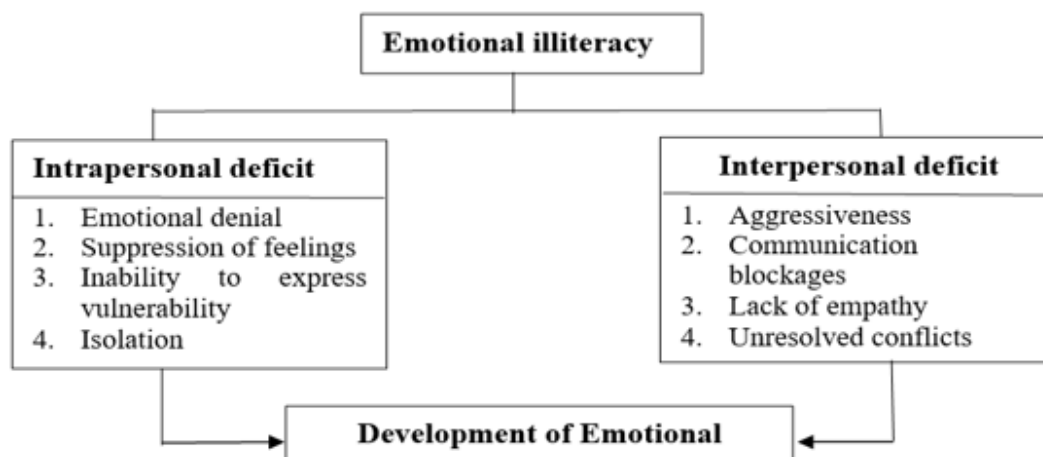


Figure 1. Conceptual model of emotional illiteracy according to Steiner Claude (2003)

The concept of emotional literacy was initially developed by Steiner Claude, who introduced it as a response to what he termed **emotional illiteracy** within contemporary societies. In his work *Emotional Literacy: Intelligence with a Heart* (2003), argues that many interpersonal and social difficulties originate from the inability to recognize, express, and manage emotions constructively [27, p. 54]. According to Steiner C., emotional illiteracy manifests through several behavioral patterns: emotional denial, suppression of feelings, inability to express vulnerability, and the tendency to replace authentic emotional

communication with aggression or withdrawal. He maintains that individuals who are emotionally illiterate often struggle with empathy, constructive dialogue, and conflict resolution. Emotional repression, in his view, does not eliminate affective experiences but distorts them, leading to relational dysfunction and social alienation.

Educational Implications of Emotional Literacy in Primary Education

Steiner C. conceptualizes emotional literacy as a set of learnable competencies that include emotional awareness, ownership of feelings, empathy, and the ability to repair emotional harm. He emphasizes that emotional skills are not innate traits that develop automatically with age; rather, they must be cultivated intentionally through guided interaction and reflective practice [26, p.23]. Emotional illiteracy, therefore, is not merely an individual deficiency but a socially reproduced condition sustained by educational systems that prioritize cognitive achievement over emotional development.

From a pedagogical perspective, Steiner's argument is particularly relevant. If emotional illiteracy leads to communication breakdowns, unresolved conflicts, and emotional rigidity, then educational institutions bear partial responsibility when emotional development is neglected. Steiner C. criticizes traditional schooling models that focus predominantly on intellectual performance while disregarding emotional competence. In such contexts, students may acquire academic knowledge but lack the emotional vocabulary and regulatory skills necessary for healthy interpersonal relationships. The phenomenon of emotional illiteracy is especially significant in primary education. Students who are unable to identify their own emotions or interpret the emotions of peers may experience frustration, social exclusion, or behavioral difficulties [12, p. 452]. Without structured pedagogical support, these patterns may consolidate and influence long-term adaptive functioning.

Steiner's framework suggests that emotional literacy should be approached not as an auxiliary educational component but as a foundational element of human development. The absence of systematic emotional education generates a pedagogical gap, reinforcing the argument that emotional literacy constitutes a genuine pedagogical problem rather than a purely psychological concern [18, p. 25]. In this sense, emotional illiteracy becomes visible in classroom settings through impulsive reactions, limited empathic response, difficulties in collaborative learning, and conflict escalation. Addressing these manifestations requires intentional pedagogical intervention aimed at fostering emotional awareness, responsible expression, and constructive relational repair. Thus, Steiner's conceptualization provides a theoretical foundation for understanding why emotional literacy must be integrated systematically within primary education: without it, educational systems risk producing academically competent yet emotionally underdeveloped individuals.

A substantial body of empirical evidence demonstrates the relationship between socio-emotional competencies and academic performance. In their meta-analysis of 213 school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, Durlak J. et al. (2011) report an average 11% improvement in academic achievement among participating students [8, p. 405-407]. Zins J. et al. (2004) argue that academic success is built upon the foundation of emotional regulation, attention control, and interpersonal skills [1, p. 3-5]. The mechanism underlying this relationship lies in the interaction between emotional regulation and executive functioning. Students who can manage frustration and anxiety demonstrate greater persistence, concentration, and task engagement. From a neuropsychological perspective, emotional regulation supports cognitive flexibility and working memory processes, which are essential for learning [17, p. 182].

Romanian educational psychology also supports this perspective Iucu R. (2014) underlines that effective classroom management and student engagement depend significantly on socio-emotional competencies [15, p. 104]. Furthermore, Pânișoară I. (2015) notes that emotional self-regulation contributes to intrinsic motivation and academic perseverance, reinforcing the integrative role of emotional literacy in instructional effectiveness [22, p. 190].

Emotional literacy plays a preventive role in reducing aggressive and disruptive behaviors. Eisenberg N. et al. (2000) demonstrate a negative association between emotional regulation and externalizing behaviors.

Students who lack emotional awareness often resort to impulsive or aggressive responses due to limited regulatory strategies [9, p. 137–139].

In their research, Rieffe C. and Camodeca M. (2016) demonstrate that deficits in emotional processing are associated with peer rejection and relational conflict. Emotional literacy programs equip students with constructive coping strategies, facilitating prosocial interaction and cooperative learning [23, p. 16]. Both Izard C. (2021) and Simonova O. (2022), although grounded in different disciplinary frameworks, converge in emphasizing that emotions represent structured processes influencing behavior, cognition, and social interaction. Their perspectives support the view that emotional literacy requires not only emotional awareness and regulation but also an understanding of the socio-cultural norms that shape emotional expression [30]. Within the Romanian pedagogical framework, Cucoș C. (2014) stresses the formative role of moral-emotional education in cultivating empathy and social responsibility. Emotional literacy contributes not only to individual adjustment but also to the ethical climate of the classroom community [5, p. 200].

Emotional literacy functions as a protective factor against anxiety, stress, and emotional vulnerability. Brackett M. and Rivers S. (2014), indicate that students with higher emotional competence report lower levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms [4, p. 369]. The OECD (2021), confirms that socio-emotional skills are strongly correlated with life satisfaction and well-being indicators [19, p. 32–35]. In contexts marked by social transition and educational reform such as Romania emotional literacy becomes particularly significant. Educational resilience depends not only on cognitive preparation but also on adaptive emotional functioning. As Bălan V. (2018) argues pedagogical discourse, the cultivation of emotional awareness supports students' adaptability in dynamic socio-cultural environments. Heckman J. and Kautz T. (2012) show that non-cognitive skills, including emotional regulation and perseverance, predict employability, income stability, and social integration more reliably than IQ alone [12, p. 451–455]. This perspective reframes emotional literacy as an investment in human capital development. In Romanian educational thought, Joița E. (2006) similarly emphasizes the formation of transversal competencies that extend beyond disciplinary knowledge and contribute to lifelong learning and social integration [17, p. 137].

Conclusions

The theoretical analysis confirms the pedagogical relevance of emotional literacy in fostering emotional intelligence within primary education. Emotional literacy emerges as a structured educational process that supports emotional awareness, adaptive regulation, empathy, and constructive communication. The discrepancy between educational policy recognition of socio-emotional competences and their limited systematic implementation in classroom practice justifies the conceptualization of emotional literacy as a pedagogical problem. Integrating emotional literacy as a transversal dimension of the primary curriculum may contribute to improving classroom climate, preventing interpersonal conflicts, and supporting students' holistic development. Therefore, emotional literacy should be regarded as a foundational pedagogical framework aligned with contemporary competence-based educational paradigms.

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NATIONAL MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS A POLICY MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

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In contemporary governance, four streams – civic education, citizen engagement, national monitoring and evaluation systems, and digital-era approaches – are converging into a single performance loop that can improve policy responsiveness, trust and service quality. Civic education equips citizens with the knowledge, skills and motivation needed for informed participation. When civically literate citizens enter well-designed engagement channels, governments gain access to local knowledge, obtain early warnings and can iterate service design more fairly. Effective national monitoring and evaluation systems (NMES) close the loop by converting citizen-generated feedback and administrative/ statistical data into performance information and evaluative evidence that decision-makers can use to steer, adjust direction, allocate resources, and strengthen accountability. Building on three earlier articles that developed the conceptual basis of citizen engagement, examined education as an enabling condition, and linked engagement to monitoring and evaluation, this article deepens the discussion by introducing an actionable input–throughput–output framework, clarifying the “missing middle” concept, and providing a distinction between policy management and public administration.

Keywords: *civic education; citizen engagement; participatory governance; monitoring and evaluation; results-based management; evidence-informed policy; open data; digital government; accountability; public sector innovation.*

SISTEMELE NAȚIONALE DE MONITORIZARE ȘI EVALUARE ȘI IMPLICAREA CIVICĂ CA INFRASTRUCTURĂ DE MANAGEMENT A POLITICILOR

În guvernarea contemporană, patru direcții – educația civică, implicarea cetățenilor, sistemele naționale de monitorizare și evaluare și abordările erei digitale – converg într-o singură buclă de performanță care poate îmbunătăți răspunsul la politici, încrederea și calitatea serviciilor. Educația civică le oferă cetățenilor cunoștințele, abilitățile și motivația necesare pentru o participare informată. Atunci când cetățenii cu competențe civice intră în canale de implicare bine concepute, guvernele obțin acces la cunoștințe locale, obțin avertizări timpurii și pot itera designul serviciilor într-un mod mai echitabil. SNEM închide bucla prin transformarea feedbackului generat de cetățeni și a datelor administrative/ statistice în informații de performanță și dovezi evaluative pe care factorii de decizie le pot utiliza pentru a ajusta direcția, a aloca resurse și a consolida responsabilitatea. Bazându-se pe trei articole anterioare care au dezvoltat baza conceptuală a implicării cetățenilor, au examinat educația ca o condiție favorizantă și au corelat implicarea cu monitorizarea și evaluarea, acest articol aprofundează discuția prin introducerea unui cadru acționabil de input-throughput-output și prin clarificarea distincției dintre managementul politicilor și administrația publică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educație civică; implicare cetățenească; guvernare participativă; monitorizare și evaluare; management bazat pe rezultate; politici informate pe dovezi; date deschise; guvernare digitală; responsabilitate; inovare în sectorul public.*

Distinguishing policy management from public administration

A recurring confusion in governance debates is to treat “policy management” and “public administration” as interchangeable. They are complementary but distinct [9].

Policy management is focusing on steering. Its core concentration is on the issues of defining policy intent, translating political priorities into coherent policy frameworks, setting objectives, learning from effective monitoring and evaluation systems, and adjusting the course to ensure that policies remain relevant. It could be said in simple terms that the policy management is preoccupied with the question: “Are we doing right things, and are they still relevant?” [9].

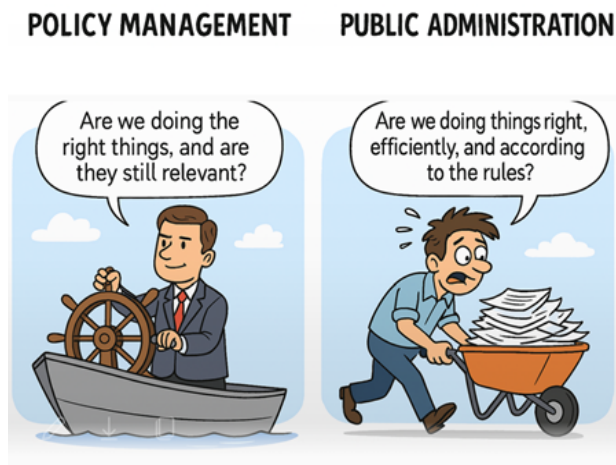


Figure 1. Difference of policy management and public administration

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Figure 2. Comparison of policy management as a steering function and public administration as a doing function

Designed with support of Microsoft Copilot

Public administration is more concerned with the aspect of doing: organising public institutions to perform laws and policies, deliver quality services, enforce regulations, manage inputs and resources effectively and efficiently and comply with the procedures. It could be said that public administration main question is “Are we doing things right, efficiently, and according to the rules?” [10].

This distinction matters significantly because many governments actually invest more in administrative capacity while under-investing in the institutional machinery that transforms evidence, results, and citizen feedback into steering decisions [9; 10].

A concept of governance triangle and its reinforcing aspects

The synthesis of articles reviewed for this research brought us to the concept of “governance triangle” and its reinforcing convergence.

In particular, the three pillars of the governance triangle that reinforce or weaken its performance are as follows:

- **Policy management** - is an institutional capability, its backbone that helps to steer the policy cycle effectively and adaptively, based on the evidence-based methods. Independent evaluation is one of core policy management methods.



Figure 3. Governance triangle pillars

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- **Citizen engagement** - is considered in this context more as a governance not communication capacity. Citizen engagement informs policy quality when applied meaningfully in formal decision-making through feedback loops, among other means.

- **Civic education** - is an important enabling factor that furnishes civic and policy knowledge and experience into the informed deliberations, trade-offs, and constructive participation [9; 6].

The weakness or strength of any one pillar of the governance triangle either constrains or enhances its overall structure. Thus, evidence-based policies struggle without public feedback and broader understanding; engagement lacks impact without institutional uptake; and civic capacity loses momentum without effective and efficient policy performance [9; 4].

The governance performance loop: education → engagement → national monitoring and evaluation systems → digital tools

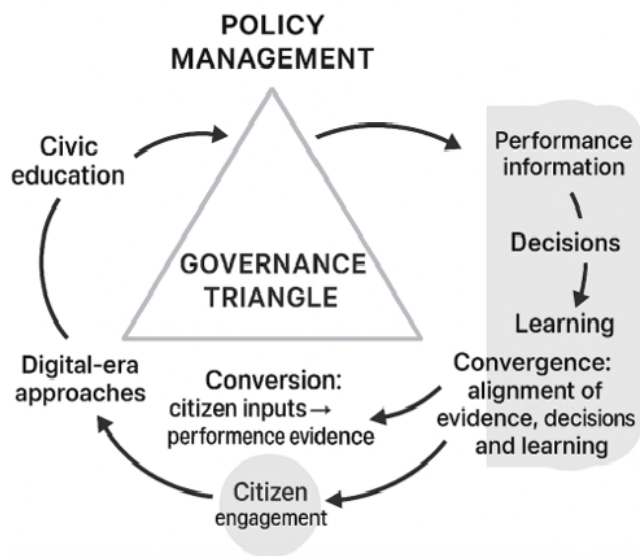


Figure 4. Operationalization Pathways of Governance Performance Loop

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4. Digital-era technologies and methods (dimension of speed and scale): open data, interoperable registries, digital platforms and analytics that widen access, improve timeliness and enable cross-system insights [4].

The value-added of this governance performance loop is in bridging its elements. Thus, engagement becomes meaningful when inputs are visibly reflected in performance information, decisions and learning. The literature studied for this article revealed that dashboards often remain insufficiently used or improperly institutionalized [9].

Measuring What Matters: An Input–Throughput–Output Framework and the Concept of the “Missing Middle”

Why metrics matter in governance

Metrics are central for both policy management and public administration. Public institutions are constantly in the choice of what to prioritize, which policy instruments and methods to deploy, and when and how to adjust the course. Without credible metrics, these choices risk being driven by assumptions, political cycles, or administrative conveniences rather than by the evidence of what works, for whom, and under what circumstances. Measurement therefore functions not merely as a reporting instrument, but as a core mechanism of robust, evidence-based, people-centered, and forward-looking policy steering. More specifically, it makes intentions visible, performance transparent and comparable, and enables knowledge accumulation and learning over time. OECD analyses consistently show that in places where monitoring and evaluation are weak or disconnected from decision authority, policies tend to persist regardless of their effectiveness. In those experiences adaptation becomes episodic rather than systematic.

From a governance perspective, metrics are also essential for linking the three dimensions of the governance triangle and bridging the governance performance gap. Policy management requires metrics to assess and inform whether policy objectives still remain relevant and whether strategic trajectory should be corrected. The effectiveness of citizen engagement, among other factors, depends on metrics that make participation meaningful rather than symbolic; by making observable how public inputs are translated into action; and whether - and how - they influence decision-making. In other words, civic education, relies on credible evidence-informed metrics to demonstrate how abstract policy goals translate into signals of progress, understandable tradeoffs, and results on the ground; how they informed deliberation and sustained public trust. When measurement is absent or narrowly focused on compliance, the following three dimen-

To operationalize the above-mentioned governance triangle, this article proposes to consider four interconnected dimensions of the governance performance loop, which are as follows:

1. **Civic education** (dimension of capacity supply): develops knowledge of institutions and rights, deliberative and communication skills, norms of responsibility, and motivation to participate.

2. **Citizen engagement** (dimension of signal capture and co-creation): focuses on institutionalized channels of consultations, hearings, advisory bodies, participatory monitoring, and online feedback that surface local knowledge, preferences and experience.

3. **National monitoring and evaluation systems** (dimension of decision-making and steering conversion): monitoring routines, performance indicators and evaluation processes that translate citizen inputs and administrative and statistical data into evidence for steering decisions, learning and accountability.

sions drift apart. Evidence fails to inform steering; engagement loses credibility; and civic capacity is not used to inform, validate, or signal policy performance [10].

Civic education and citizen engagement are closely linked. Civic education empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills and values that contribute to active participation in democratic processes, while citizen engagement aims at the practical application of these skills in order to make governance more efficient and improve community life. Taken together, they strengthen democracy by promoting volunteerism and responsibility, commitment and civic activism.

This is supported by a growing body of evidence that well-designed civic education can have significant positive impacts. Research typically identifies three distinct ways in which students absorb and apply civic knowledge: (i) acquiring basic knowledge, (ii) becoming more politically active, and (iii) internalizing deeper democratic values [13].

At the same time, to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of civic education across the education system requires more rigorous national evaluations of civic education programmes, with a focus on quality, accessibility, and impact on diverse student populations [11].

However, governance metrics face a welldocumented structural challenge. While most governments are able to measure inputs (such as budgets, staff, and activities) and are increasingly pressured to report on highlevel outcomes, the intermediate space where policies are interpreted, contested, and operationalized often remains insufficiently measured or evidenced. This challenge is called a “missing middle”. The “missing middle” often relates to, or insufficiently informs such aspects as changes in awareness, access, uptake, service quality, institutional responsiveness, and behavioural adaptation. More precisely, it does not show robust metrics and mechanisms through which policy intent is translated into societal change. Without reliable metrics in this space, governance systems and practitioners will struggle to explain *how* results were produced, *how* to attribute change credibly, or *how* to learn or apply adaptive management methods in real time [8].

Recognizing this gap shifts the purpose of measurement from compliance toward actionability to inform steering. Hence, the purpose of metrics is not to add complexity, but to clarify causal pathways for decision points within the governance process. A practical way to operationalize this logic is therefore to articulate governance performance through a straightforward and explicit mechanism of input–throughput–output. When effectively established, it shall be visible *what* enters the system, *how* it is processed, and *what* informs decisionmaking and accountability.

To make governance performance loops actionable and effective, the measurement mechanisms shall move beyond the culture of tracking activities and outcomes. Instead, it shall focus on how policy intents translate into decisions, actions, and adaptive change. This challenge or gap is often discussed in evaluation and other literature as the “missing middle”. It refers to a space between inputs and ultimate outcomes where learning, engagement, and institutional uptake actually occur, yet often remains weakly measured or conceptually underdeveloped. Addressing this gap requires a consistent and explicit analytical structure that clarifies what enters the system, how it is processed, and what is produced as an end result. A practical way to design the loop, therefore, is to articulate inputs, throughputs, and outputs as logically connected development chain. It will make the results framework consistent and robust to inform policy steering and governance performance loop management.

In simple terms, inputs, throughputs, outputs and the missing middle could be defined as follows:

Inputs: institutional, legal, financial, and technological resources that enable policy steering, together with civic competence produced through curricula and adult learning, and administrative and statistical data.

Throughputs: national monitoring and evaluation systems and performance management routines that structure how citizen engagement is conducted and how inputs are converted into decisionrelevant evidence for steering, learning, and accountability.

Outputs: products, capital goods, and services that result from a development intervention, produced by evaluation systems and made available to inform decision-making, accountability, and policy improvement [9].

Missing Middle: the key objective to address “missing middle” is to bridge the gap between operational data (budgets, activities, services delivered) and population-level outcomes (for example national or global Sustainable Development Goal indicators). Without this intermediate level outcome evidence and robust measurement of data on such aspects as awareness, uptake, service quality, behavioural change, the policies cannot be effectively and credibly steered or adapted [9; 4].

Table 1. Provides an indicative simple chain illustrating ‘missing middle’

Inputs	Outputs	Intermediate outcomes – often the “missing middle”	National-level indicator
Budget, staff, communication assets, civic competence	Awareness campaign; outreach; knowledge products, support services	Awareness increase; access increase; service uptake increase; satisfaction increase; behaviour change	Population prevalence indicator (e.g., tobacco use rate)

Source: World Bank learning materials, Global Evaluation Initiative, 2025 [2]

Building up national monitoring and evaluation (NMES) systems and ecosystems: three approaches and common challenges

Building up a National Monitoring and Evaluation System is not a small and easy task. The World Bank/Global Evaluation Initiative 2025 learning resource on the building blocks of effective national M&E systems outlines three broad routes: revolutionary (scrap everything and start fresh), copying (adopt a tested model from elsewhere), and incremental (build on existing strengths while addressing gaps, grounded in the local context) [2].

The incremental route is often emphasized as it supports continuity, leverages existing strengths and adapts reforms to reality. Common challenges include: (i) institutionalizing M&E practices so monitoring and evaluation become a permanent and integrated part of government operations; (ii) ensuring effective use of data in policy management (often data exist but are not used to inform decisions); (iii) sustaining progress beyond crises when momentum declines; and (iv) maintaining long-term commitment to invest in systems and capacities [2; 9; 4].

Thus, taken together, the three routes for building the national M&E system underscore that the central issue is not the choice of reform model, but whether evidence use becomes embedded in the everyday functioning of government. Revolutionary or copied systems may appear technically robust on paper, yet often struggle to take root if they bypass existing institutions, incentives, and routines. Incremental approaches, while slower, highlight that effective NMES development is fundamentally about institutionalization: making monitoring, evaluation, and learning part of how policies are steered, adjusted, and justified over time. The common challenges identified – limited use of available data, episodic momentum linked to crises, and fragile longterm commitment – point to a deeper governance risk: without sustained investment in systems and capacities, M&E remains peripheral, compliance-driven, or symbolic.

Digital and adaptive M&E: lessons from crises and complex systems

The materials reviewed for this article note that complex and interconnected policy challenges (e.g., health emergencies, climate risks, economic shocks) have increased demand for more adaptive, timely and people-centred evidence. Practical directions include: digital/remote data collection, mobile surveys, and real-time feedback mechanisms; adaptive management approaches that allow indicators and targets to be refined as contexts change; community-led monitoring where local actors contribute to data generation; and cross-system analysis that integrates information across sectors [4].

These approaches broaden the scope through understanding of *what* evidence is available and *when* it is available. However, they only improve policy management when embedded in institutional routines, roles and incentives for evidence use [9].

Examples of international best practice snapshots: Canada, United Kingdom, Republic of Korea

The review of global experience provides examples of how national monitoring and evaluation systems link to governance accountability, service quality and trust. Below are three illustrative examples:

Canada: A results-based framework institutionalizes performance information and evaluation to support evidence-informed decision-making and accountability across the government [12; 4]. Canada is a strong globally known example as it demonstrates how the national monitoring and evaluation system can be institutionalized and inform policy management. The federal *Policy on Results* embeds performance measurement, evaluation, and departmental results frameworks into core management processes, linking evidence directly to planning, budgeting, and reporting across the government. For the purpose of this article, Canada example illustrates how NMES can function as the *conversion mechanism* in the governance performance loop: citizen needs, administrative data, and programme experience are systematically translated into results for steering and parliamentary accountability. The case shows that the key value of NMES is not in sophisticated indicators alone, but in clearly assigned mandates, standardized expectations, and routinised use of evidence within executive decision-making.

United Kingdom: A government-wide efficiency framework sets definitions and reporting standards to track efficiencies, strengthen oversight, and improve transparency in public spending [3; 4]. The United Kingdom provides a compelling example of how evidence systems can be leveraged to strengthen policy discipline and transparency. The *Government Efficiency Framework* sets common definitions, reporting standards, and performance expectations across departments, enabling comparability and oversight in how public resources are used and what value is generated. For this article, the example of UK shows how monitoring information can support *strategic steering* rather than retrospective control: efficiency metrics are explicitly designed to inform tradeoffs, prioritization, and reform decisions at system level. It highlights that NMES effectiveness depends not only on data availability, but on authoritative frameworks that align incentives, clarify what “performance” means, and ensure that evidence feeds into highlevel fiscal and policy decisions.

Republic of Korea: Open data policy illustrates how making government data accessible can strengthen service quality, accountability and citizen participation [1; 4]. The Republic of Korea stands out as a best-practice example of how digitalization and open data can reinforce national monitoring and evaluation systems when paired with governance arrangements and data use. Korea open data policy demonstrates how making government data accessible, standardized, and reusable can improve service quality, enable external scrutiny, and stimulate citizen participation—while still supporting internal performance management. For the purposes of this article, Korea example illustrates the *acceleration function* of the governance performance loop. In Korea example digital tools increase the speed, scale, and visibility of evidence flows. Its governance value-added is when data are monitored, interpreted, and linked to service improvement and accountability mechanisms. The case demonstrates digital openness not as a substitute of NMES, but as a linkage to institutional routines for evidenceinformed policy management.

Governance performance loop and NMES design principles

Based on the synthesis across the reviewed materials, the following principles make the governance performance loop operational: (1) Link engagement to decision authority: consultations should have a clear pathway to influence, and institutions should communicate how inputs were considered; (2) Institutionalize evidence use: assign mandates, roles and routines for monitoring, evaluation and learning across the policy cycle; (3) Measure the “missing middle”: track intermediate outcomes that connect services and budgets to national indicators; (4) Balance supply and demand: build technical capacity while strengthening incentives for evidence use among decision-makers; (5) Govern digitalization: invest in interoperability, data quality, transparency and safeguards so digital tools strengthen (not undermine) trust [9; 10].

Conclusion

This article synthesized elements of civic education, citizen engagement, national monitoring and evaluation systems and ecosystems, and digital-era tools into a single governance performance loop that supports evidence-informed policy management. The core messages are straightforward: (1) participation contrib-

utes to governance improvement when citizen knowledge and experience are meaningfully involved; (2) civic education builds competence; engagement captures societal signals; (3) NMES converts signals into steering and accountability; and (4) digital tools accelerate and scale governance performance loop. To improve governance performance loop, the priority is to strengthen its connective tissue, use evaluative evidence for quality steering, and ensure robust intermediate outcome measurement of the “missing middle”.

Viewing through the concept of governance triangle, policy management and public administration are complementary functions of the same system: civic education enables meaningful engagement, engagement generates signals, NMES translates those signals into steering, and public administration turns that steering into performed actions and results.

In conclusion, four streams of contemporary governance – civic education, citizen engagement, national monitoring and evaluation systems, and digital-era approaches – are strongly interrelated and create a single convergence loop that strengthens or weakness the policy management infrastructure. As a firm recommendation, the need to conduct more rigorous evaluations of civic education programs and use them properly through national monitoring and evaluation system for policy management and steering. Regular evaluations will also foster accountability and ecosystem of policy management, continuous improvement, ultimately contributing to a more engaged and informed citizenry.

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EPISTEMOLOGICAL LANDMARKS REGARDING THE RESOLUTION OF INTRAFAMILIAL CONFLICTS

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The present study presents the results of an analysis of the specialised literature in the field of intrafamilial conflict resolution. The most important theories addressed by us (philosophical, systemic, psychological, communicational, social and pedagogical) aimed at a holistic approach and an in-depth understanding of the field, in order to determine their functionality in immediate contemporaneity. Scientific syntheses and directly contextualised projections, related to the realities identified by various specialists, allowed us to formulate practical recommendations that could help today's families prevent the escalation of conflicts, reduce the consequences experienced by each individual member, and engage, on a partnership basis, in their constructive resolution. Well-established and promoted counselling and mediation good practices, supported by a solid theoretical framework, can offer individualised and differentiated support, with a long-term impact on family well-being and cohesion.

Keywords: *family, intrafamilial conflict, epistemology, theories, mediation, counselling, practical recommendations.*

REPERE EPISTEMOLOGICE PRIVIND SOLUȚIONAREA CONFLICTELOR INTRAFAMILIALE

Studiul de față prezintă rezultatele unei analize a literaturii de specialitate în domeniul problematicei soluționării conflictelor intrafamiliale. Cele mai importante teorii abordate de noi (filozofice, sistematice, psihologice, comunicative, sociale și pedagogice) au avut ca obiectiv abordarea holistă, cunoașterea profundă a domeniului, pentru a determina funcționalitatea acestora în contemporaneitatea imediată. Sintezelor științifice și proiecțiile direct contextualizate, raportate la realitățile constatate de diverși specialiști, ne-au permis stabilirea unor recomandări de ordin practic, care ar ajuta familiile de astăzi să prevină escaladarea conflictelor, să diminueze consecințele, resimțite de fiecare membru în parte, dar și să se implice, pe bază de parteneriat, în soluționarea constructivă a acestora. Bunele practici de consiliere și mediere, destul de dezvoltate și promovate, cu suport teoretic solid, pot oferi ajutor individual și diferențiat, cu impact pe termen lung asupra stării de bine și a coeziunii familiale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *familie, conflict intrafamilial, epistemologie, teorii, mediere, consiliere, recomandări practice.*

Introduction

The epistemology of intrafamilial conflicts represents a field of intersection between the philosophy of knowledge, social psychology and the sociology of the family. A gnoseological analysis of this phenomenon presupposes not only the identification of the causes and manifestations of conflict, but also a critical examination of the ways in which conflict is known, conceptualised and interpreted. Thus, the process of knowledge as it unfolds within the sciences, as a prerequisite for optimising the resolution of such conflicts, includes the theoretical and methodological foundations through which we recognise, interpret and analyse the processes of dispute resolution within the family. In general terms, intrafamilial conflict represents a state of tension, misunderstanding or confrontation that arises between members of the same family (spouses, parents and children, siblings or extended relatives). Unlike occasional quarrels, conflict becomes a problem when it is recurrent and obstructs the normal functioning of the family. It is not sufficient to grasp conflict merely as a phenomenon; rather, it is necessary to understand how family members arrive at solutions, what types of conflicts they experience, and how the process of reconciliation is negotiated. In resolving intrafamilial conflicts, it must be acknowledged that these situations involve multiple typologies of conflict, such as communication conflicts, conflicts related to child-rearing and, not least, financial conflicts. The resolution of such conflicts requires a profound and professional approach.

Theoretical foundations

According to scientific research in the specialised literature, as well as pedagogical and pastoral practice, intrafamilial conflicts may be classified into several basic categories:

- *Communication conflicts*: when family members do not express themselves clearly, do not practise active listening or fail to understand one another. These may also arise due to misinterpretations, lack of sincerity and emotional blockages;
- *Conflicts of roles and responsibilities*: caused by misunderstandings regarding who holds which role within the family or how tasks are distributed;
- *Intergenerational conflicts*: between grandparents, parents and children, related to differences in values, lifestyles, expectations or rules;
- *Financial conflicts*: lack of money is a frequent source of conflict, caused by improper management of the family budget, such as expenditure, debts or long-term financial planning.

The resolution of conflicts within the family involves a series of theoretical perspectives and approaches, each offering a distinct understanding of conflict dynamics. These theories may be grouped into three major categories: *psychological theories*, *systemic theories* and *sociological theories*.

Among *psychological theories*, which focus on individual processes and interactions between family members, emphasising communication, emotions and behavioural patterns, particular importance is given to *attachment theory*, developed by J. Bowlby. This theory highlights how attachment patterns formed in childhood influence adult relationships and conflict management. A secure attachment style favours open communication and empathy, whereas an insecure style may generate mistrust and conflict. Attachment theory has fundamental applications in modern psychology, providing concrete tools for understanding human behaviour through *parenting interventions*: parents are encouraged to be responsive and predictable, helping children develop *secure attachment* by validating their emotional needs. Based on this theory, psychotherapists use the concept of the “internal working model” to help adults identify how childhood trauma or deprivation affects their current couple relationships. In *healthcare and social work*, the theory has radically changed protocols in hospitals and orphanages, emphasising the constant presence of caregivers and the avoidance of prolonged separations that may cause separation anxiety. In *education*, teachers may act as a “secure base”, creating a protective school environment that facilitates learning and exploration without fear.

Cognitive-behavioural theory, which chronologically originates with the pioneers of behaviourism B.F. Skinner (1904–1990) and I. Pavlov (1849–1936), later integrating the contributions of A.T. Beck’s cognitive therapy (1921–2021), developed in the 1960s to treat depression through the correction of distorted thoughts, and A. Ellis’s *rational-emotive behavioural therapy* (1913–2007), focuses on how irrational beliefs generate suffering. This theory concentrates on the thoughts, beliefs and behaviours underlying conflicts and, in the family context, helps members identify and change negative thinking patterns and improve problem-solving skills, thereby reducing conflict escalation. Behavioural interdependence suggests that the symptoms or problems of one member are often maintained by interaction patterns and collective beliefs of the entire family. Family members act based on “schemas” or core beliefs about each other’s roles, which may lead to distorted interpretations of others’ actions (such as “mind-reading” or “catastrophising”). Therapy aims to “unlearn” dysfunctional behaviours through techniques such as positive reinforcement, negotiation and cognitive restructuring. A major emphasis is placed on improving direct communication, active listening and collaborative problem-solving. Unlike other methods, this approach focuses on current family problems, using homework and practical exercises to consolidate new skills in everyday life.

Communication theories approach conflict as a problem of faulty communication [8]. Particularly emblematic is P. Watzlawick’s theory, a pillar of the Palo Alto School, which revolutionised the understanding of human interaction through five axioms: *the impossibility of not communicating* – every behaviour is a form of communication; because one cannot „avoid having a behaviour, and as a result, it is impossible for one not to communicate, even by silence and retreat; *content and relationship levels* – every message conveys information (content) but also defines how one sees the other (relationship), which is often the cause of conflicts. *punctuation of communication sequences* (Axiom 3) – interlocutors interpret interactions as

chains of cause and effect; for example, one retreats because the other one annoys him/her, while the other „annoys because the first has retreated”, the 4th axiom - *digital and analogue communication* – people use verbal (digital/symbolic) and non-verbal (analogic) language, the latter being especially significant for expressing feelings, and the last axiom of the School of Palo Alto refers to *symmetrical and complementary interaction* – relationships based on equality or difference in power or roles, both requiring balance to remain healthy.

Complementary to the axioms of communication, in the contemporary context frequent recourse is made to the concept of *communication competence*, which, in the view of the American researcher M. Parks (2006), represents the degree to which individuals achieve their intended goals within the limits of the social situation, without risking the loss of the abilities or opportunities to pursue other, more important goals from an individual perspective [Apud 7]. Thus, in Park's view, communication competence is not merely a sum of theoretical knowledge, but rather the capacity of an individual to achieve personal objectives while maintaining healthy social relationships appropriate to the context. The tridimensionality nature of communication competence consists of: *control* – the ability to steer interaction towards the desired outcome; *responsibility* – the assumption of the effects that communication has on others; and *foresight* – the ability to anticipate the long-term consequences of the communicative act. Consequently, both at the broader social level and within the family, in a narrower sense, genuine competence requires effective action and the monitoring of one's own behaviour, as well as situational adaptability. Rather than being viewed as a fixed trait, competence is understood as an adaptive ability, involving the use of knowledge about oneself, about others and about the context in order to generate communicative performances that maximise mutual understanding. Among its many findings, the volume cited above demonstrates that individuals in relationships feel closer and, in general, more connected when they have more intensive contact with members of each other's personal networks and when they believe that network members support their relationship [8].

Systemic theories view the family as an interconnected whole, in which the actions of one member affect all the others. Conflict is not seen as the problem of a single person, but as a dysfunction of the family system. In the same sense, *family systems theory* affirms that family members are emotionally connected to one another and that a conflict in one area can produce symptoms in another area. These include: *differentiation of self* – the ability to maintain emotional autonomy and to think rationally, even in the presence of conflict. Low differentiation leads to emotional fusion and to difficulties in managing conflicts. *Triangulation* occurs when a tense relationship between two persons (for example, parents) draws in a third person (for example, the child), in order to stabilise the relationship, often through the diversion of the conflict [Apud 5].

Structural family theory focuses on the structure of the family, namely on the rules and boundaries that govern interactions. Conflict often arises due to unclear boundaries, which lead to excessive involvement, or overly rigid boundaries, which lead to detachment and isolation. Structural therapy aims to reconfigure these boundaries in order to create a healthier and more functional system.

Sociological theories analyse conflict within a broader social context, taking into account roles, norms and the distribution of power. From a sociological perspective, the family is not only an emotional unit, but also a fundamental social institution. Intrafamilial conflicts are viewed as the result of the interaction between social roles, cultural norms, economic structures and power factors: *social conflict theory* – when applied to the family, it views conflict as a struggle for limited resources, such as power, attention, money or time. Intrafamilial conflicts are the result of an unequal distribution of these resources and of power dynamics; *social role theory* argues that family members play certain roles (parent, partner, child) and that the expectations associated with these roles can lead to conflict. A conflict may arise when partners have different expectations regarding who should take on domestic tasks or childcare responsibilities; *feminist theory and gender studies* address conflicts arising from power asymmetries between spouses or between parents and children. The traditional family is seen as a space of male domination and gender inequalities. Contemporary families, however, are more oriented towards balancing relationships and tasks, establishing effective couple partnerships.

The family crisis is perceived by specialists in the socio-human sciences as a symptom of the crisis of contemporary society. In this context, we highlight that the dimensions of the phenomenon of family dis-

organisation are expanding and becoming increasingly complex. Lost parent syndrome, inhibition, guilt, deviant behaviour, revenge, running away from home – all these are just some of the state's characteristic of a child who is a victim of intrafamilial conflicts. In these difficult situations, we mention the importance of the role of the social worker and, respectively, of the mediation process carried out by specialists in the field of social work with families in which conflictual situations predominate [1]. For this purpose, it is beneficial to study and elucidate the tasks and responsibilities of the social worker in the process of mediating intrafamilial conflicts, thus having the possibility, in this case, to contribute to diminishing the phenomena elucidated above. Mediation is a confidential and private method through which mediators, independent persons with specialised training, help the parties to define their objectives and interests more clearly and guide them so as to jointly construct mutually advantageous solutions to the conflict. This strategy offers individuals and groups the opportunity to assume responsibility for resolving disputes and to maintain permanent control over the decisions that affect their future. Thus, the use of abusive measures is avoided, as well as the deterioration of relationships between the parties, while dialogue, collaboration and mutual respect are encouraged.

The role of the social worker in the mediation process can be carried out effectively through the application of various techniques, such as: active listening, reflection, summarising, and the ability to decentralise the person from the atmosphere of the existing problem. Social work has primordial importance both before the mediation process, in order to collect all the necessary information for studying the problem, and during the process. At these moments, collaboration between the mediator and the parties is effective when both parties accept participation in the process and when each specialist of the multidisciplinary team fulfils their responsibilities appropriately [1].

All the theoretical reference points analysed by us, with direct projection onto functionality in daily practice, offer a solid basis for understanding and addressing the complexity of intrafamilial conflicts, guiding families towards constructive solutions. At the root of most unhappiness and illnesses of the couple lie internal causes (which concern only the two partners of the couple) and external causes (which refer to objectively identifiable circumstances).

Conflicts determined by causes internal to the couple:

- *Lack of conjugal love* – this is the most important of the causes that lead to conflictuality in the couple; the two partners do not present a community at the level of objectives and interests.

- *Too great differences in intellectual level, culture, traditions, opinions, etc.* – individuals are hardly compatible, disrupting any communication. It becomes difficult for partners (especially when it comes to conflicts of political opinions, religious beliefs, value systems) and they try to convince each other of the truth of their own beliefs.

- *Incompatibility of character, personality, systems of expectations.*

- *Sexual disagreement* – causes may be different – some related to personal complexes (refusal of femininity, of motherhood, fear of sex, frigidity – in women; refusal of virility, sexual impotence – in men), others related to problems of an origin other than sexual (affective insecurity of the relationship, inferiority, anxiety), others being more directly linked to conjugal sexual practices that ignore the difference in experiencing sexuality in men and women, differences in sexual appetite and rhythm, clumsiness in the sexual act, fear of pregnancy in women, etc., all of which are compounded by very deficient communication.

- *Role conflicts* – disagreements regarding conjugal and parental roles.

- *Exclusive passion of one of the partners* – forms a so-called “couple” with the object of their passion (person, object, pet, etc.), an abnormal couple from which the partner feels excluded. The most banal form is the extramarital relationship, but there are also other variants such as: passion for an animal, for a profession, for sport, for politics, research, money, etc.

- *Permanent reproach, expressed verbally or perceived only through non-verbal communication.*

Conflicts determined by causes external to the couple:

- *Early marriages and forced marriages* – marriages that are too early (usually in adolescence), marriages carried out under social or moral pressure, due to an unwanted pregnancy, or marriages seen as a way to escape from something or someone, marriages of pity or compassion, are sure sources of conjugal difficulties.

- *Mental illness of one of the partners* – situations in which the mental illness existed before marriage, being reactivated against the background of stress induced by assuming new conjugal roles, or illness acquired within the couple.

- *Problems of accommodation, environment, external relationships* – the existence of the couple unfolds in a space perceived as unpleasant or unacceptable.

- *Socio-professional difficulties of one of the partners* – tensions of dissatisfaction and failure produced by the general situation tend to be discharged in aggression against the closest beings. They become “scape-goats” for all forms of aggression that are difficult to express elsewhere.

- *Conflicts of interest* – conflicts arising from concerns about material goods and money, both in conditions of poverty and in situations where interests are divergent and partners’ assets are separate.

- *Presence of third parties* – the involvement of a third person in the daily existence of the couple can become a source of conflict, especially due to the breaking of intimacy. This situation becomes more serious when the third person becomes the ally of one of the partners (the parents of one of the partners) [2].

In the context of resolving intrafamilial conflicts, we must consider the possibility of family counselling by psychologists specialised in the field. Family counsellors address problems that arise within the family: relationships between family members, appeasement and resolution of conflicts within the family, drawing up an internal family regulation, spouses’ behaviour in the event of divorce, etc. We agree that the process of family counselling involves assistance activities aimed at facilitating the balance of the family system. The pursued goal is the formation and development in parents of effective attitudes and behaviours in parent–child relationships, in order to improve the quality of the psycho-emotional and intrafamilial climate. Another type of counselling that addresses partners in a couple for the development of the necessary skills to successfully resolve marital conflicts – marital counselling – is identified by C. Zdrehuși [4].

With regard to family counselling, the opinions of authors are diverse. Psychologists view family counselling as an essential method for preventing the escalation of conflicts and for promoting the emotional health of family members. It does not aim only at resolving a specific conflict, but also at developing long-term relational skills, such as communication, negotiation, emotional regulation and strengthening family cohesion.

Professor L. Cuznețov proposes the term *moral counselling and therapy of the family*, which represents a set of actions aimed at supporting and restoring the state of psychological balance of the person; the reintegration of family members into the order imposed by moral norms and the restoration of relationships and of the family climate on the basis of their mutual respect [5].

Another approach belongs to the researcher E. Vrasmas, who considers family counselling and parental counselling to be two components of a form of support, namely: socio-educational intervention, carried out both through counselling and through education, which is oriented towards strengthening family relationships for the realisation of the educational process. Family counselling refers to a series of preventive and direct actions to support family members. Parental counselling addresses mainly parents and provides for the strengthening of their roles in actions in favour of education and the preservation of family cohesion. It differs from couple counselling, which refers to maintaining marital relationships and resolving various crisis situations between partners. Family counselling may also involve information actions, to ensure success in intrafamilial communication [10].

Researchers of family issues have frequently signalled the significance of the micro- and macro-group factor in the evolution of the couple. Some authors (Murell, Stachowiak, 1965) insist on the factors of marital dissolution and cohesion generated by situations and events within the family micro group. Levinger (1965) considers marriage as a particular moment of social groups; consequently, he approaches conjugal cohesion, as well as divorce, as expressions of conflict, in terms of the properties on which the cohesion of social groups in general depends, thus delineating a series of „external attraction sources” that become dissolution factors for the conjugal relationship.

The results of extensive and intensive research have revealed, within conflictual couples, the incidence of microsocial, precipitating and dysfunctional risk factors, among which the following can be mentioned: tense relationships of the couple (through one or both partners) with the family micro group of origin (be-

longing), most frequently encountered being conflicts daughter-in-law–mother-in-law, son-in-law–father-in-law, daughter-in-law–father-in-law. The presence of different models of conjugal role determined socio-culturally, contrasting and mutually exclusive, the de facto adoption of certain conceptions, attitudes and “conjugal styles” from families of origin, non-concordances, psychological, social and residential interference of parents (in-laws) in the conjugal interpersonal space of the newly created nucleus create favourable conditions for a deficient inter-accommodation of spouses, favouring early dysfunctional phenomena.

The incidence of dysfunctional phenomena in couples with relational “problems” with parents (in-laws) is significantly higher than in the case of couples who do not report such relationships. In some cases, repeated conflicts between two family generations become psychopathic, bi-univocally or univocally, which requires family reorganisation psychotherapies, possibly through separation.

At present, there is a worrying tendency among some young couples to maintain a degree of psychosocial “symbiosis” with one of the families of origin, which hinders the process of conjugal and parental relational maturation. Grandparents usually take over to a large extent parental role tasks or, in the case of childless dyads, an organisational-administrative and even psychological tutelage is maintained over them [6].

The first “steps” of a family are similar to the first steps taken by a child who is trying to move independently. Initially, newly married couples are full of enthusiasm born of their ardent love. But negative factors often act upon them, forces that appear either deep in their minds or in the social environment in which they live, confusing them and putting them to the test, which sometimes diminishes their enthusiasm. We distinguish several pathological states that gnaw from within the life of spouses in their first years of family life. At the same time, it is good to realise that certain negative aspects that may arise at the tender age of the family, if neglected, can have serious consequences for the whole of life.

The way in which the contemporary world develops is linked to the way education can meet the requirements of this development. Family life, like social life, includes the moral life of the individual with all its aspects. Moral life presupposes a focus on ethical values, which means an order with regard to the observance of value priorities. Moral ideas, as well as a person’s moral life, relate to conscience and psychic life, considered as a spiritual dimension that correlates with character and personality traits. Moral norms become functional through education insofar as the person respects them, forming and continuously observing them.

Education for values and Education for family help us in the creation of the family. They concentrate general values that reflect the pedagogical, bio-psycho-socio-cultural needs inherent to any human personality: *Good – Truth – Utility – Beauty – Health*. Education for values is based on common values such as: life and the physical and psychological health of women and men, which relate to their abilities of cooperation, understanding, acceptance, tolerance, etc. [1].

Education for family is defined as a concept from the field of educational sciences, which brings together practices, representations, judgements and educational strategies regarding the formation and development of personality for the effective fulfilment of family roles, which presuppose gender education to the same extent as the other dimensions [3].

Gender education is in a significantly conditioned relationship with education for family from two perspectives: the fulfilment of functional family roles through their division/complementarity between partners (gender resocialisation of spouses); the fulfilment of parental roles through gender education of daughters and sons [2].

In the same vein, we consider valuable the observance of certain principles for harmonising family relationships and for creating and maintaining family well-being, extracted from a reference work by Prof. L. Cuznețov, based on specialised literature and psychopedagogical counselling practice:

- The principle of the conscious and autonomous choice of the conjugal partner;
- The principle of assuming responsibility for creating and maintaining family well-being;
- The principle of assuming commitment to respecting a healthy and dignified way of life within the family;
- The principle of focusing all family members on positive thinking and moral action;
- The principle of harmoniously valuing sexuality and conjugal intimacy in family life;

- The principle of respecting and accepting the personality of all family members and close relatives (by each of them);
- The principle of involving both spouses/parents in the education of children [5, pp. 121–122].

Findings and practical recommendations

Conflict in relationships is a natural component of any human interaction, all the more so of an affective type. Two people cannot think in unison all the time, and beyond the arguments that may arise, there is the advantage of progress resulting from different points of view. Conflict even becomes beneficial in relationships when it is transformed into an opportunity to make a positive change. Otherwise, it can be an inexhaustible source of tension, psychological imbalance and emotional dissatisfaction [4].

In order to identify practical opinions related to intrafamilial conflicts, we carried out a mini qualitative study through an interview with open-ended questions, addressed to 7 experts from the fields of psychology, theology, jurisprudence and social work. Synthesising the responses received, we conclude the following:

- Conflict within the family represents a lack of compromise between partners, a misunderstanding, the desire to impose one's opinion or goal on the other partner;
- The families that most frequently face problems are those married for 1-5 years and those married for 16-25 years;
- With regard to the causes of conflict, psychology experts specified the following causes: lack of communication, tendency to dominate, selfishness, negative life habits. Lawyers mentioned the following causes: financial shortages, alcohol abuse. Social work specialists highlighted causes related to poverty, unemployment, different models of cohabitation that existed in the families of origin of the spouses. The priest mentioned that the main causes are immorality and lack of moral-spiritual education;

- Another important idea mentioned by specialists was the fact that very few families attempt to resolve their conflictual problems.

In order to resolve intrafamilial conflicts, we propose the following *recommendations*:

- Establish and develop emergency or support services such as community family counselling centres, temporary placement centres for children, day centres for children, recreational services for families with children with disabilities, assistance and support centres for the readaptation of children with psychosocial problems, support services for pregnant women predisposed to abandon their child, services that would prevent the separation of the child from the family in crisis and maintain the child within the family after reintegration, centres that would prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of the child within the family, etc.;
- Implement specialised consultative services that would allow the assessment of the psychological compatibility of partners and of the family life value system;
- Organize trainings, seminars or conferences for the development of mediation skills of social workers, given that at present there are very few qualified specialists in the field of intrafamilial conflict mediation;
- Develop programmes on family planning, the provision of premarital counselling of a formative nature;
- Create support groups made up of different families that have either faced certain conflict situations or are currently in a conflictual state;
- Develop psychosocial services, the opening of psychological practices, the establishment of a hotline, the creation of multidisciplinary teams to act in accordance with the interests of the person, the placement of centres in an accessible manner for everyone and alongside Courts;
- Raise public awareness regarding access to social services and the acceptance of a healthy family lifestyle, through advertising spots, television programmes, seminars or conferences at community level.

In order to overcome situations of intrafamilial conflict, it is important that family protection, including child protection, be a priority of social policy, which would contribute to the formation of a viable social protection system. At the same time, we note that in our society there are no services for resolving conflicts or for mediating them at territorial level, but only in the Municipality of Chișinău, where, as a model of good practice, there is the Commission for the Resolution of Disputes within the Municipal Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights, which has proven its effectiveness over time.

In **conclusion**, the epistemological approach demonstrates that the resolution of intrafamilial conflicts is a complex process of knowledge, transformation and reconstruction of the meaning of the human relationship. The epistemological analysis of intrafamilial conflicts highlights the fact that the way in which we understand and explain these tensions largely determines the ways in which we resolve them. Knowledge of conflict is not neutral, but bears the imprint of the theoretical paradigm approached, of social values and of the individual experiences involved. The resolution of intrafamilial conflicts presupposes the integration of objective knowledge, acquired through research, with the subjective understanding of the participants, based on empathy, communication and critical reflection.

Epistemology provides a necessary framework for moving from the simple management of conflict to a profound understanding of the cognitive, emotional and relational processes that generate it. Through the articulation between rationality and lived experience, between science and experience, a holistic perspective on family conflict takes shape – one that allows not only reconciliation, but also personal and relational development.

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A STUDY ON INNOVATION CULTURE MATURITY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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The study is focused on an investigative approach to the innovation culture of teachers active in pre-university institutions in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Through a quantitative, descriptive-comparative design, the maturity level of innovation culture was determined, based on the multidimensional structure of the analysed construct. The research was conducted on a sample of 128 teachers, using an assessment questionnaire founded on models based on the corporate organizational environment, adapted and validated for the educational ecosystem. The data were subjected to descriptive, correlational, and non-parametric inferential statistical analyses. The results revealed a predominantly moderate level of innovation culture development in both educational contexts, with no statistically significant differences between the national participant samples. The significant correlations among the analysed dimensions confirmed the multidimensional, systemic and interdependent nature of the construct. The results underscored the relevance of assessing innovation culture maturity as an instrument for organizational diagnosis and for grounding managerial decisions and innovation-oriented educational policies.

Keywords: *innovation culture; organizational maturity; pre-university education; institutional assessment.*

UN STUDIU ASUPRA MATURITĂȚII CULTURII INOVĂRII ÎN INSTITUȚIA EDUCAȚIONALĂ

Studiul are la bază un demers investigativ asupra culturii inovării cadrelor didactice active în instituțiile preuniversitare din România și Republica Moldova. Printr-un design cantitativ, descriptiv-comparativ, s-a determinat nivelul de maturitate a culturii inovării, în baza structurii multidimensionale a constructului analizat. Cercetarea s-a realizat pe un eșantion de 128 de cadre didactice, în baza unui chestionar de evaluare fundamentat pe modele derivate din mediul organizațional corporatist, adaptate și validate pentru ecosistemul educațional. Datele au fost supuse unor analize statistice descriptive, corelaționale și inferențiale neparametrice. Rezultatele au evidențiat un nivel preponderent moderat de dezvoltare a culturii inovării în ambele contexte educaționale, fără diferențe semnificative statistice între eșantioanele naționale. Corelațiile semnificative dintre dimensiunile analizate au confirmat caracterul multidimensional, sistemic și interdependent al constructului. Constatările au subliniat relevanța evaluării maturității culturii inovării ca instrument de diagnoză organizațională și de fundamentare a deciziilor manageriale și a politicilor educaționale orientate spre inovare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *cultura inovării; maturitate organizațională; educație preuniversitară; evaluare instituțională.*

Introduction and conceptual framework

Few things have influenced human progress as consistently as the desire to improve existing ideas and practices. In education, however, this desire for innovation has often come into conflict with long-established systems and ways of working. Today, the tension is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore [8, pp.7-9]. Rapid technological development, changing social expectations and the uneven growth of digitalisation have created pressure that can no longer be addressed through small or gradual adjustments alone. Educational institutions are now expected to go beyond adapting certain practices and rethink how they function as organizations. In this context, *innovation* should not appear only during times of crisis or external evaluation, but *should become a normal and ongoing part of institutional life* [6, p.12].

There is often a tendency within institutions to speak about innovation culture without actually creating it. Lists of values, newly introduced frameworks or revised procedures do not automatically lead to genuine innovation. Rooted in organizational culture theory as one of its structural subsystems [7, p.18], *innovation culture only becomes meaningful when it begins to shape behaviour from within the organization itself.*

It influences how teachers think about change, how they make decisions and what attitudes they take toward risk, development and improvement [3, p.2]. This process cannot simply be imposed from above. It develops gradually through repeated practice, institutional support and shared experience. Once this happens, innovation stops being occasional and instead becomes part of the organization's everyday way of working.

Wang and Ahmed's (2004) understanding of organizational innovation cannot be reduced to a single factor. They define it as an institution's overall ability to introduce new products or practices [9, p.607]. According to their perspective, *innovation depends not only on individual initiatives, but also on the relationship between strategic direction, innovative processes and the behaviours through which these are implemented*. Their model highlights the importance of interaction between these different elements rather than focusing on separate components in isolation.

Dobni (2008) develops this perspective further from Wang and Ahmed by focusing on the conditions needed to sustain innovation over time. In his framework, *innovation culture is understood as a multidimensional environment that brings together intention, infrastructure, operational behaviour and support for implementation* [3, pp.1-3]. Strategic, structural and behavioural elements need to function together in a coherent way. However, this is often where the gap between institutional ambition and everyday reality becomes visible. Many organizations express a desire to innovate, but creating real alignment between goals, structures and daily practice is far more difficult.

Within education, both presented models move attention away from the creativity of individual teachers alone and towards the wider organizational environment in which innovation takes place. From this perspective, innovation becomes a collective and multidimensional organizational achievement rather than the isolated result of one teacher's work in one classroom.

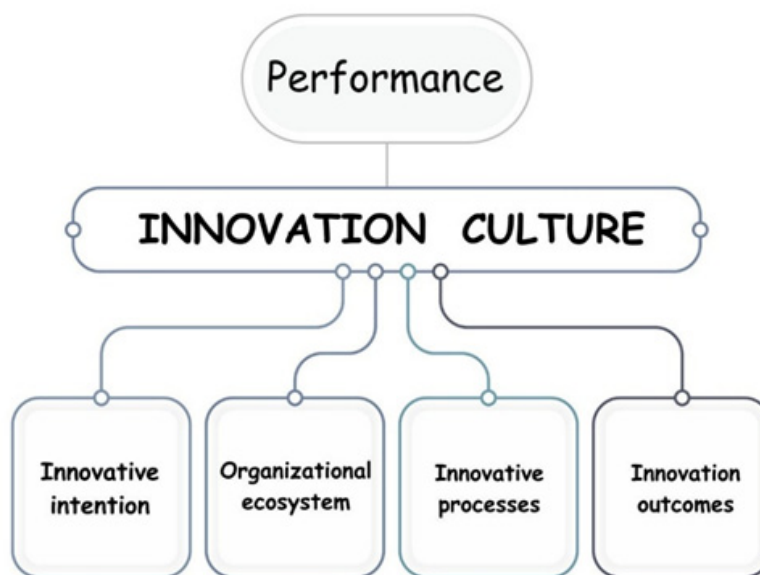


Figure 1. The model of innovation culture dimensions
(adapted for educational ecosystems from Dobni, 2008)

Four main dimensions structure this analysis, each with its own role, but none can function effectively by itself:

1. *innovative intention* – openness towards new ideas, willingness to take risks and the type of managerial support that treats innovation as a priority rather than a simple possibility;
2. *organizational ecosystem* – effective collaboration, institutional trust, access to resources and genuine opportunities for professional development;
3. *innovative processes* – the way that innovative ideas are created, developed and integrated into the daily life of the organization through planning, implementation and evaluation;
4. *innovation outcomes* – improved pedagogical practices, organizational solutions and educational interventions that contribute to added value and stronger institutional performance.

Moreover, researchers increasingly agree that the success of innovative initiatives depends not only on individual creativity, but also on *the maturity of the organizational culture* that supports and sustains them [7, p. 357]. As a result, the focus of research has gradually shifted away from isolated innovative actions towards the assessment of innovation culture as an indicator of an organization's ability to support long-term educational change. Measuring this construct can provide useful benchmarks for organizational diagnosis and can support managerial decisions with clearer evidence rather than relying mainly on intuition [5, pp. 23-26].

At the same time, empirical research focusing on the systematic assessment of innovation culture within school organization remains relatively limited. Many existing instruments are borrowed from corporate or non-educational contexts and later adapted for schools rather than being specifically designed for education. This limitation influenced the theoretical and methodological choices made in the present research.

Research objectives and hypothesis

The *scope* of this research was to evaluate the level of innovation culture maturity in pre-university educational institutions in Romania and the Republic of Moldova by analysing its main dimensions and the relationship between them. At the same time, the study compared the ways innovation culture is reflected across the two educational contexts.

In accordance with this scope, the study pursued the following *objectives*:

01. To assess the level of innovation culture maturity in pre-university educational institutions, both at the overall level and across its main dimensions;

02. To analyse the relationship between the dimensions of innovation culture in order to highlight the multidimensional and interdependent nature of innovation culture maturity;

03. To compare the level of innovation culture maturity between teachers in Romania and those in the Republic of Moldova, both overall and across the main dimensions.

The investigative approach was guided by the following *hypothesis*: innovation culture maturity in pre-university educational institutions is a multidimensional construct, shaped through the interaction between innovative intention, the organizational ecosystem, innovative processes and innovation outcomes.

Research methodology

The study was carried out within *a quantitative research framework* based on *the pedagogical survey method*, which is considered suitable for investigating educational phenomena at organizational level. This approach was chosen because the research required measurable and comparable data that could be statistically analysed, allowing both the assessment of innovation culture maturity and the testing of the proposed hypothesis.

The whole investigation process adopted *a descriptive-comparative design*. This choice was made because the research aimed not only to describe the level of innovation culture maturity in pre-university educational institutions, but also to examine whether significant differences existed between teachers in Romania and those in the Republic of Moldova. Both require a design that can hold description and comparison at the same time without collapsing one into the other.

The comparative aspect of the study was particularly important. The innovation culture development is influenced by the realities of individual institutions and the wider socio-educational environment in which schools operate. Romania and the Republic of Moldova share a common language and certain elements of educational heritage, but their institutional development since the 1990s has followed different paths that may influence how innovation is understood, supported, and applied in practice. For this reason, a comparative approach was considered appropriate for the study.

The *research instrument* consisted of *an evaluation questionnaire* designed to measure the level of innovation culture maturity in pre-university educational institutions. The questionnaire was developed using established theoretical models of organizational innovation culture, particularly the work of Dobni (2008) and Wang & Ahmed (2004), adapted to the specific characteristics of the educational environment [3]; [9].

The questionnaire was structured around the four main dimensions of innovation culture identified by Dobni: *innovative intention* (teachers' openness towards change and new pedagogical practices); *innovative ecosystem* (the organizational environment supporting collaboration, professional learning, and innovative initiatives); *innovative process* (the way pedagogical innovations are created, implemented and evaluated)); *innovative outcomes* (the educational results that add value to the teaching and learning process) [3, p.2]. Each item included a statement based on teachers' everyday experiences of innovation culture within their schools. Responses were measured using a *five-point Likert scale* ranging from 1 (to a very small extent) to 5 (to a very great extent). Scores for each dimension were calculated by combining the related items, while the overall maturity score was obtained by summing all four dimensions. Higher scores reflected a more developed innovation culture profile.

Sample and data collection. The sample comprised 128 *pre-university teachers* from Romania and the Republic of Moldova, covering all educational levels from preschool to upper secondary. Participants were selected based on availability and professional relevance to the research topic. Although the study presents statistical data, each response reflects the real experiences of teachers who engage with innovation culture in their everyday professional practice and this practical perspective adds value to the findings.

Data were collected electronically, with participation being voluntary and confidentiality guaranteed throughout the research process.

The hypothesis was tested using several **statistical analyses**. *Descriptive statistics* were first used to establish the overall profile of innovation culture maturity in both samples, while *Spearman's rank correlation coefficient* examined the relationships between the four dimensions of the construct. *The Shapiro-Wilk and Levene's tests* were then applied to verify normality and homogeneity of variances. Finally, *the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples* was used to identify possible statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Results and data analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for both national samples, both for each individual dimension and for the overall innovation culture maturity score. Mean values and measures of dispersion offered an initial picture of how scores are distributed within each group, showing where teachers tend to cluster and where greater individual variation appears. This stage was more than simply preparatory. The descriptive results outline the empirical profile of innovation culture maturity in both educational contexts, highlight the level of similarity between the two groups and provide the basis for understanding what the inferential analyses are intended to examine. In other words, before exploring whether significant differences exist between the groups, it is important to first understand the general profile of each sample.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of innovation culture maturity dimensions by country

Dimensions of Innovation Culture	Country	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Min.	Max.
Dimension A Innovative Intention	Republic of Moldova	63	29.38	8.05	15	48
	Romania	65	29.46	7.98	17	45
Dimension B Innovative Ecosystem	Republic of Moldova	63	29.90	7.95	17	46
	Romania	65	28.48	7.65	15	45
Dimension C Innovative Process	Republic of Moldova	63	44.73	11.71	25	69
	Romania	65	43.55	12.00	23	68
Dimension D Innovative Product	Republic of Moldova	63	29.21	7.99	15	48
	Romania	65	28.35	7.76	15	46

Mean scores across all four dimensions were relatively similar in both samples. For *innovative intention*, the results were almost identical, 29.38 in the Republic of Moldova and 29.46 in Romania. The largest dif-

ference appeared in the *innovative ecosystem* dimension, although the gap remained small, with teachers from the Republic of Moldova scoring slightly higher ($M=29.90$ compared to $M=28.48$), suggesting minor differences in how organizational support is perceived. The *innovative process* dimension recorded the highest mean score in both samples (44.73 and 43.55), which is understandable given that teachers' daily work largely involves planning, implementing, and evaluating different projects and pedagogical activities. The differences between the two groups were minimal. Similar results were observed for *innovation outcomes*, where the mean scores remained comparable and moderate levels of variability were present in both samples (29.21 and 28.35).

Overall, the descriptive results indicate *a very similar innovation culture profile* across the two educational contexts.

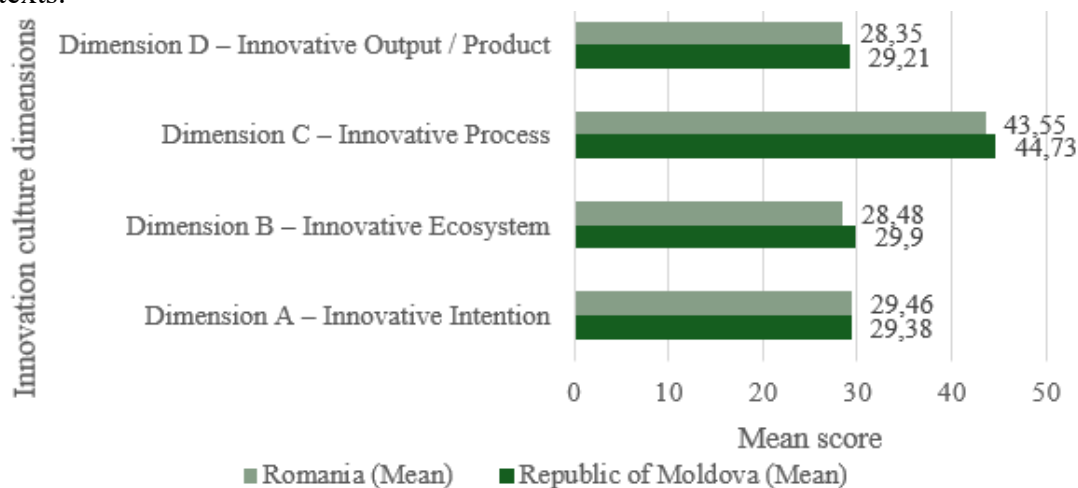


Figure 2. Comparative mean scores of innovation culture maturity dimensions by country

The results across the different dimensions point to a clear conclusion: *the two participant samples show a high degree of similarity* and the variations observed between the two samples remain modest across all four dimensions. To move beyond the analysis of individual dimensions, the study was extended to include the overall innovation culture maturity score and the distribution of development levels across both samples. This broader approach allowed for a more integrated comparison of the two educational contexts.

Table 2. Distribution of innovation culture maturity levels by country

Development level	Republic of Moldova (n = 63)	%	Romania (n = 65)	%
Low level	18	28.57	20	30.77
Medium level	32	50.79	32	49.23
High level	13	20.63	13	20.00
Total	63	100.00	65	100.00

Around *half of the teachers* in both samples were placed at the *medium level of innovation culture maturity*. In the Republic of Moldova, 50.79% of participants fell into this category, compared to 49.23% in Romania. The results are therefore *very similar* across the two groups. At the high maturity level, the percentages were also close, with 20.63% in the Republic of Moldova and 20.00% in Romania. This suggests that around one in five teachers in both educational contexts demonstrated a well-developed innovative practice. At the same time, approximately 28-30% of teachers in both samples were classified at the low maturity level. These results point to ongoing difficulties related to pedagogical innovation and suggest that this area should receive greater attention in future professional initiatives.

Overall, the distribution pattern remains very similar across both educational ecosystems, despite the differences between the two countries.

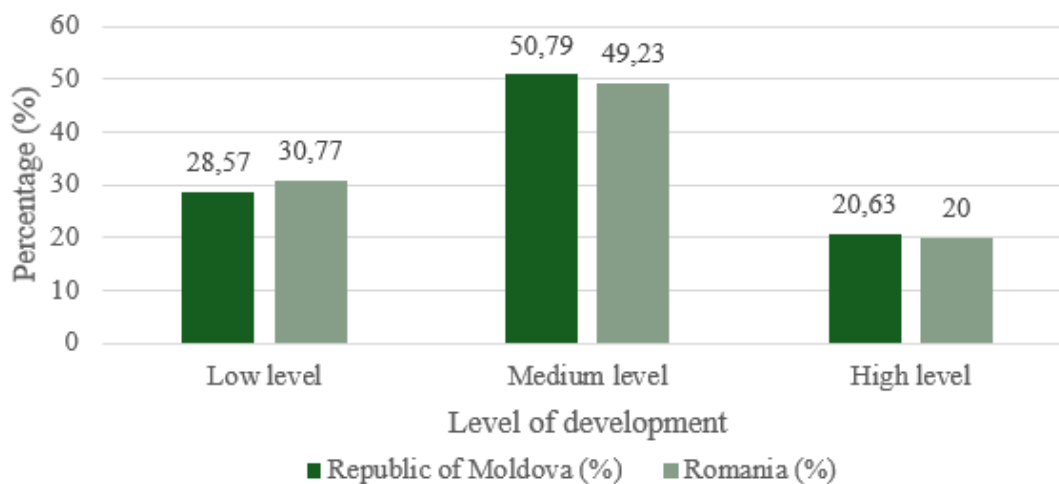


Figure 3. Distribution of innovation culture maturity levels by country

To complement the analysis of distribution levels, the overall innovation culture maturity score provides a broader perspective by offering a single value that reflects the general level of development of the construct across both samples. Examining this score descriptively allows a clearer understanding of internal variability within the groups, highlighting differences that may not be fully visible through percentages and categorical levels alone. At the same time, it provides the empirical basis for the comparative and inferential analyses that follow.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the overall innovation culture maturity score

Country	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Min.	Max.
Republic of Moldova	63	133.22	34.24	78	198
Romania	65	129.85	33.98	75	195

The two teacher samples recorded *very similar mean scores*, 133.22 for the Republic of Moldova and 129.85 for Romania, both corresponding to *a medium level of innovation culture development*. Although the differences between the groups were small, the results were consistent across both educational contexts.

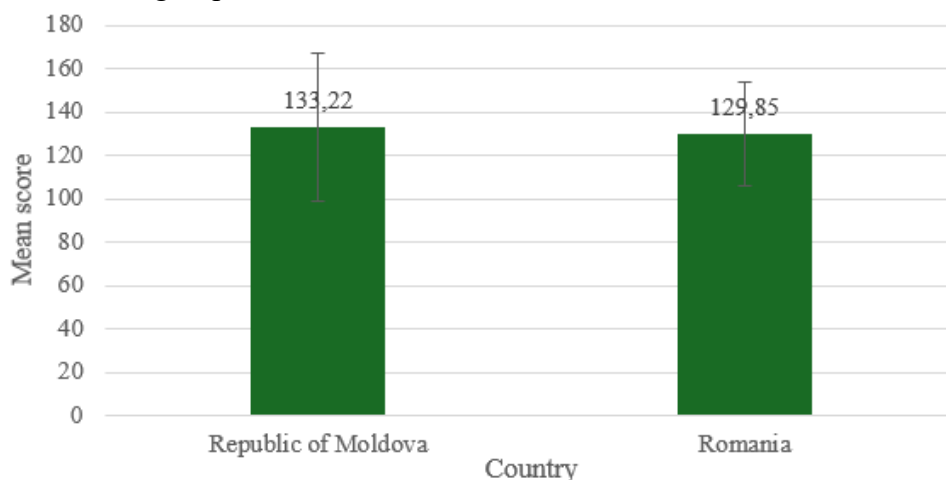


Figure 4. Distribution of the overall innovation culture maturity score

The descriptive results presented above provide an important starting point for the analysis. Finding that teachers in both samples showed a moderate level of innovation culture maturity is useful but it also raises a broader question: are the four dimensions of the construct connected to one another or do they function independently? If innovation culture maturity is truly a multidimensional and interconnected system, as

suggested by Dobni (2008), then the dimensions should not simply exist side by side but should also show meaningful relationships between them. To examine this aspect, a *correlational analysis* was carried out using *Spearman's rank correlation coefficient*, which was appropriate given the non-normal distribution of scores identified earlier.

The results are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Intercorrelations among innovation culture dimensions and overall maturity score

	Dim. A	Dim. B	Dim. C	Dim. D	Total
<i>Dimension A Innovative Intention</i>	—	0.858	0.884	0.866	0.944
<i>p</i>		< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
<i>Dimension B Innovative ecosystem</i>	0.858	—	0.866	0.867	0.942
<i>p</i>	< .001		< .001	< .001	< .001
<i>Dimension C Innovative process</i>	0.884	0.866	—	0.860	0.944
<i>p</i>	< .001	< .001		< .001	< .001
<i>Dimension D Innovative product</i>	0.866	0.867	0.860	—	0.939
<i>p</i>	< .001	< .001	< .001		< .001
Total score	0.944	0.942	0.944	0.939	—
<i>p</i>	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	

The results showed strong and *statistically significant correlations* between all four dimensions of innovation culture maturity ($r_s=.858-.884$, $p<.001$), as well as between each dimension and the overall maturity score ($r_s=.939-.944$, $p<.001$). These findings suggest that the four dimensions do not operate independently but function together as parts of a connected system. In practical terms, teachers who are more open to change and innovation also tend to work in more supportive organizational environments, participate more actively in innovative processes and report stronger innovation outcomes. This shows that the construct is supported not only at a theoretical level, but also by empirical data obtained in the study.

At the same time, although the correlational analysis confirms the internal coherence of the innovation culture maturity construct, it does not show whether differences exist between the two national samples. The descriptive analyses presented earlier suggested broadly similar profiles for teachers from Romania and the Republic of Moldova but descriptive similarity alone is not enough to confirm statistical equivalence. For this reason, an inferential comparison between the two groups was carried out.

Before conducting the inferential comparison between the two groups, it was necessary to verify whether the data met the required statistical assumptions. For this purpose, the *Shapiro-Wilk test* was applied to the overall innovation culture maturity scores in both samples in order to *assess the normality of the data distribution*. This step was very important in determining which statistical tests were most appropriate for the comparison that followed.

Table 5. Results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test for innovation culture maturity

Country	Applied Test	Statistic (W)	Sig. (p)
Republic of Moldova	Shapiro-Wilk	0.946	0.008
Romania	Shapiro-Wilk	0.912	< 0.001

The *Shapiro-Wilk test* returned $p=0.008$ for teachers from the Republic of Moldova and $p<0.001$ for teachers from Romania. Both values fall below the accepted threshold, which indicates that the distribution of scores in neither sample follows a normal curve ($p<0.05$). In other words, there is a *noticeable level of individual variation within both groups*, with teachers positioned differently across the innovation culture maturity spectrum.

Before selecting the final test, one additional verification step was necessary. *Levene's test for homogeneity of variances* was applied to examine whether the two samples different in terms of internal dispersion. This represented an important methodological step before moving forward with the comparative analysis.

Table 6. Results of Levene's test for the homogeneity of variances of innovation culture maturity

Applied Test	Statistic	Sig. (p)
Levene	0.12	0.73

The results of Levene's test indicate *homogeneity of variances* for the total innovation culture maturity scores across the two investigated groups ($p=0.73>0.05$). This result confirms that *the two samples are comparable in terms of score dispersion*, providing additional methodological conditions necessary for conducting the inferential comparative analysis that follows.

Therefore, in order to compare the level of innovation culture development between teachers from Romania and the Republic of Moldova, a non-parametric statistical test for independent samples was applied, using *the Mann-Whitney U test*, with the purpose of identifying possible statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Table 7. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test for comparing innovation culture dimensions

Dimension	M – Rep. of Moldova	M – Romania	U	p
Dimension A – Innovative Intention	29.38	29.46	2029.5	0.933
Dimension B – Innovative Ecosystem	29.90	28.48	2270.5	0.288
Dimension C – Innovative Process	44.73	43.55	2200.5	0.467
Dimension D – Innovative Product	29.21	28.35	2200.5	0.467

The Mann-Whitney U test *did not identify any statistically significant differences* between teachers from Romania and the Republic of Moldova across any of the innovation culture dimensions analysed ($p>0.05$).

For the *innovative intention* dimension, the similar mean ranks and mean scores suggest that teachers in both groups showed comparable levels of openness toward change and involvement in educational innovation. In the case of the *innovative ecosystem* dimension, although small differences were observed in the descriptive results, these did not reach statistical significance, indicating similar perceptions of the organizational conditions that support innovation in schools. Similar patterns also found for *innovation processes* and *innovation outcome* dimensions, where the differences observed between the groups appear to be related more to individual variation than to national context.

Overall, *the results confirm the similarity of the dimensional profiles across the two samples* and support extending the comparative analysis to the overall innovation culture maturity score.

Table 8. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test for comparing the overall innovation culture maturity score by country

Group			N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Republic of Moldova			63	66.12	4166.0
Romania			65	62.95	4092.0
U	Z	Sig. (p)			
2012.0	-0.56	0.57			

The Mann-Whitney U test found *no statistically significant difference* between the two groups ($U=2012.0$; $p=0.57>0.05$). Mean ranks were similar across both samples, which is another way of saying that where a teacher falls on the innovation culture maturity spectrum has more to do with who they are than where they teach. Individual variation, not national context, shapes the distribution.

The finding does more than raise or answer a comparative question. It confirms that *the two samples are sufficiently alike to be considered together when designing intervention and professional development initiatives*, a practical implication that the data support directly.

Conclusions

This study aimed to assess the maturity of innovation culture in pre-university educational institutions through a multidimensional framework structured around four interconnected dimensions: *innovative intention, innovative ecosystem, innovative process and innovation outcomes*. Taken together, the findings offer both a descriptive picture of the current situation in schools and a basis for understanding the factors that shape innovation culture development process.

Most teachers' organizations in both samples were situated at *a moderate level of innovation culture maturity*. This finding is consistent across both educational contexts and suggests that innovation is present within schools, but it has not yet become fully integrated into everyday organizational practice. The intention to innovate exists, the organizational environment provides some support and teachers engage in planning, implementing and evaluating innovative practices. However, these elements do not yet function together in a stable and coherent way. The results show that innovation still relies too heavily on individual effort and too little on organizational structures capable of sustaining it over time. As a result, the gap between innovation as isolated initiative and innovation as an established organizational practice remains an important issue.

The correlation analysis brings an important perspective to the results. *The dimensions of innovation culture are meaningfully connected to one another*. Particularly important is the strong relationship between the innovative process dimension and the overall maturity score. Planning, implementing and evaluating pedagogical innovations, core aspects of everyday teaching practice, appear to represent the area in which innovation culture is most strongly reflected.

For educational management and professional development policy, the implications are fairly direct. A supportive organizational climate matters. So does embedding innovation-related competencies into continuing professional development, rather than treating them as occasional add-ons. In addition, the structured assessment of innovation culture maturity can provide educational institutions with a useful diagnostic tool and a reliable baseline for monitoring progress over time.

The comparative analysis *did not identify statistically significant differences between teachers from Romania and the Republic of Moldova*, either across the individual dimensions or at the level of the overall maturity score. The similarity between the two educational contexts is itself a significant finding. It suggests that the factors influencing innovation culture maturity are not shaped entirely by national educational systems. Instead, individual professional characteristics, such as openness towards change, reflective practice and tolerance of uncertainty, appear to explain a greater part of the observed variation than broader contextual factors. This finding shifts attention from system-level conditions alone towards the importance of developing professional competencies and attitudes at the individual and institutional level.

Overall, the results provide a useful empirical basis for understanding the current state of innovation culture in pre-university education and highlight several priorities for future professional development and organizational improvement. Future research could extend these findings through longitudinal studies that track changes in innovation culture maturity over time, as well as through qualitative approaches capable of exploring the lived experiences behind the statistical data, including the everyday practices, challenges and decisions through which innovation culture process is shaped within schools.

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METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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This article addresses the issue of developing dialogic communication competence among primary school students. It elucidates the methodological approach to enhancing this competence, which can be more effective if teachers properly organize activities for practicing dialogue. Dialog skills will not be developed in primary school students merely through simple reproduction exercises; instead, careful analysis of communication situations and their use in varied and authentic contexts is required. The article presents the analysis and interpretation of the results of an administered questionnaire, from which it is inferred that, in order to overcome the difficulties encountered by primary school students in developing dialogic communication competence, teachers should design debate activities, text-based discussions, dramatizations of literary texts adapted to age-specific characteristics, and employ specific methods such as guided dialogue, role-play, debate, problem-based learning, and heuristic conversation.

Keywords: *oral communication, dialogic communication, dialogic communication competence, didactic activities, didactic forms, methods.*

ASPECTE METODOLOGICE PRIVIND DEZVOLTAREA COMPETENȚEI DE COMUNICARE DIALOGATĂ LA ELEVII DIN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR

În acest articol este abordată problema dezvoltării competenței de comunicare dialogată la elevii din învățământul primar. Este elucidat demersul metodologic de dezvoltare a acestei competențe, care poate fi mai eficientă, dacă cadrele didactice organizează corect activități de exersare a dialogului. Abilitățile de dialog nu vor fi dezvoltate la elevii din învățământul primar doar prin simple exerciții de reproducere, ci este necesară o analiză atentă a situațiilor de comunicare și valorificarea lor în contexte variate și autentice. Articolul prezintă analiza și interpretarea rezultatelor unui chestionar aplicat, din care deducem că, pentru a elimina dificultățile întâmpinate de elevii claselor primare în dezvoltarea competenței de comunicare dialogată, cadrele didactice trebuie să proiecteze activități de dezbateri, activități de discuție pe text, activități de dramatizare a textelor literare adaptate particularităților de vârstă și să utilizeze metode specifice: dialogul ghidat, jocul de rol, dezbateri, problematizarea, conversația euristică etc.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare orală, comunicare dialogată, competența de comunicare dialogată, activități didactice, forme didactice, metode.*

Introduction

Oral communication is important in the *Language and Communication* curriculum area, aiming to develop students' ability to listen actively and to express themselves clearly and coherently. The communication process involves both the ability to send messages and to be a good listener, because “half of the communication process is listening”. Listening and hearing are considered fundamental skills, involving understanding the speaker's intention and responding appropriately to the messages received. On the other hand, speaking, as a form of interpersonal communication, requires mastery of language at all levels (phonological, grammatical, lexical, syntactic) and the elimination of barriers to expression. Oral communication lessons aim to develop students' critical thinking, cooperation and communicative attitude, through interactive exercises and dialogue [3, p. 25].

“Communication must occupy a central place in primary education, because it facilitates the development of listening, expression and understanding skills of interlocutors” [7, p. 121].

In the opinion of the author Constantin Cucoș, “effective communication involves not only the correct transmission of messages, but also the ability to actively listen, cooperate and negotiate meanings” [2, p. 37].

“The development of oral communication competence will be built on various teaching approaches: initiation into the ways of listening to a message, depending on the content, forms, communication channels; development of the skill of reacting verbally to a listened message; practicing in different communication situations; formulating and launching messages; integrating vocabulary acquisitions into own statements; specific use of communication situations” [9, p. 10].

Dialogic communication is a form of direct and reciprocal interaction between two or more participants. In an educational context, it plays an essential role in developing the communication and comprehension competences of primary school students. For this reason, it is necessary that the language used in teaching activities be accessible, clear and adapted to the age of children, so that they can understand and respond appropriately.

In the opinion of specialists in Romanian language teaching, dialogic communication cannot be reduced to a simple chain of questions and answers, but represents a complex process of constructing meaning and managing interaction [5, p. 105].

The dialogic communication competence in primary education refers to the ability of children to interact effectively and appropriately through dialogue, both with some colleagues and with teachers, parents or other people in the school environment [11, p. 9]. Dialogic communication in the teaching environment must be built on interaction, involvement and collaboration between students and teachers, so as to stimulate free expression, the development of critical thinking and creativity.

“Dialogue communication can be a valuable tool to encourage students to express their own opinions and be open to the perspectives of others” [4, p. 163].

Dialogic communication is one of the most essential dimensions of the instructional-educational process, especially in primary education, where the development of communication skills contributes decisively to the formation of students’ social, cognitive and emotional competences. In this sense, the main objective of this research was to investigate teachers’ perceptions of the importance of dialogic communication, the strategies used to develop it and the difficulties encountered in daily teaching.

“It contributes significantly to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in primary school students” [10, p. 133].

The development of *dialogic communication competence* is a gradual process, which begins in the first grade, takes shape in the second grade and is consolidated in the third and fourth grades. “Dialogue energizes the activity of the entire class, stimulates the active participation of students, increases attention and develops dialogic speech, considered superior to monologue speech” [1, p. 42].

The development of this competence “requires an integrated approach, which includes the development of listening skills, oral expression, manifestation of emotions, interpretation and understanding of messages, as well as adaptation to various communication situations. All of these can be cultivated through interactive and contextualized activities, which allow students to gradually and efficiently develop their communication capacity” [8, p. 34].

The development of dialogic communication competence in primary school students is one of the fundamental skills that contributes decisively to the academic and social success of students. The competence to initiate and sustain an effective dialogue involves the simultaneous development of the capacities of active listening, clear expression, respect for communication rules and adaptation to the interlocutor.

The development of dialogic communication competence in primary school students is one of the fundamental competences “which ensures the development of students’ ability to interact effectively and appropriately in various communication contexts” [6, p. 45-47].

Dialogue situations are perceived differently by each student, depending on personal experience and the communication context. Therefore, the teacher’s role is to create varied and authentic communication situations, which develop students’ verbal spontaneity and flexibility [5, p. 105].

Concerned with the issue of developing dialogic communication competence in primary school students, in the following we are interested in the difficulties encountered by primary school students in developing dialogic communication competence and what are *the ways of motivating* dialogic communication, *the methods and forms of organization* in streamlining the development of this competence.

Experimental framework

For this purpose, we applied a questionnaire to a sample of 112 teachers with different seniority in primary education, which gives the study a significant representativeness. The research instrument was structured in two main sections:

1) Perceptions on dialogic communication;

2) Strategies used to develop dialogic communication competence. The answers provided allow not only to quantify the general opinion on this subject, but also to extract relevant conclusions regarding good practices, challenges and development directions in the field of communicative education.

Analyzing the results recorded by primary education teachers, we find that for **Item 1**, “*How important do you consider dialogic communication in the educational process at the primary education level?*” 98.2% of respondents consider it to be “very important” and 1.8% indicated that it is “important”. The values reveal an almost total consensus on the crucial role of dialogic communication in the educational process. This assessment indicates that the majority of teachers recognize the potential of dialogue not only as a teaching tool, but also as a means of personal and social development of students. Given that only 1.8% do not consider it “very important”, we can speak of an educational climate in which dialogic communication is seen as a basic competence. This fact suggests the opportunity for the systematic integration of communicative strategies in all curricular areas.

To the question: “*To what extent do you think that students can support a structured and coherent dialogue at their age?*”: 26.8% of those interviewed answered – to a large extent, 68.8% – to a certain extent and 4.5% – to a small extent. The answers indicate a moderate level of confidence in students’ dialogic communication competences. Although a third of teachers believe that students can support a structured dialogue to a large extent, the majority express reservations, placing themselves in the “to a certain extent” area. This may signal a need for systematic intervention to develop oral expression competences, as well as the need for support through structured learning contexts (e.g. role-playing games, debates).

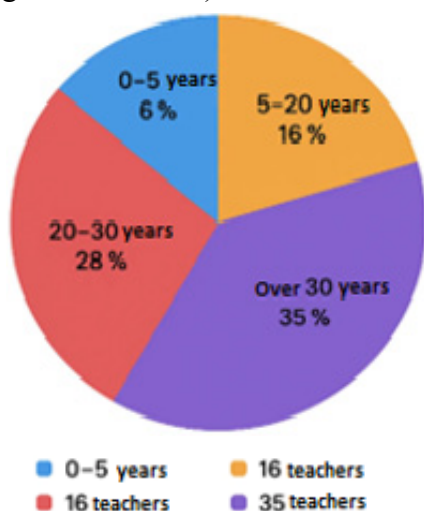


Fig. 1. Distribution of Interviewed Teachers by Length of Service in Education Groups

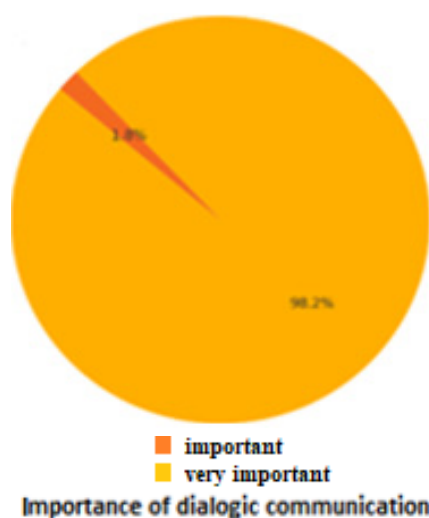


Fig. 2. Representation of Dialogic Communication Importance

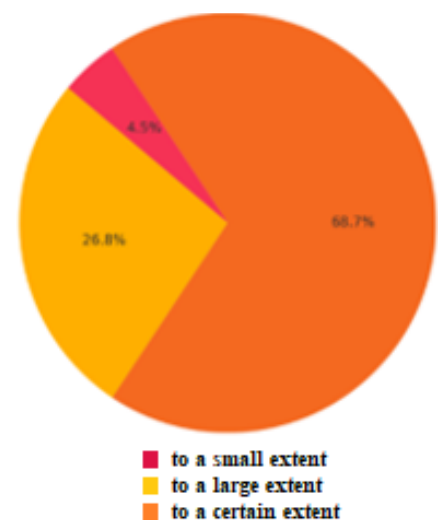


Fig. 3. Students' Ability to Sustain Coherent Dialogue

Analyzing the results recorded in **Item 3** regarding *ways to motivate students to communicate*, teachers predominantly use dialogue themes and specific teaching strategies to stimulate communication.

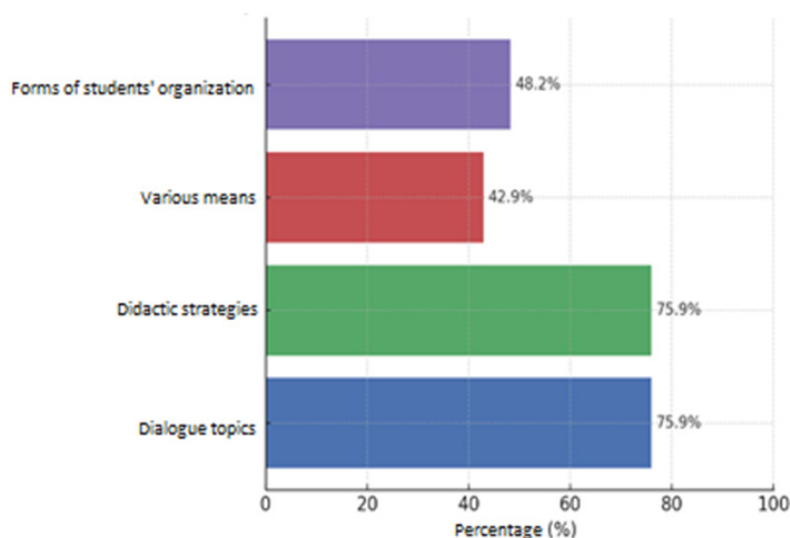


Fig. 4. Ways to Motivate Students for Communication

- By proposing various dialogue topics - 75.9%
- By using various teaching strategies - 75.9%
- By using various means - 42.9%
- By using various forms of student organization - 48.2%

The relatively lower importance given to various means and collective organization indicates a pedagogical orientation that is more traditional than technological or collaborative.

It can be recommended to increase the share of interactive approaches (technologies, digital collaboration), in order to increase the attractiveness of dialogic activities.

Referring to **Item 4** regarding *strategies/methods for developing dialogic communication competence*, the increased use of role-playing games, followed by guided conversations, is noted, which underlines the preference for interactive methods. Collective storytelling, although relevant, is used in a lower percentage, which may indicate a decrease in the role of classical narrative in favor of active strategies.

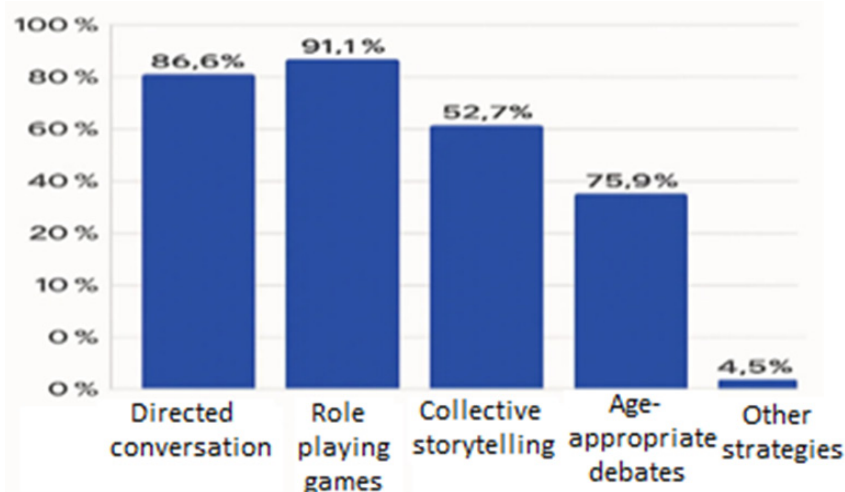


Fig. 5. Didactic Strategies Used to Develop Communication

Referring to **Item 5**, “How effective do you consider these strategies in developing dialogic communication in primary school students?” the general perception is positive, most teachers perceive the applied strategies as having a strong impact on the development of communication competence (77.7% very effective, 22.3% effective). This assessment can be correlated with the frequency of their use and with the results observed in practice.

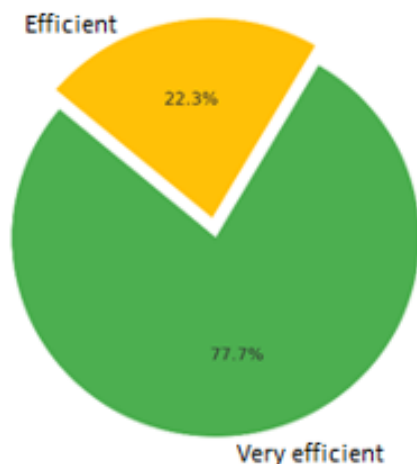


Fig. 6. Efficiency of Strategies Used

On the 6th item, “Which didactic forms of classroom organization do you consider to be most helpful to primary school students in understanding literary texts/composing dialogue?”, we recorded the following results: group activities (71.4%) are clearly in first place, suggesting that respondents perceive didactic socialization and multiple interaction as the most favorable for the development of dialogic communication competence. Group work offers a diversity of roles, the need to negotiate meanings, and repeated opportunities to exchange responses. Frontal activities (59.8%) are, however, at a high level, indicating that exposure, modeling of conversational rules, and collective discussions guided by the teacher remain essential. The frontal form can function as a “common platform” from which collaborative activities subsequently emerge. The percentage for pair activities (52.7%) shows the appreciation of a format that allows all students to effectively participate; the speaking and listening time is distributed more evenly, and shy students can practice in a less exposed

setting. Although the latter is preferred (34.8%), individual work is not negligible. It supports personal preparation (thinking about answers, noting ideas, self-regulation) that subsequently feeds the dialogic exchange. Integrating short individual phases before or after the dialogue can increase the quality of the interaction.

Teachers combine forms of organization. A balanced design could start with frontal modeling, continue with exploration in pairs, extend negotiation in groups and end with evaluative individual reflection, maximizing both participation and internalization of dialogic communication strategies.

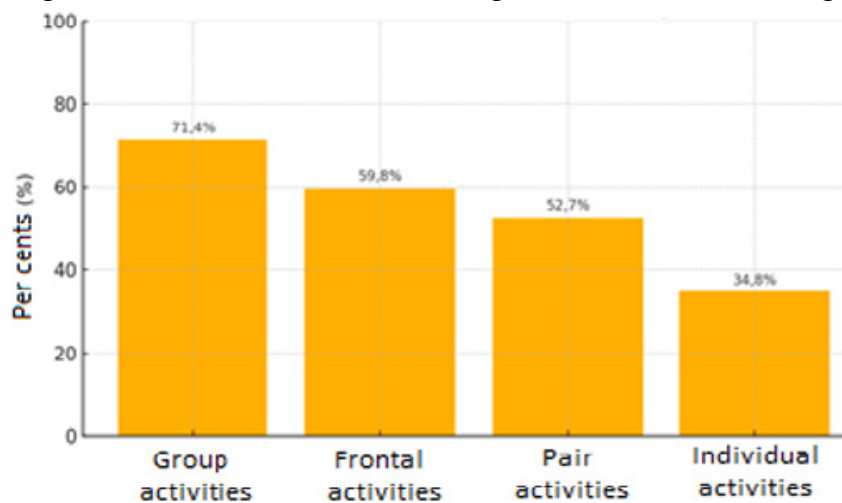


Fig. 7. Preferred Forms of Organization

Analyzing the questionnaire data recorded, at item 7, “What are the difficulties that primary school students encounter in composing a dialogue?”, the data analysis highlights the fact that the main difficulties encountered by students in composing a dialogue are active listening (54.5%) and adaptation to the communication situation (53.6%), very close values. These aspects show that students encounter problems in maintaining effective communication, especially in terms of understanding the context and responding appropriately to the interlocutor. Also, the opening and closing formulas (51.8%) represent an important barrier, suggesting that students need additional exercises to coherently structure the dialogues. In contrast, logical answers (28.6%) are perceived as a less frequent difficulty, which indicates an acceptable level of logical thinking, but insufficient to compensate for the lack of communicative coherence.

These results reveal the need for teaching methods focused on developing active listening and creating real communication contexts, through which students learn to initiate, maintain and complete a dialogue in a natural and efficient manner.

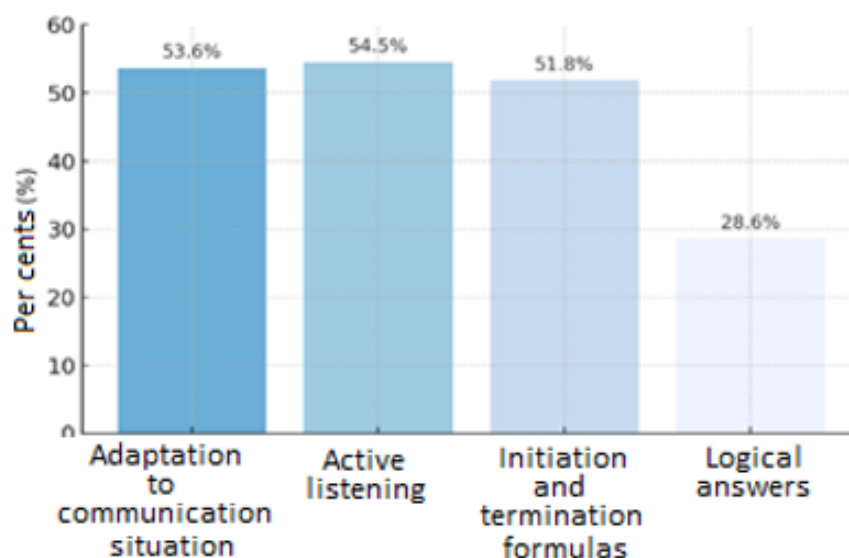


Fig. 8. Difficulties Encountered in Students' Communication

Comparing the results regarding *the forms of organizing activities* for the development of dialogic communication competence and *the difficulties encountered by students in composing a dialogue*, we observe a significant correlation between the types of activities and the identified communication problems.

1. *Group activities* (71.4%) and *pair activities* (52.7%), preferred by teachers, provide students with an interactive framework conducive to practicing dialogue. However, difficulties such as *active listening* (54.5%) and *adapting to the communication situation* (53.6%) suggest that, although they are applied, they are not sufficiently exploited to develop authentic and coherent communication.

2. *Frontal activities* (59.8%), which involve more dialogue between the teacher and the students, could contribute to the lack of initiative of the students in *formulating the opening and closing formulas* (51.8%), because these contexts are more rigid and less favorable to personal expression.

3. *Individual activities* (34.8%), although less used, do not allow for real interaction, which may partially explain the persistence of difficulties in *adapting to the communication situation* and in developing *active listening*, essential elements in dialogue.

4. *The low level of problems related to logical answers* (28.6%) shows that students better master the structure of ideas, but need more consistent exercises to understand the dynamics of dialogue and the role of mutual listening.

The results show that there is a need to optimize interactive activities (groups and pairs), through tasks that stimulate authentic dialogue, the exchange of ideas and the management of real communication situations. Also, *explanatory readings and dialogue scenarios* should be complemented with *role-playing and debates*, in order to increase the level of adaptation and active listening of students.

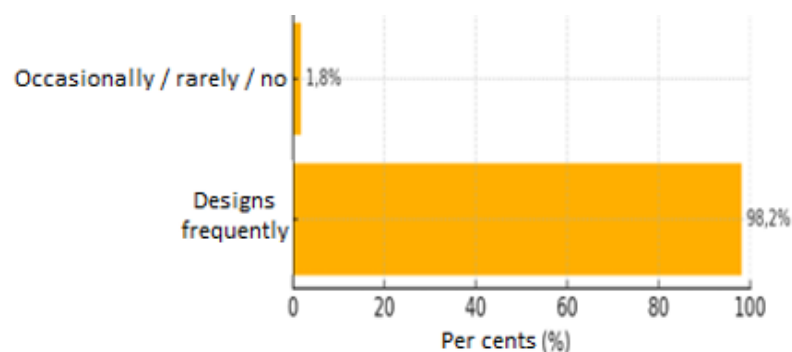


Fig. 9. Frequency of Designing Activities for Developing Dialogic Communication

To the question “*How frequently do you use activities to develop dialogic communication*”, the data indicate an almost unanimous consensus: 98.2% of teachers declare that they frequently design activities aimed at developing dialogic communication competence. Only ~1.8% report a low frequency (occasionally / rarely / not at all). This extremely polarized distribution conveys several important methodological and pedagogical messages.

The very high proportion suggests the alignment of teachers with current curricular guidelines that grant communication (oral, dialogic) status as a key transdisciplinary competence. Declaratively, teachers seem aware that dialogic skills support learning in all curricular areas.

For **the last item** “*Exemplify an activity that you have designed in order to develop dialogic communication competence*”, the responses of 112 teachers were analyzed.

Results and discussion

The reports allowed multiple mentions; the percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who indicated each type of activity. Therefore, the totals exceed 100%, reflecting the combined use of work forms in didactic design. Mentioned in *over 60%* of the responses (≥ 68 teachers), role-playing games constitute the dominant strategy. The scenarios “*At the library*”, “*At the store*”, “*Interview*”, “*Toy fair*”, “*From the teacher*”, “*The story of the brown bear*” show the orientation *towards recognizable life situations and narrative transpositions* that stimulate empathy. Methodologically, teachers use the assignment and rotation of roles, the construction of dialogues and playful supports (models, mascots). Functions: training clear expression, active listening, negotiation of meanings and collaboration.

To develop dialogic communication competence in primary school students, an important role is played by *debate activities* (technology, healthy eating, environmental protection) that are mobilized to develop *critical thinking* and *argumentative expression*. They require compliance with the rules of constructive dialogue (listening, paraphrasing, responding) and introduce contextualized disciplinary vocabulary.

An equally important role in the development of this competence is played by *discussions on the text*, *character analysis*, *question/answer formulation* and *literary mini debates* that help to understand dialogic communication texts.

A new series of methods such as *the ATA (Answer-Throw-Ask) method*, *the Cube method*, and *the Starburst method* indicate the use of the cooperative framework to distribute conversational roles and multiple perspectives.

In order to improve the development of dialogic communication competence in primary school students, we suggest that teachers organize *dramatization activities of literary texts* or *original creations* with students. It is important to contribute to the expansion of *role-playing* towards **performativity**: memorization, vocal projection, nonverbal expressiveness, coherence of chained lines. Dramatization is beneficial for reluctant students, because speaking as a character reduces anxiety. The use of mediator characters lowers the barrier to expression, making dialogic tasks game-centered and accessible to students in grades I and II.

Conclusions

The conducted research has enabled us to formulate the following conclusions: the obtained results highlight that the development of dialogic communication competence in primary school students constitutes an essential component of the educational process, having a significant impact on academic performance and social integration.

The data reveals the existence of a moderate to high potential among students to engage in coherent dialogue. However, the analysis highlights persistent difficulties regarding adaptation to the communicative context, the manifestation of active listening, and the assurance of logical coherence in discourse.

In this context, optimizing the development of dialogic communication competence requires the implementation of interactive, student-centered teaching strategies. Debate activities, grounded in adherence to the rules of constructive dialogue (listening, paraphrasing, response formulation), as well as text interpretation activities (guided discussions, character analysis, dramatization), prove effective in stimulating communicative competences.

Furthermore, expanding role-play toward its performative dimension, by integrating elements such as memorization, vocal projection, non-verbal expressivity, and coherence of turns, contributes to the development of fluency and self-confidence, particularly among students who are hesitant to express themselves, thereby reducing the anxiety associated with communicative situations.

Enhancing the effectiveness of this approach is conditional upon the diversified use of organizational forms of didactic activity and specific methods, such as collective storytelling, guided dialogue, role-play, debate, and heuristic conversation, which foster active participation and the development of functional communicative competences.

In **conclusion**, the research provides relevant theoretical and applicative references for optimizing teaching practices, with a view to developing dialogic communication competence in primary school students, in accordance with the requirements of an educational approach centered on the holistic formation of the student's personality. This analysis offers a coherent framework for rethinking and optimizing teaching strategies focused on the development of dialogic communication competence in primary school students, in the spirit of quality education oriented toward the comprehensive development of the learner.

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EDUCATION OF OLDER ADULTS FROM AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: THE ROLE OF GENDER IN SHAPING MOTIVATIONAL NEEDS

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In the context of global demographic changes, marked by the accelerated aging of the population, senior education has gained increased relevance within contemporary educational and social policies. This article examines senior education from an intercultural perspective, highlighting the role of gender in shaping motivational needs for participation in formal and non-formal educational activities. The theoretical framework is grounded in the lifelong learning paradigm, promoted by UNESCO and the United Nations, and informed by relevant contributions from intercultural education and gender studies. The results indicate the predominance of intrinsic motivation in the learning process in later life, with seniors primarily driven by the desire for self-realization, personal development, and maintenance of intellectual activity. Furthermore, gender differences in motivational orientation are highlighted, correlating with life experiences and social trajectories. In conclusion, the article emphasizes the need for educational programs sensitive to gender and intercultural diversity, supporting active participation and social cohesion.

Keywords: *education of older adults, intercultural approach, gender differences, lifelong learning, motivational needs, seniors.*

EDUCAȚIA SENIORILOR DIN PERSPECTIVĂ INTERCULTURALĂ: ROLUL GENULUI ÎN CONFIGURAREA TREBUINȚELOR MOTIVAȚIONALE

În contextul transformărilor demografice globale, marcate de îmbătrânirea accelerată a populației, educația seniorilor a dobândit o relevanță sporită în cadrul politicilor educaționale și sociale contemporane. Articolul explorează educația seniorilor din perspectivă interculturală, evidențiind rolul genului în configurarea trebuințelor motivaționale pentru participarea la activități educaționale formale și nonformale. Demersul teoretic se fundamentează pe paradigma învățării pe tot parcursul vieții, promovată de UNESCO și ONU, precum și pe contribuții relevante din domeniul educației interculturale și al studiilor de gen. Rezultatele indică predominanța motivației intrinseci în procesul de învățare la vârsta a treia, seniorii fiind stimulați în principal de dorința de autorealizare, dezvoltare personală și menținere a activității intelectuale. Totodată, sunt evidențiate diferențe de gen în orientarea motivațională, corelate cu experiențele de viață și traiectoriile sociale. În concluzie, articolul subliniază necesitatea elaborării unor programe educaționale sensibile la dimensiunea de gen și la diversitatea interculturală, care să sprijine participarea activă și coeziunea socială.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educația seniorilor, abordare interculturală, diferențe de gen, învățare pe tot parcursul vieții, trebuințe motivaționale, seniori.*

Introduction

In the context of ongoing global demographic change and the accelerated ageing of populations, the education of older adults has increasingly become a relevant concern for educational, social, and cultural policy agendas. As the proportion of individuals in later life continues to grow, the traditional understanding of education - largely centred on professional preparation - requires reconsideration. In later adulthood, education is increasingly linked to broader objectives such as active participation in society, social inclusion, and the sustained quality of life.

Within this framework, education for older adults is widely acknowledged as an integral component of the lifelong learning paradigm promoted by UNESCO and the United Nations. At the same time, it is gradually consolidating its status as a distinct area within adult education, one that requires pedagogical approaches responsive to learners' accumulated life experience, evolving motivations, and heterogeneous life trajectories.

The growing relevance of this field is also connected to the need to approach older adult education from an intercultural perspective, particularly in contexts characterised by mobility, migration, and cultural diversity. Research suggests that educational processes in adulthood are closely linked to the cultural environments in which values, attitudes, and perceptions of learning are formed [1]. From this standpoint, interculturality allows for a move beyond standardised educational models toward more context-sensitive interpretations of learning in later life.

Such an approach necessarily extends beyond ethnic or linguistic categories, incorporating additional dimensions such as gender, social positioning, professional background, and culturally internalised patterns of behaviour accumulated across the life course. Consequently, education in later adulthood can be understood as a multidimensional field shaped by intersecting social and identity-related factors.

Within this theoretical framework, a relatively underexplored aspect concerns the influence of gender on the motivational structure of older adults in intercultural learning contexts. Rather than being treated as a purely demographic variable, gender should be understood as a socio-cultural construct that shapes educational pathways, occupational histories, social roles, and coping strategies across the lifespan [3].

In later life, these gendered patterns often become more visible, reflecting accumulated structural inequalities, culturally embedded expectations, and differentiated access to educational opportunities. From a motivational perspective, older adults tend to prioritise needs related to self-actualisation, belonging, recognition, social usefulness, and autonomy. However, the way these needs are ranked and expressed is significantly influenced by both gender and cultural context. Overlooking this dimension may result in educational programmes - formal or non-formal - that are only partially aligned with learners' realities, thereby limiting meaningful participation and engagement.

Against this background, the present article aims to examine senior education from an intercultural perspective, with particular attention to the role of gender in shaping motivational needs. It seeks to develop an interpretative framework of learning motivation in later adulthood that may inform more inclusive, equitable, and context-sensitive educational policies and practices.

Successful Ageing - Theoretical Approaches

Successful ageing is a complex and multidimensional concept for which the specialised literature does not yet offer a single, universally accepted definition. Researchers who have explored this topic tend to emphasise different, though often complementary, dimensions of the ageing experience.

One of the early conceptualisations is offered by Havighurst (1961), who associates *successful ageing* with the individual's capacity to "add life to years", highlighting the importance of life satisfaction and sustained engagement in meaningful activities [9, p. 11]. This perspective suggests that quality of life should not be understood as secondary to longevity, but rather as its defining dimension. In later adulthood, living longer has limited value if it is not accompanied by subjective experiences of satisfaction, meaning, and psychological balance. This anticipates contemporary approaches that place increasing emphasis on subjective well-being as a core indicator of successful ageing.

Within a different conceptual tradition, Ryff (1989) defines successful ageing as "a form of positive or ideal functioning, linked to the achievement of developmental tasks across the life course" [19, p. 1073]. While Havighurst's interpretation is more closely related to life satisfaction and emotional fulfilment, Ryff's model introduces a more structured psychological perspective on well-being. In this view, ageing successfully is not only about feeling satisfied with life, but also about maintaining autonomy, having a sense of purpose, and preserving meaningful interpersonal relationships. This shift is important because it moves the discussion from a purely subjective evaluation of happiness toward a more multidimensional understanding of human functioning in later life.

Fisher (1992), based on qualitative interviews with older adults, provides empirical insight into how successful ageing is actually experienced and described by seniors themselves [7, p. 174]. His findings indicate that older adults tend to define successful ageing less in abstract theoretical terms and more through everyday strategies of coping and adaptation. In this sense, concepts such as "*adjustment*" or "*adaptation*" are not merely technical terms in gerontology, but reflect a lived reality in which individuals continuously negotiate biological changes, psychological transitions, and social repositioning. From this perspective, successful ageing is better understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed outcome, since it depends on how individuals

integrate change into their daily lives while maintaining a sense of continuity and personal coherence.

Building on these perspectives, Gibson (1995) attempts to integrate subjective and objective dimensions of ageing, defining successful ageing as “the attainment of personal potential and a satisfactory level of physical, social, and psychological well-being in later life, both from the perspective of the individual and others” [8, p. 284]. A similarly integrative view is proposed by Palmore (1995), who conceptualises successful ageing through three core components: *survival* (longevity), *health* (absence of disability), and *life satisfaction* (happiness) [14, p. 914].

A widely cited model in the literature is proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1998), who conceptualise successful ageing through three interrelated components:

- The first refers to the *maintenance of good health*, understood as a reduced risk of disease and disability, which is typically supported by lifestyle factors such as regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and periodic medical monitoring.
- The second component concerns sustained *physical and cognitive functioning*, reflected in the ability to remain intellectually active and mentally engaged across later life.
- The third dimension emphasises *active engagement in life*, which is largely expressed through the maintenance of meaningful social relationships.

Beyond this tripartite model, Rowe and Kahn also highlight the central role of social support in shaping ageing outcomes. Their argument is based on the observation that social isolation constitutes a significant risk factor for health decline, particularly in later adulthood.

In contrast, different forms of support-emotional, practical, and relational - contribute positively to overall well-being and quality of life. More importantly, social support functions not only as a protective factor in itself, but also as a buffer that can mitigate some of the negative consequences associated with ageing, including increased vulnerability to everyday stressors [17, p. 133]. From this perspective, successful ageing is not only a matter of individual health behaviours, but also of the broader relational and social context in which older adults are embedded.

Although Rowe and Kahn’s model has significantly influenced contemporary gerontological discourse, it has also been criticised for its limited sensitivity to cultural diversity and gendered experiences of ageing. Several scholars argue that its emphasis on physical health, functional performance, and autonomy largely reflects individualistic Western values, which may not adequately capture the realities of older adults in other cultural contexts or those facing structural constraints.

Moreover, empirical studies indicate that men and women experience ageing differently, as a result of distinct educational, occupational, and family trajectories. This suggests the need for a more explicitly gender-sensitive interpretation of successful ageing.

In later developments, Rowe and Kahn’s model (1998) was expanded to include positive spirituality as an additional dimension capable of enriching the ageing experience (Fig. 1). Spirituality contributes to psychological and emotional balance, facilitates adaptation to losses and limitations associated with later life, and strengthens a sense of meaning and existential coherence.



Fig. 1. Revised Rowe and Kahn Model of Successful Aging [4, pp. 615]

Through spiritual practices and value-based reflection, older adults may maintain an active relationship with both self and others, thereby supporting cognitive functioning as well as sustained social engagement [4, p. 615].

Along the same lines, Vaillant G. E., & Mukamal, K. report that the two most important psychosocial predictors of successful aging are a high level of education (which likely reflects, equally, traits such as self-care and planning capacity, not just social status) and the existence of an extensive family network. In his research on aging, Vaillant G. E., (2001) identified the following variables as contributing to successful aging:

- seeking and maintaining interpersonal relationships and recognizing that relationships that help us heal and grow require gratitude, forgiveness, and intimacy;
- concern for others and the capacity to give of oneself;
- a sense of humor and the ability to laugh and play well into old age;
- forming new friendships as old ones are lost, which has a more positive impact on successful aging than post-retirement income;
- the desire to learn and openness to new ideas and perspectives;
- understanding and accepting one's own limitations, as well as accepting help from others;
- understanding the past and its influence on our lives while remaining anchored in the present;
- focusing on positive aspects and valuable people in our lives, rather than on negative events that may occur [21, pp. 841].

Vaillant's findings indirectly draw attention to the role of education and lifelong learning as protective factors for successful ageing. The willingness to learn, openness to new ideas, and the capacity for identity reconstruction are not only individual characteristics, but are also shaped by broader cultural frameworks as well as by gender norms internalised throughout the life course.

From this perspective, later-life learning cannot be understood in a uniform way, since women and men may engage differently in educational processes depending on socially constructed roles and the nature of educational opportunities accumulated over time. These differences are not merely individual preferences, but reflect long-standing structural and cultural influences.

Although conceptual definitions of successful ageing vary in emphasis and terminology, most approaches converge on a shared understanding: ageing successfully involves a continuous balancing process between physical health, psychological well-being, social participation, adaptive capacity, and existential meaning. What becomes particularly important in an intercultural and gender-sensitive perspective is the recognition that this balance is not achieved in the same way across all individuals or contexts. Rather than a fixed universal model, successful ageing should be interpreted as a dynamic and situated process, shaped by lived experience, cultural expectations, and unequal access to educational and social resources.

This convergence of perspectives offers a useful foundation for integrating the concept of successful ageing into adult and continuing education. In this context, learning is not limited to cognitive development, but also functions as a mechanism that supports autonomy, maintains motivation, and contributes to the preservation of quality of life in later adulthood.

The Biopsychosocial Development Profile of Older Adults

The third age can be understood as a distinct stage of the life course, characterised by the interplay of biological, psychological, and social changes that influence how individuals function, perceive themselves, relate to others, and engage in educational activities. Contemporary gerontological approaches increasingly move beyond reductionist interpretations of ageing that focus exclusively on decline, instead emphasising the diversity of ageing trajectories and the strong influence of contextual factors on individual development.

From a *biological perspective*, ageing involves gradual physiological changes such as reduced muscle strength, decreased bone density, lower sensory acuity, and increased susceptibility to chronic health conditions. However, these changes should not be interpreted in deterministic terms, as their impact is significantly mediated by lifestyle, health behaviours, and social conditions.

However, empirical research shows that these changes do not follow a uniform trajectory and do not in-

evitably lead to functional loss. The concept of developmental plasticity supports the idea that biological ageing is significantly influenced by lifestyle, physical activity, access to healthcare, and engagement in cognitively and socially stimulating activities. The World Health Organization emphasises that functional ability, rather than the mere absence of disease, represents the central criterion of healthy ageing [22].

At the *cognitive level*, the third age is marked by a differentiation between components of intellectual functioning. While processing speed and working memory may show moderate decline, crystallised intelligence - including accumulated knowledge, life experience, and verbal abilities - tends to remain stable or may even improve. This cognitive profile helps explain why older adults often demonstrate well-developed capacities for reflection, contextual judgement, and experiential integration. These abilities are particularly relevant in learning environments that rely on dialogue, the exchange of experience, and critical reflection, where personal and collective knowledge intersect in meaningful ways.

From a *psychological perspective*, later life is characterised by a gradual reorientation of existential priorities. Attention tends to shift away from externally defined achievements toward processes of meaning-making, biographical coherence, and the integration of lived experiences. Within Erikson's psychosocial framework (1982), this developmental stage is defined by the tension between ego integrity and despair, with positive resolution associated with the acceptance of one's life as a meaningful and coherent whole. In this phase, individuals frequently engage in retrospective evaluation of their life course, accompanied by an intensified search for meaning and a stronger need for symbolic recognition and social validation [5].

Ageing may also be accompanied by a qualitative shift in the individual's relationship with self and the surrounding world. Many older adults show an increased orientation toward existential, spiritual, and relational dimensions, while placing less emphasis on competition, social status, or material accumulation. This transformation has direct implications for learning motivation, as it tends to favour educational activities that carry cultural, symbolic, and identity-related relevance.

From a *social perspective*, later adulthood is often associated with the reconfiguration of social roles and positions, particularly in the context of retirement, changes in family responsibilities, and the loss of significant relationships. Although such transitions may heighten the risk of social isolation, they can also create space for redefining social identity and for participation in community-based, educational, or voluntary activities. Empirical evidence consistently highlights that maintaining an active social role remains a key protective factor for psychological well-being and cognitive health in older adults [17, p. 165].

Gender differences play an important role in shaping how these biological, psychological, and social changes are experienced and integrated. Older women's life trajectories are often marked by caregiving responsibilities and discontinuous employment histories, which may contribute to lower financial security but stronger and more diversified social networks. By contrast, older men may experience the loss of occupational status and work-related identity more acutely, which can increase their vulnerability to social isolation after retirement. These differences are particularly relevant when analysing motivational patterns and participation in lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the experience of later life is strongly shaped by cultural context. In some societies, older adults are socially recognised as custodians of knowledge and tradition, whereas in others they may be exposed to negative stereotypes associated with decline and dependency. From an intercultural perspective, these cultural frameworks significantly influence attitudes toward ageing, access to educational opportunities, and participation in learning activities, making them essential considerations in the design of inclusive and diversity-sensitive educational programmes.

In conclusion, the biological, psychological, and social dimensions of the third age describe a developmental profile characterised by heterogeneity, plasticity, and continued potential for growth. A clear understanding of these dimensions provides a necessary foundation for analysing the motivational needs of older adults and for designing educational interventions that reflect life experience, autonomy, cultural diversity, and gendered life trajectories. These issues will be further developed in the following section.

Motivational Needs of Older Adults

The motivational needs of older adults are shaped by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social transformations associated with the ageing process. Rather than indicating a decline in motivational capacity, these needs should be understood as a restructuring of priorities and sources of satisfaction, increasingly oriented toward quality of life, autonomy, and the search for existential meaning.

Specialised literature consistently highlights that motivational patterns in later life are also influenced by gender, as a result of differentiated educational, occupational, and family trajectories accumulated across the life course. In this regard, older women more frequently emphasise interpersonal relationships, affiliation, and social support, whereas older men tend to attach greater importance to autonomy, social status, and the maintenance of active roles. These differences are not purely individual, but reflect culturally and historically shaped expectations regarding gender roles [2].

A key component of motivation in later adulthood is the increased *need for security*, understood both in physical terms (health status and access to healthcare services) and in psychosocial terms (financial stability, predictability of living conditions, and social protection). In the context of heightened vulnerability and potential dependency, these needs often acquire a central role, influencing the activation and sustainability of higher-order motivational drives. At the same time, older adults demonstrate a persistent orientation toward *autonomy* and *self-determination*, expressed through a desire to remain actively involved in decisions that concern their lives.

In this context, perceived loss of control may function as a strong demotivating factor, with negative implications for self-esteem and engagement. Conversely, the fulfilment of autonomy needs appears to play a crucial role in maintaining intrinsic motivation and supporting psychological well-being in later life.

Another distinctive aspect of motivational needs in older adults is *the desire for recognition of accumulated skills and experience*. Participation in activities that allow knowledge transfer, mentoring, or community engagement fulfills the need for social utility and supports personal identity (Erikson, 1982). Motivation at this stage is less oriented toward long-term goals and more toward *imbuing life experiences with meaning*. The need for biographical coherence and integration of past experiences is central, associated with achieving ego integrity [5].

Activities with symbolic, cultural, or spiritual value have high motivational potential. Older adults often tend to narrow the scope of their social interactions, giving priority to relationships that offer *emotional support* and *affective satisfaction*. In this context, motivational orientations gradually shift from the quantity of social contacts toward the quality and depth of social bonds.

The expression and hierarchy of motivational needs are strongly influenced by *cultural context*. In collectivist societies, emphasis is typically placed on relationships, solidarity, and group belonging, whereas in individualistic contexts autonomy and personal achievement are more strongly valued. These culturally embedded frameworks also shape older adults' openness toward participation in educational and community-based activities [10, p. 80].

Motivation in later life is further conditioned by the immediate social and *educational environment*. Environments characterised by respect, empathy, and the absence of age-based discrimination tend to support engagement and participation, while stereotypical or paternalistic attitudes often have a discouraging effect. Compared to earlier stages of adulthood, older learners are generally less responsive to external incentives such as material rewards or social status, and more influenced by *intrinsic factors*, including personal relevance, intellectual curiosity, and emotional fulfilment [12]. For this reason, educational programmes addressed to older adults require careful adaptation to both cultural and gender-specific contexts, in order to ensure meaningful participation and sustained engagement.

In addition, motivational needs in later adulthood are closely connected to respect for *individual functional rhythms*. When cognitive or physical demands exceed personal capacity, they may generate anxiety, reduced confidence, or withdrawal from learning activities. In contrast, appropriately paced instruction, flexible content, and supportive pedagogical strategies contribute to persistence and reinforce the sense of competence.

Taken together, motivational patterns in later life appear as deeply contextualised, being centred on autonomy, meaning, security, and meaningful social relationships. From an intercultural and gender-sensitive perspective, learning motivation in older adulthood should therefore be understood as a dynamic construct, continuously shaped by life experience, cultural norms, and socially internalised roles.

Lifelong Education for Older Adults

Continuing education for older adults is widely recognised at the international level as a key component of active ageing. This perspective reflects an important shift in how ageing is conceptualised, moving away from a deficit-oriented model toward an approach that emphasises accumulated experience, autonomy, and sustained social participation. From an intercultural standpoint, this transformation is particularly significant, since perceptions of ageing, learning, and the social roles of older adults are not universal, but are shaped by cultural norms, gender expectations, and broader socio-economic contexts.

At the policy level, both the United Nations and the World Health Organization consistently underline the strategic role of lifelong learning in supporting the health and well-being of older persons. A relevant example is the *UN Decade of Healthy Ageing* (2021–2030) [22], which proposes a coordinated global framework aimed at improving the quality of life of older people through integrated, cross-sectoral interventions.

This initiative is important not only because it acknowledges ageing as a heterogeneous process, but also because it explicitly recognises diversity - including gender, cultural background, and social conditions - as a determinant of quality of life in later adulthood. In this context, health in older age is understood in a broader sense, extending beyond access to healthcare services and including sustained participation in social, educational, and community life, where education plays a particularly significant role.

The WHO underlines that maintaining functional capacity - physical, cognitive, and social - depends significantly on opportunities for lifelong learning and active engagement. From this perspective, unequal access to education in intercultural contexts can either facilitate or restrict older adults' participation and motivation, thereby contributing either to the reproduction of social inequalities or, conversely, to processes of inclusion and empowerment.

In a similar normative direction, *the United Nations Principles for Older Persons* (1991) [20] outline five fundamental dimensions of ageing with dignity: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, and dignity. Rather than functioning as isolated categories, these principles collectively articulate a broader vision in which older adults are recognised as active social actors who should benefit from real opportunities for autonomy, development, and meaningful participation, regardless of their socio-economic position.

Within this framework, lifelong learning extends beyond its strictly educational function and becomes a mechanism for promoting social equity, supporting self-realisation, and strengthening active citizenship in later life.

At the European level, *the European Association for the Education of Adults* (EAEA) [6] stresses that adult education must remain accessible, flexible, and responsive to diversity in all its forms, including cultural background, life experience, and gender-related differences. This implies the development of both formal and non-formal learning environments that foster digital competences, transversal skills, and the systematic recognition of prior experiential learning. At the same time, the effectiveness of these approaches depends on the continuous professional development of educators, particularly in relation to intercultural, inclusive, and gender-sensitive pedagogical practices.

At the national level, the Republic of Moldova has aligned its strategic directions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through *the National Programme on Active and Healthy Ageing* (2023–2027) [15]. This policy framework builds on commitments assumed within the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), which emphasises dignity, security, and participation as core principles of ageing well.

The programme addresses a set of interrelated priorities, including the strengthening of institutional capacities, the promotion of social inclusion, improved access to education, and the development of age-friendly environments. Within this broader framework, education is positioned not as an isolated sector, but as a transversal pillar that supports autonomy, participation, and active ageing.

A concrete expression of these principles can be observed in *the University of the Third Age* (U3A), which operates as a structured educational initiative dedicated to older adults. Originating in 1973 in Toulouse under the initiative of P. Vellas, U3A has evolved into an international model promoting social participation, cognitive stimulation, and active ageing.

Two main organisational models have emerged: the French model, integrated into universities and structured around formal teaching, and the Anglo-Saxon model, based on self-organisation, peer learning, and voluntary participation [16, p. 73]. Both models reflect different philosophies of adult education, but share the same goal of promoting active engagement in later life.

In the Republic of Moldova, the University of the Third Age (U3A) has been developed through collaboration between public institutions, universities, and international organisations. Since 2023, programmes have been initiated at Moldova State University and subsequently expanded at national level, providing older adults with structured learning opportunities in areas such as digital literacy, foreign languages, health education, law, history, and physical well-being.

Through these developments, U3A supports digital inclusion, fosters intergenerational dialogue, and promotes the recognition of older adults' experiential knowledge. In this way, it aligns with broader national and European strategies on lifelong learning, while also responding to the specific educational and social needs of older learners.

Conclusions

The analysis of education for older adults highlights the need to understand successful ageing as a multidimensional and dynamic process that extends beyond biological functioning. Rather than being limited to physical health, ageing in contemporary societies increasingly involves psychological adaptation and sustained social participation. In this sense, the biopsychosocial profile of older adults reflects a continuous interaction between health status, cognitive-emotional functioning, and the surrounding social environment, which together shape opportunities for learning and engagement.

The findings suggest that motivation in later life is primarily driven by intrinsic factors such as personal development, self-actualisation, and the desire to remain intellectually active. External incentives, including social recognition, appear to play a secondary role. This pattern indicates that educational approaches for older adults are most effective when they support autonomy and create space for meaningful engagement with prior life experience, rather than focusing exclusively on formal knowledge transmission. From this perspective, lifelong learning becomes not only an educational process, but also a mechanism for maintaining social connection, participation, and intercultural openness.

The study also indicates that educational practice with older adults requires a high degree of contextual sensitivity. Learning activities should be adapted to the functional diversity of participants, taking into account variations in cognitive pace, health conditions, and previous educational trajectories. At the same time, gender and cultural differences should not be treated as secondary variables, but as integral dimensions that influence motivation, participation, and learning preferences.

On this basis, several implications for educational practice can be formulated. These include the need to design flexible and learner-centred programmes, to incorporate collaborative and experiential learning strategies, and to ensure that educational environments actively support inclusion, dialogue, and social belonging. Equally important is the continuous adaptation of teaching approaches in response to learners' feedback and evolving needs.

At the policy level, strengthening education for older adults requires coordinated actions that go beyond isolated initiatives. The integration of senior education into national lifelong learning frameworks, the expansion of accessible learning opportunities, and the professional development of educators in adult and intercultural pedagogy represent key directions. In addition, public policies should aim to reduce barriers to participation and promote positive societal perceptions of ageing as a stage of continued development.

Overall, the evidence discussed in this paper suggests that education plays a central role in supporting active and dignified ageing. It contributes not only to individual development, but also to social cohesion and intercultural understanding. In this way, learning in later life should be viewed as a strategic resource for both personal well-being and broader societal sustainability.

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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

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The article describes the process of conceptualizing the intercultural competence through a systematic analysis of the specialized literature, relating it to a complex set of interconnected competences: key competence, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, transversal competence, interdisciplinary competence, integrated competence, axiological competence and the competence to learn to live together with others. The complexity of the intercultural competence stems from its positioning at the confluence of multiple scientific fields, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and axiology, thus serving as a foundation for social interaction and personal development. The research findings lead to an original definition of intercultural competence, highlighting the interdependence between linguistic knowledge and cultural sensitivity.

Keywords: *intercultural competence, conceptualization, key competence, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, transversal competence, interdisciplinary competence, integrated competence, axiological competence, learning to live together.*

COMPETENȚA INTERCULTURALĂ: PERSPECTIVE TEORETICE ȘI IMPLICAȚII EDUCATIONALE

Articolul descrie procesul de conceptualizare a competenței interculturale printr-o analiză sistematică a literaturii de specialitate, raportând-o la un set complex de competențe conexe: competențele-cheie, competența plurilingvistă și pluriculturală, competența transversală, competența interdisciplinară, competența integrată, competența axiologică și competența de a învăța să trăiești împreună cu ceilalți. Complexitatea competenței interculturale provine din situarea acesteia la confluența mai multor domenii științifice precum psihologia, sociologia, antropologia și axiologia, fiind astfel fundament al interacțiunii sociale și al dezvoltării personale. Rezultatele cercetării duc la o definiție originală a competenței interculturale, care aduce în prim-plan interdependența între cunoașterea lingvistică și sensibilitatea culturală.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competență interculturală, conceptualizare, competență-cheie, competență plurilingvistă și pluriculturală, competența transversală, competența interdisciplinară, competența integrată, competența axiologică, competența de a învăța să trăiești împreună cu ceilalți.*

Introduction

This article addresses the process of conceptualizing the intercultural competence, an essential stage in grounding the theoretical framework of the thesis bearing the title “Developing the Intercultural Competence of High School Students through the Use of Information Technologies”. The investigative approach aims at outlining the intercultural competence in relation to specialized literature, identifying its constituent components and highlighting its relevance in the academic development of high school students. In the context of contemporary education, marked by globalization and cultural diversity, the intercultural competence is configured as an essential ability, facilitating the development of *the capacity for effective, empathetic and responsible interaction in varied sociocultural contexts*. Therefore, the development of this competence represents an educational priority and a learning objective, as it facilitates the individual’s harmonious integration into diverse social contexts and contributes to the consolidation of a culture of dialogue, mutual respect and intercultural cooperation.

Methods/materials used

The intercultural competence represents a complex theoretical construct, as it is situated at the intersection of several scientific domains, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and axiology. Consequent-

ly, the intercultural competence can be viewed as an integrative configuration of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable the individual to interact effectively, responsibly and empathetically in the diverse sociocultural contexts which are characteristic of the contemporary globalized societies.

In order to formulate an original definition of the intercultural competence, relevant theoretical contributions from the specialized literature were analyzed, as well as the concepts associated with it, all of which contribute to its grounding and conceptual delimitation. From this perspective, the intercultural competence can be interpreted as a multidimensional structure that integrates several typologies of competences, such as: key competence, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, transversal competence, interdisciplinary competence, integrated competence and axiological competence, while also being correlated with the competence of learning to live together.

Key competence: The Council of the European Union has established the following eight key competences, which intertwine and overlap, in order to ensure that European citizens lead a successful life: literacy competences; multilingual competences; competences in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; digital competences; personal, social and learning to learn competences; citizenship competences; entrepreneurial competences, as well as cultural awareness and expression competences. Key competences for lifelong learning are defined as “those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion, sustainable lifestyle, successful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active citizenship” [15, p. 7]. Key competences are developed gradually throughout life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences, in varied educational contexts.

Within this conceptual framework, the intercultural competence is associated with two of the eight key competences agreed upon at the European level: *multilingual competences* and *citizenship competences*. The multilingual component brings to the forefront the role played by the intercultural competence in facilitating communication between individuals belonging to *different linguistic and cultural spaces*. The European policy document highlights the role of education in fostering the appreciation of cultural diversity in developing the students’ interest in different languages and in promoting intercultural communication. Multilingualism and interculturality intersect as linguistic diversity may intensify communication barriers between individuals from different cultures and, moreover, it may also may amplify social divisions.

The intercultural competence is subsumed under *citizenship competences*, as it encourages the development of a responsible and constructive attitude toward the democratic principle of respect for human rights. According to the same document, valid at the European level, “interest in political and socioeconomic developments, humanities and intercultural communication” provides the foundation for overcoming prejudices and ensuring social justice and equity [15]. Intercultural dialogue is grounded in mutual respect and tolerance, which cannot be manifested in the absence of respect for human rights.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of the intercultural dimension in achieving global sustainable development goals. From the perspective of developing intercultural competence, goal 4 is particularly relevant, which entails ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” [13]. This objective can be achieved by eliminating gender disparities in access to learning and labor market integration opportunities, as well as by promoting human rights, a culture of peace and non-violence. The global goal on quality education promotes global citizenship, the appreciation of cultural diversity and the recognition of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

The same policy document includes intercultural skills in the category of key competences, alongside other essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and negotiation skills, teamwork, analytical skills and creativity. These competences involve complex cognitive processes oriented toward understanding, interpreting and applying knowledge in varied contexts, going beyond the reproductive level of learning.

The educational policy document “Benchmarks for designing, updating and evaluating the national curriculum” serves as a guide for teachers in implementing the ongoing educational reform and proposes a new reference framework for the national curriculum. Based on the eight European key competences, the document specifies that “high-order skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, negotiation, creativ-

ity, analytical and intercultural skills are included within the overall set of key competences” [17, p. 21]. High-order skills support the understanding and application of knowledge, in contrast to low-order skills, which prioritize rote learning.

The same document [17, p. 70] outlines the educational profile of the high school graduates in terms of key competences, which can be developed at elementary, functional, or advanced levels. The multilingual competence is defined as the ability to use multiple languages effectively and appropriately -in a register that is adapted to the cultural and social contexts-, being complemented by intercultural competences and a historical dimension. At the advanced level, the key competence of multilingualism is manifested through “processing concepts, ideas, opinions and feelings -expressed orally or in writing- according to students’ needs and interests, in various contexts, including multilingualism and intercultural communication,” as well as through “demonstrating appreciation for each individual’s linguistic profile as a basis for the development of the intercultural competence” [16, p. 70]. The integration of intercultural skills in the category of high-order skills, coupled with the integration of intercultural communication into advanced-level multilingual competence, underscores the complexity of the intercultural competence and its importance in the framework of the ongoing of curricular reform.

Key competences underlie the emergence of transformative competences, which develop an individual’s capacity to transform society. These competences [18], essential in increasingly diverse and interdependent societies, can be acquired through interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches, which are specific to formal, non-formal and informal education. According to the OECD, these competences include: *creating new value* (through innovation, resilience and sustainability); *reconciling tensions and dilemmas* (through identifying solutions to global problems, developing tolerance for ambiguity, cognitive flexibility, empathy, respect, creativity and problem-solving); and *taking responsibility* (critical thinking, self-awareness, reflective thinking and self-regulation).

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence: From the perspective of the Council of Europe, the plurilingual competence represents the “capacity to successively acquire and use different competences in different languages, at different levels of proficiency and for different functions” [2, p. 8]. The intercultural competence goes beyond the strictly linguistic dimension, integrating “knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours which allow a speaker, to varying degrees, to recognise, understand, interpret and accept other ways of living and thinking beyond his or her home culture” [ibid.]. Plurilingual and intercultural education integrates all the foreign languages known, even partially, by students [2, p. 7]. These languages interact and continuously influence one another. Linguistic and cultural diversity constitutes a significant factor in the development of the student’s personality, which is influenced by multiple sociocultural aspects throughout their ontogenesis. In order to develop the plurilingual and pluricultural competence, the foreign language teacher must capitalize on students’ sociolinguistic and sociocultural environment, as well as the formative function of social representations that are specific to their communities of origin.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Learning, Teaching, Assessment) defines the plurilingual and pluricultural competence as “the ability to use a holistic, interrelated language repertoire for communication and intercultural interaction, where a social agent possesses varying degrees of proficiency in several languages and experience of several cultures” [14, p. 168]. The plurilingual and pluricultural competence highlights the individual’s role as a social agent (who establishes relationships with diverse social groups), as well as the increasing need to participate in intercultural interactions within the context of a globalized society.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, throughout the process of studying foreign languages, learners must acquire a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes (at all levels of education) that enable them to cope with the challenges of communication in different life contexts and to overcome linguistic and cultural boundaries. This process begins with the development of *intercultural awareness*, understood as the understanding of the “*the world of origin’ and the world of the target community*” [14, p. 103]. In this context, intercultural awareness becomes an essential component of the educational process, facilitating the reduction of differences in terms of “values and beliefs, politeness conventions, social expectations etc.” [14, p. 51].

Transversal competence: In addition to its status as a key competence, the intercultural competence is a transversal competence that facilitates students' acquisition of values and attitudes beyond the boundaries of school subjects. Transversal competences are expressed through the following descriptors: "autonomy and responsibility, social interaction, personal and professional development" [16], according to National Education Law No. 1/2011. The development of the intercultural competence involves integrated learning, which occurs beyond the clearly defined boundaries of traditional academic subjects and aims at fostering autonomous learning and the holistic conceptualization of the world. Integrated learning is essential in today's society characterized by dynamism and complex interdependencies. The intercultural competence encompasses a wide range of transversal knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to the development of students' autonomy, responsibility, social interaction and personal development. Its development involves capitalizing on educational resources from various fields of knowledge, as well as on strengthening students' ability to communicate, collaborate and relate effectively in diverse cultural contexts.

Interdisciplinary competence: In the Romanian educational system, interdisciplinarity involves the capacity of establishing connections between ideas, explanatory languages, operations, or activities "with the aim of reducing the differences that arise between traditional school subjects" [5, p. 71].

According to Neacșu I., interdisciplinary competences emerge at the intersection of several fields of study. These competences can be classified into: *centripetal*, with a localized character, manifested "through the emergence of new content with an identity-thematic status of the competence" [11, p. 13] and *centrifugal*, oriented toward the extension and further development of learning acquisitions, "analyzed more from the perspective of the subject's capacity to build new cores of complementary, integrated competences" [11]. In the latter case, a fusion between different instrumental competences is achieved, which favors the manifestation of a holistic type of behavior.

The intercultural competence can be interpreted as an interdisciplinary competence, as it entails identifying correlations between various fields of knowledge. The transversal dimension of intercultural competence implies the implementation of integrated educational approaches, that can reach beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and promote a holistic approach to social and cultural realities.

Integrated competence: According to Ciolan L., integrated competences are subsumed under cross-curricular themes and go beyond the conceptual frameworks of academic subjects. "Thus, high-order competences such as decision-making, entrepreneurial competences, intercultural communication, etc. can lead to the emergence of integrated themes or projects situated beyond traditional subjects" [3, p. 190]. Integrated competences, alongside transversal, key and cross-curricular ones, underpin the interdisciplinary approach to curriculum content, as they facilitate *methodological and conceptual transfers* from one subject to another [3, p. 125]. In this way, a systemic view and an integrative perspective on the topic under discussion are configured.

Intercultural competences are characterized by a high degree of complexity and, therefore, can be developed through a plurality of disciplines studied throughout general secondary education. No school subject alone can claim exclusivity in the formation of intercultural competence, which must be approached and taught in an integrative manner. According to Ciolan L., the integrated curriculum involves establishing meaningful connections between themes or competences that are usually developed separately through a variety of academic subjects, as "they have a strong connection to students' everyday life and aim, directly or indirectly, to contribute to shaping of values and attitudes" [3, p. 118].

Cross-curricular themes are oriented toward the students' personal and social development and involve the planning of varied learning experiences, configured within concrete and diverse educational contexts. Cross-curricular themes address the complex social, political, economic and cultural realities of the contemporary society and, therefore, require a reconceptualization of the way curriculum is designed, developed, implemented and assessed.

The intercultural competence can be developed through cross-curricular themes such as: *Multicultural cities of the world*; *Gastronomy, music and literature as expressions of cultural identity*; *Online intercultural communication*; *Migration and identity* or *Nonverbal communication in different cultures*. These themes facilitate the development of students' ability to act appropriately in diverse intercultural situations.

Axiological competence: According to L. Cuznețov, personality development is grounded in the knowledge and explanation of values, in “sensitizing the individual to values, in shaping the human personality through values and for values” [8, p. 20]. Every educational endeavor has a teleological, axiological, prospective and dialectical character. The same researcher emphasizes the axiological dimension of education by referring to the essential resources that are needed in order to achieve its intended goals, namely: *general human values; culturally derived values; pedagogical objectives and the general content of education* [8, p. 43].

Axiological competences are intrinsic to the entire teaching–learning process, as “education represents a transmission of values, a direct engagement with otherness – whether of the present, the past, or the future – a context of communication and social interaction” [6, p. 101].

Axiological competences constitute a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that ensure students’ cultural autonomy. “Axiological competences facilitate the critical and effective analysis of cultural stimuli and messages, their corroboration, their systemic correlation and the construction of new meanings and value significances” [1, p. 223], favoring the individual’s active and responsible participation in social life.

These competences are not limited to the knowledge and assimilation of cultural goods or conventions, but “aim – above all – at the capacity to invent new codes of reference or to discover new connections within systems of values” [4, p. 46]. The enhancement of the axiological competence corresponds to the axiological function of education, that is materialized in assimilating cultural values by students and generating of new ones. The teaching–learning process aims to equip learners with a broad range of scientific and cultural knowledge deemed valuable for their development and the shaping of their personalities.

“The development of the axiological competence, namely the ability to independently choose and assign meaning to values, appears to be consonant with the objectives of intercultural education” [7, p. 109]. Therefore, the intercultural competence cannot be fostered in the absence of the continuous process of axiological analysis, decentering, signification and re-signification that is facilitated through the development of the axiological competence.

The competence of living together: The development of the intercultural competence is grounded in the competence of learning to live together, which involves cooperation, communication and active participation in human activities [9, p. 16].

Learning to live together constitutes one of the four pillars of knowledge and education identified by J. Delors in the UNESCO report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, entitled “Learning: The Treasure Within,” alongside learning to do (action), learning to be (becoming) and learning to know (knowledge). These pillars of education aim at contributing to the holistic development of the human personality, based on ethical, spiritual, scientific, aesthetic and artistic values, by promoting democratic values, physical and mental health, as well as by fostering respect for national traditions and values.

This fundamental type of education involves the acquisition of transversal competences designed to facilitate students’ adaptation to a dynamic and constantly changing world, by developing their ability to relate to others, to empathize, to overcome prejudices, to collaborate in diverse teams, to participate in problem-solving, to transcend their own limits and to cultivate the full potential of the mind and spirit on a universal scale.

The competence of learning to live together can be strengthened “by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way” [9, p. 20].

This educational process can be concretized through the following lines of action:

1. *Learning through contact with difference*, which involves focusing on diversity, adopting cultural relativism and cultivating reciprocity;
2. *Learning from controversies and conflicts*, not by avoiding them, but by managing them in such a way that they do not degenerate into violence;
3. *Interactive learning* within networks, teams and communities [10, p. 35-36].

In addition to this pillar of education, S. Shaeffer and his collaborators introduced a fundamental type of education: *learning to transform oneself and society*, oriented toward the development of the abilities to know, reflect and act upon reality, with the aim of promoting a non-discriminatory society and fostering solidarity and social cohesion [12, p. 16-17].

This type of learning is subordinated to the values that shape each type of society. “The individual, the social group and peoples have the right to prioritize those values they consider most important, without harming, through their actions, other individuals, social groups, or peoples” [8, p. 68]. Just as ancient and medieval societies were subordinated to divinity and religious values, contemporary democratic society focuses on harmonious human interactions.

The Council of Europe, through the Pestalozzi program, proposes the following strategies that can be implemented for the development of the competence of learning to live together, which is considered the main objective of intercultural education:

1. *Selecting topics that are specific to the multilingual context of education* (through comparisons between languages and cultures) *and the plurilingual perspective*. In addition to subjects that directly contribute to the development of intercultural competences (such as history, geography, political sciences/social sciences, or foreign languages), the integration of other school subjects is also recommended, such as music, mathematics, or natural sciences.

2. *Developing student-centered teaching and learning methods*, such as: discovery learning, project-based learning, role-play, negotiation of positions and perspectives, the use of fictional texts with intercultural themes and devising strategies for negotiating differences and otherness.

These strategies contribute to achieving the objective of curricular development, which can be attained by offering diverse learning opportunities; by integrating intercultural education as a curricular objective at all levels of formal education; by promoting the principles of non-discriminatory pluralism and cultural relativism; by creating explicit intercultural learning situations; by fostering learning from differences, multiperspectivity, remembrance and reconciliation; by exposing students to intercultural communication situations; by valuing intercultural encounters and by implementing experiential learning situations [10, p. 41–43].

Results

The analysis of the specialized literature has shown that the development of intercultural competence can be defined *as the process of developing the students' abilities to interact effectively and appropriately with others who are linguistically and culturally different from themselves*. The intercultural competence goes beyond the strictly communicative dimension, involving reciprocal processes of knowledge, interpretation and cultural mutual influence, characteristic of intercultural encounters.

Contact with cultural otherness inherently entails confronting different systems of values, norms and sociocultural representations, which generates opportunities for critical reflection and for the reconfiguration of one's own perspectives. In this context, the development of the intercultural competence involves fostering students' ability to understand and interpret cultural diversity, to negotiate meanings in intercultural communication situations and to demonstrate openness toward the plurality of ways of thinking and acting.

Conclusions

The analysis of the theoretical framework and the contemporary educational context underscores that the intercultural competence emerges as a complex, multidimensional and integrative competence, whose fundamental manifestation consists in adopting an attitude of respect, tolerance and acceptance of cultural otherness in all its forms of expression.

The intercultural competence develops students' ability to interpret, negotiate and value cultural differences through the integrated mobilization of cognitive, socio-emotional and communicative resources in intercultural contexts.

Therefore, the intercultural competence is essential in developing individuals who are capable of ef-

fectively managing cultural diversity, demonstrating openness and respect toward otherness and actively contributing to the development of democratic and inclusive societies. The intercultural competence facilitates the development of an autonomous and reflective personality, capable of active participation in social life and effective integration into a socio-professional environment, that is characterized by dynamism and increasing competitiveness.

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EDUCATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND THE INTEGRATION OF EMOTIONAL CULTURE IN DANCE TEACHER EDUCATION ACROSS DIVERSE GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTS

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Contemporary society requires dance teachers to demonstrate continuous adaptability, calling for the development of professional autonomy and responsibility. In dance education, teachers’ emotional culture plays an essential role, encompassing the regulation of their own emotions as well as those of their students in order to create a harmonious and effective learning environment. Emotional culture is structured around intrapersonal and relational dimensions that shape pedagogical communication and professional performance. Attributes such as empathy, self-regulation, and pedagogical optimism support instructional effectiveness and professional success. Consequently, the training of dance teachers must incorporate socio-emotional competences and strategies for emotion regulation that are responsive to the challenges of contemporary education. Emotional culture thus emerges as a foundational element of professional performance and harmonious relationships within the educational community, proving essential for the development of an effective and inclusive educational system.

Keywords: *emotional culture, dance teachers, socio-emotional competences, emotion regulation, professional performance, dance education, pedagogical communication, professional adaptability.*

REGLEMENTĂRI EDUCAȚIONALE ȘI VALORIFICARE A CULTURII EMOȚIONALE ÎN FORMAREA CADRELOR DIDACTICE DE DÂNS DIN DIVERSE CONTEXTE GEOGRAFICE

Societatea contemporană impune profesorilor de dans o adaptabilitate continuă, necesitând dezvoltarea autonomiei și responsabilității profesionale. În educația dansului, cultura emoțională a profesorilor joacă un rol esențial, incluzând gestionarea propriilor emoții și ale elevilor pentru a crea un mediu armonios și eficient. Aceasta se structurează în componente intrapersonale și relaționale, care influențează comunicarea pedagogică și performanța profesională. Trăsături precum empatia, autocontrolul și optimismul pedagogic susțin succesul didactic. Formarea profesorilor de dans trebuie să includă competențe socio-emoționale și strategii pentru gestionarea emoțiilor, adaptate provocărilor educației moderne. Astfel, cultura emoțională devine fundamentul performanței profesionale și al relațiilor armonioase în comunitatea educațională, fiind vitală pentru dezvoltarea unui sistem educațional eficient și tolerant.

Cuvinte-cheie: *cultură emoțională, profesori de dans, competențe socio-emoționale, gestionarea emoțiilor, performanță profesională, educație coregrafică, comunicare pedagogică, adaptabilitate profesională.*

Introduction

Rapid changes in education, driven by the spread of technology and recent global disruptions, have fundamentally changed what effective teaching requires. Teachers now work under ongoing professional pressure, which demands flexibility and the ability to adjust to new teaching demands as they arise. Hence, educational institutions should update their teaching frameworks, and this transformation carries a heavy responsibility for teachers to continue to develop their professional skills. According to the European Commission (2017, 2020), modern teachers must master a multidimensional set of professional competences. These include reflective practice, professional initiative, and cultural literacy, integrated with digital proficiency and interdisciplinary collaboration. Central to this framework is the teacher’s capacity for systematic self-reflection and a sustained commitment to continuous professional development.

In dance pedagogy in particular, the emotional culture of the teacher is understood as a combination of psychological and emotional qualities that influence teaching effectiveness and relationships with students.

This construct consists of two interdependent abilities: the teacher's awareness and management of their own emotions, and attentiveness to students' emotional states. According to Borozan (2021), emotional culture is built from a combination of intrapersonal elements (self-concept, motivational orientation, and the capacity for emotional interpretation) and relational and communicative dimensions (communication strategies and managing relationships). This integration supports teaching communication that is meaningful, context-aware, and professionally focused.

Though the basic models of emotional intelligence were initially developed in general psychological contexts, their principles remain highly relevant to the specific demands of dance teaching. Drawing on the ability model (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004), which originates from the foundational framework of Salovey and Mayer (1990), dance teachers need to develop the ability to recognize and manage emotional changes in themselves and their students. This requires anticipating emotional situations and adjusting their responses to the shifting demands typical of the dance studio. Furthermore, the four-branch model of emotional intelligence suggests that using emotion to support thinking helps teachers stay clear-headed in difficult moments [9], making it a tool for building a stable emotional environment where professional judgment and calm relationships are preserved even during the most tense teaching situations.

Dance teachers are driven by various professional and personal motivations, including seeking recognition from their institution, avoiding professional failure, and a desire for personal growth. These factors shape the development of the teacher's emotional culture and determine the quality of their instructional practice. The ability to manage emotions and stay emotionally stable has become increasingly important under the demands of modern education, as it supports both career success and personal well-being. Structured emotional training contributes to the development of socio-emotional skills and encourages open and respectful professional dialogue within the broader educational community.

A teacher's emotional culture represents one of the main factor shaping professional success and teaching effectiveness. According to Borozan (2021), developing autonomy and responsibility in continuous professional learning is a core priority for institutions facing today's unstable educational landscape. This focus on the emotional dimension of teaching is supported by the growing attention given to socio-emotional competences in current policy frameworks and educational research. In dance education specifically, the emotional culture of the teacher shapes teaching effectiveness and helps create a classroom atmosphere built on empathy and mutual support.

Theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence indicate that the level of emotional culture significantly affects teaching effectiveness, particularly when emotional values are deliberately included in both initial and ongoing professional development. Emotional culture is expressed through internal aspects, such as self-image, motivation, and professional knowledge, as well as through outward dimensions like emotion regulation and social awareness [2].

In today's educational environments, open communication, empathy, and emotional balance are now widely seen as essential to a healthy and effective teaching culture. This means teachers need to accurately read and express emotions in themselves and in others, and to manage those emotions in ways that support both emotional and intellectual growth [9]. In practice, this involves staying attuned to their own and their students' feelings in order to guide both their thinking and their interactions in the classroom.

In this context, Borozan (2021) emphasizes that continuous professional development depends on building and sustaining a solid foundation of emotional culture, as this supports high-quality teaching and strengthens relationships within the school community. In line with the above, the present article examines how emotional culture is integrated into educational regulatory frameworks governing dance teacher education across different geographical contexts.

Research methodology

This article applies an interdisciplinary qualitative methodology, combining regulatory document analysis, literature review, and cross-cultural comparison to investigate how emotional culture is operationalized within dance teacher education systems across diverse geographical settings.

Study Findings and Scientific Debates

The idea of emotional culture refers to the emotional climate that characterizes a given community and reflects how social life is emotionally structured in a given cultural setting. Participation in a culture therefore means experiencing shared emotions in a manner that is determined by socially established norms and expectations.

Émile Durkheim (1995, original work 1912) argues that the basic categories of human thought emerge from collective emotional experiences produced in ritual contexts, and that individuals' moral attachment to society is reinforced through participation in shared experiences of joy and suffering. Gregory Bateson (1972) develops the related concepts of *ethos*, understood as the emotional and affective tone of a culture, and *eidos*, referring to the cognitive or structural organization of cultural ideas. In this framework, *ethos* regulates emotions and instincts according to culturally specific patterns and can be compared to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which describes a system of internalized dispositions shaping perception and action [3].

Rosenwein (2002) emphasizes that each community develops its own “emotional system,” which defines norms regarding which emotions are accepted, tolerated, or discouraged. These systems reflect broader social mechanisms that help regulate and shape emotional behavior within a given group. Valsiner (1998) introduces the concept of the “affect field” to explain how immediate personal emotions interact with culturally mediated emotional meanings, highlighting the fluid and context-dependent nature of emotional experience in social life. From this perspective, emotions are not only biological responses but also socially shaped processes. Through repeated and interpreted emotional experiences, individuals develop emotional schemas that structure how emotions are understood, experienced, and expressed over time.

Przybylska (2021) notes that emotional vocabulary is dynamic and sensitive to particular emotions, modes of feeling, patterns of behavior, and situational evaluations. Expressions such as “anger detracts from one's beauty,” “men should be tough,” “guys don't cry,” “good girls don't behave like that,” or “I am full of pride” illustrate how language conveys both emotional states and social norms. These examples reflect emotional vocabulary and emotional beliefs, indicating which emotions and behaviors are socially approved and how they are expected to be expressed [14].

Hochschild (1983) argues that what distinguishes culture from biology is the way emotions are drawn into social life and governed by cultural norms and unspoken ‘feeling rules.’ These rules, often invisible, shape which emotional responses are considered appropriate and how intense they should be in a given context. As a result, emotions play an important role in education: they help reinforce professional identity and build cohesion among teachers and students through shared emotional norms.

Emotional culture provides the foundational environment in which emotional competencies develop, shaped by both socialization and formal education. Within this process, emotional learning involves internalizing the emotional meanings, expressions, and vocabularies specific to a given culture. Families, schools, and broader social structures all offer models and expectations that guide how emotional competence is formed.

Strengthening emotional culture in education therefore requires integrating it deliberately into curricula, preparing teachers to recognize and respond to emotional dynamics in the classroom, and creating structured opportunities for students to practice emotional skills across different situations. According to Hochschild (1983), this need is particularly pressing in contemporary societies where social bonds are weakening and emotional expression is increasingly shaped by commercial forces.

Emotional culture can therefore be understood as a dynamic, socially constructed, and internalized system that shapes how emotions are experienced and expressed through norms, symbols, and educational practices. Developing emotional competencies in educational settings requires an interdisciplinary perspective that takes into account the cultural complexity of emotions [14].

The training of dance teachers is regulated at both national and international levels through standards and normative frameworks that define professional competencies, qualification requirements, and recognized pedagogical practices. In the Republic of Moldova, for example, these guidelines are set out in qualification standards and official documents approved by the Ministry of Education and Research, with an emphasis on competency-based training and alignment with the national regulatory framework.

As stipulated in Order 1124/2018, the Professional Competency Standards for Teachers in General Education define the set of professional competencies that a teacher is expected to possess and develop throughout their career. These standards address instructional design, learning environments, the educational process, professional development, and educational partnerships, and provide indicators and descriptors for both self-assessment and external evaluation. They serve as a reference point for both initial and continuing teacher education, including dance teacher preparation, informing curricula, professional development programs, and the assessment of teaching performance [12].

The analysis of the structural frameworks of dance pedagogy in the Republic of Moldova (Figure 1), reveals a primary orientation toward:

Figure 1. Dance Teacher Training in the Republic of Moldova

A review of national and international documents shows that while Moldova's standards provide a general framework for teacher training, international dance standards take a more specific approach, focusing on the nature of choreographic art, expressive competencies, and the emotional dimensions of the teaching profession. Incorporating these perspectives into the national system holds the potential to modernize dance teacher training and align it with the contemporary demands of arts education.

In the Republic of Moldova, dance is integrated either within the broader domain of arts education or through extracurricular systems such as arts schools encompassing music, theatre, visual arts, and dance. The main features of this model are its normative and institutional focus, a framework built around general teaching competencies, a strong emphasis on technical and methodological preparation, and little explicit attention to emotional, creative, or reflective dimensions in official documents. Dance teachers are positioned principally as specialist-instructors with responsibilities for teaching and assessment, while the role of artist-educator remains underdeveloped in explicit normative terms [11].

In Italy, dance teacher training operates through a dual system encompassing university-based and conservatory-based pathways (AFAM, Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica), coordinated by the Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca. Dance is accorded the status of an autonomous artistic discipline, with clearly defined formation pathways for choreographers and dance educators. The Italian model is characterized by the integration of dance into higher artistic education through the Accademia Nazionale di Danza, a strong focus on the teacher's artistic and pedagogical identity, the connection of technical training with aesthetic practice and professional reflection, and the preparation of teachers as artists, educators, and researchers. The Italian system places particular weight on bodily culture, expressivity, the cultural and heritage dimensions of dance, and the development of creative and interpretive competencies. The dance teacher is regarded as a cultural mediator and artistic educator, beyond the function of technical instructor [10].

At the international level, professional organizations such as the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) and educational authorities in the United States provide detailed standards for dance education and pedagogy. These standards address the professional, artistic, and pedagogical development of teachers, as well as the expressive and socio-emotional dimensions of choreographic education. Comparing these documents makes it possible to identify both common ground and key differences in how dance teacher preparation is approached, as well as emerging trends in the field.

In the United States, dance teacher preparation is among the most systematically regulated, structured through discipline-specific standards developed by the NDEO and integrated into state certification systems at the K-12 level. The defining characteristics of the American model include the existence of discipline-specific standards for dance education; an organizational focus on four artistic processes, Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting; the explicit integration of emotional, identity-related, and social development; and the use of professional portfolios and reflective practice. The dance teacher in the American context is conceptualized as an artist-educator and reflective practitioner who actively supports students' creative growth and socio-emotional development. The American system consistently prioritizes authentic assessment, the development of transferable skills, and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of diverse students in both school and community contexts [13].

The NDEO standards (Dance Education Standards and Professional Teaching Standards for Dance Arts) reflect a discipline-specific approach to dance education, as illustrated in Figure 2.

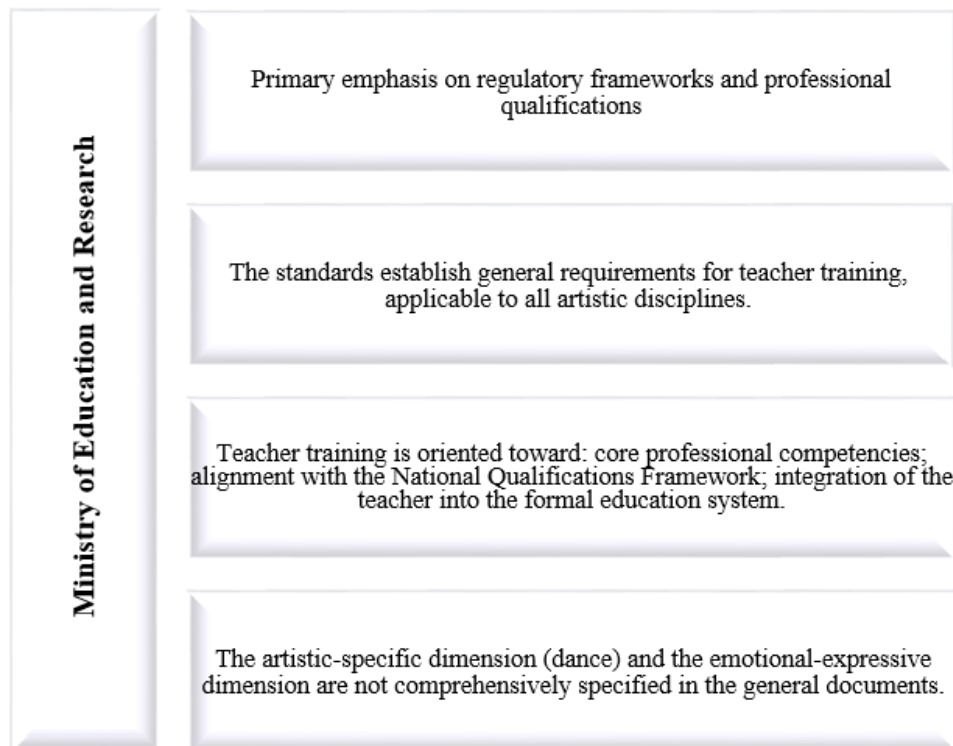


Figure 2. NDEO's Discipline-Specific Approach

The discipline-specific framework presented in Figure 2 illustrates a clear example of how professional standards can guide the development of artistic, pedagogical, and socio-emotional competencies in dance teachers, showing how clearly defined expectations and reflective practices help teachers integrate their artistic identity with pedagogical and emotional skills.

To contextualize these principles within a broader comparative perspective, Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of dance teacher training in the Republic of Moldova, Italy, and the United States, highlighting differences in curricular status, training approaches, teacher roles, emotional integration, and assessment practices.

Table 1. Comparative Summary Analysis

Dimension	Republic of Moldova	Italy	USA
Status of Dance	Component of general arts curriculum	Independent artistic discipline (Higher Arts Education)	Discrete curricular discipline
Type of Training	Technical-prescriptive	Artistic-pedagogical	Reflective artistic-pedagogical
Main Focus	Technical and methodological proficiency	Artistic and pedagogical identity	Creativity, aesthetic expression, and socio-emotional development
Role of the Teacher	Technical instructor	Artist-pedagogue	Reflective artist-educator
Emotional Dimension	Implicit	Contextually integrated	Explicitly addressed
Assessment	Predominantly summative	Performance-based evaluation	Portfolio and authentic assessment

Conclusion

The comparison of dance teacher education models in Moldova, Italy, and the United States shows significant differences in teaching methods and artistic focus. In Moldova, teacher training mainly follows a standards-based approach based on qualification requirements and general skills. In Italy and the United States, the common view sees the dance teacher as an artist-educator. This perspective combines creative, reflective, and social-emotional aspects as main parts of professional training. Italy emphasizes dance as both cultural heritage and artistic expression. Meanwhile, the United States sees dance education as a holistic process that promotes students' personal, creative, and social-emotional growth.

Drawing on elements from both models could meaningfully help modernize dance teacher training in Moldova and bring it closer to the current needs of arts education. Dance teacher training in Moldova would therefore benefit from incorporating the development of emotional culture, the formal use of professional teaching portfolios, and the development of reflective practice to support the formation of a clear artistic identity, drawing on the pedagogical traditions of the Italian and American training models.

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THE ACTIVE AGEING POLICIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND MALDIVES: COMPARATIVE ASPECTS

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Population ageing is an increasingly widespread phenomenon that raises important challenges for governments, civil society, and academia. Statistical data place the Republic of Moldova among countries with an ageing population, while the Maldives is currently undergoing demographic ageing. In this context, active ageing policies serve as key mechanisms for promoting the rights of older persons and fostering age-friendly environments. This article provides a comparative analysis of active ageing policies in the Republic of Moldova and the Maldives. The study is based on a qualitative review of national policy documents and relevant strategic frameworks. The findings show that the Republic of Moldova has over a decade of experience in developing and implementing active ageing policies, whereas the Maldives adopted its first policy document in this field in 2025, in response to emerging demographic trends. The comparative analysis highlights enabling factors, policy development pathways, and selected recent initiatives.

Keywords: *ageing, active ageing policy, older population.*

POLITICILE DE ÎMBĂTRÂNIRE ACTIVĂ ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA ȘI MALDIVE: ASPECTE COMPARATIVE

Îmbătrânirea populației este un fenomen tot mai răspândit, care generează provocări importante pentru guverne, societatea civilă și mediul academic. Datele statistice plasează Republica Moldova în rândul țărilor cu o populație îmbătrânită, în timp ce Maldive se află în prezent în proces de îmbătrânire demografică. În acest context, politicile de îmbătrânire activă reprezintă mecanisme esențiale pentru promovarea drepturilor persoanelor în etate și pentru crearea unor medii prietenoase vârstei. Articolul oferă o analiză comparativă a politicilor de îmbătrânire activă din Republica Moldova și Maldive. Studiul se bazează pe o analiză calitativă a documentelor naționale de politici publice și a cadrelor strategice relevante. Rezultatele arată că Republica Moldova are peste un deceniu de experiență în elaborarea și implementarea politicilor de îmbătrânire activă, în timp ce Maldive a adoptat primul document de politică în acest domeniu în anul 2025, ca răspuns la tendințele demografice emergente. Analiza comparativă evidențiază factorii favorizanți, traiectoriile de dezvoltare a politicilor și inițiative recente relevante.

Cuvinte-cheie: *îmbătrânire, politici de îmbătrânire activă, populație în etate.*

Introduction

Population ageing is a global phenomenon, with most countries experiencing increases both in the absolute number and in the share of older persons within their populations. The WHO data shows the trends in increasing the older population: 1 in 6 persons will be aged 60 years or over, by 2030, and by 2050 the older population will be double [1].

Across the European Union, the share of the working-age population is declining while the proportion of retirees is increasing. As the post-war baby boom generation reaches retirement age, the number of older persons will rise, placing greater pressure on the working-age population to sustain the social costs and services required by an ageing society.

The population of the Republic of Moldova is also undergoing a rapid ageing process. The share of

persons aged over 65 in the total resident population has increased in recent years, from 11.4% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2025, surpassing countries such as Montenegro (17.2%) and Georgia (16.6%) [2]. During last decade, the population ageing coefficient also rose, reaching 25.9% in 2025, rural area registered a high rate (28.0% versus 23.2% in urban area) [3]. In the last 5 years the largest increases in the proportion of older persons were recorded in the Centre Region of the country. These data indicate that the Republic of Moldova is experiencing a pronounced and rapidly accelerating demographic ageing process. The urban-rural disparity suggests uneven demographic pressures and potentially greater challenges for service provision and social support in rural communities. Overall, the evidence points to an urgent need for targeted, region-specific public policies in social protection, healthcare, and community services to address the consequences of an ageing population, especially in rural and highly affected regions.

The Maldives also is in a process of ageing: in 2022 the share of persons 65 years or over were 4%. The population forecast shows an increase of ageing coefficient: 7% by 2030 and 14% by 2050 [4]. Based on these data, it can be mentioned that although the current share of persons aged 65+ in the Maldives is still relatively low, the country is clearly undergoing an accelerated process of demographic ageing. The projections indicate a rapid increase in the ageing coefficient - almost doubling by 2030 and tripling by 2050 - suggesting that, within a relatively short period of time, the Maldives will shift from a predominantly young demographic structure to one with a significant proportion of older persons. The situation analysis shows that the Maldives is projected to become an „ageing” society by 2031 and an „aged” society by 2044, being a country with the fastest demographic transitions in the Asia-Pacific region [8]. This trend highlights the need to anticipate and adapt public policies, particularly in the areas of social protection, health, employment, and community services, in order to respond in a timely manner to the emerging needs.

The situation in both countries highlights the urgent need for comprehensive and forward-looking public policies aimed at accelerating active ageing initiatives, by promoting longer participation in the labour market, improving access to health and social services, fostering social inclusion, and creating supportive community environments for older persons.

Methodology

The research conducted on active ageing policies in the Republic of Moldova and the Maldives was carried out using the documentary method, based on the analysis of open-access materials addressing this topic, as well as international and national statistical data. At the same time, policy documents were examined in order to identify relevant aspects related to the development and promotion of active ageing policies.

Results and discussions

Active ageing policies have been presented as a potential means of intervention, being necessary in the context of the growing proportion of the older population and the pressure placed on the economic system, social insurance, healthcare, and social protection. The concept of active aging entered the public discourse after World War II - in the 1960s in the United States - in discussions on successful ageing, which emerged as a response to the disengagement theory developed by Cumming E. and Henry W. (1961). According to these researchers, as people age, they gradually withdraw from social life and reduce their social roles. In this context, active aging emphasizes policies aimed at engaging older adults, marking a shift from a passive to an active approach toward these individuals.

In the 1980s, we witnessed a revival of the concept in the context of discussions on productive aging, with emphasis on the entire life cycle, not just the final stage of life (old age) [5, p. 8]. The new approach was considered narrow, focusing particularly on economic aspects, promoted also by UN. The first forum on aging was organized by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982 (July 26-August 6) in Vienna, during which the International Plan of Action was approved. The Plan of Action represents the first international instrument in this field, which stimulated the formulation and adoption of policies and programs related to ageing. The World Health Organization has played an important role in promoting active aging at the international level, proposing in 2002 a broader approach to aging that goes beyond the concept of productive aging. Active aging is seen as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and

security in order to enhance people's quality of life as they grow older. Through active aging initiatives, continuous participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and civic activities is ensured, without being limited to physical ability or labor market participation. The new approach represented a shift from a needs-based approach to one focused on rights and responsibilities, based on 3 pillars: health, participation and security.

Discussions on aging issues were further expanded during the Second United Nations Assembly on Aging, held in 2002 (April 8–12), when the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (MIPAA) was adopted. The Political Declaration and the International Plan of Action that were adopted prompted a re-thinking of how societies are organized so that they are age-friendly, by incorporating the needs of older people into public policies through the lens of three priority areas: older persons and development, ensuring the health and well-being of older persons, and creating supportive environments and conditions.

Active ageing policies in the Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova adhered to MIPAA, supported in its efforts to institutionalize policies addressing ageing issues by development partners, particularly UNFPA. Consequently, the first policy document in the field of aging was approved: the Program for the Integration of Aging Issues into Policies, implemented through two action plans: the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Roadmap Guide for Integrating Aging Issues into Policies (2014–2016) (Government Decision No. 406/2014) and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Active Aging Principle (2018–2021) (Government Decision No. 1147/2017). By approving these policy documents, the Republic of Moldova committed to ensuring an age-friendly society by promoting quality of life and active aging, while highlighting the contribution of older persons to the socioeconomic development of society.

An analysis of the implementation of the commitments assumed by the Republic of Moldova following its adherence to MIPAA, conducted in 2021, highlighted a number of gaps in the policies implemented up to that point. This indicated the need to revise public policies to fully address the needs of older persons, as well as the entire population, in order to contribute to the development of an environment that provides opportunities for healthy and active ageing. Despite the challenges in ensuring active aging, the Republic of Moldova has made progress in this regard, data on the Active Aging Index showing improvements in this regard. In 2020, it reached 28.7%, up from 27.1% in 2016, but still lower than the European average [14, p. 150–151].

As a result, a new program in the field was developed - the National Program for Healthy and Active Aging for 2023–2027, approved by Government Decision No. 434/2023 [6]. The objectives set out in the public policy document were formulated based on an analysis of the situation of older persons and in relation to the commitments undertaken: (a) expanding access for older persons to quality basic social services; (b) strengthening the policy and institutional framework to increase opportunities for healthy and active aging by creating age-friendly environments and integrating aging into all areas of social life; (c) increasing the number of older persons participating in programs, services, and community activities to empower them, and (d) increasing the number of older persons using information technologies. Thus, a set of targets was established in line with the objectives of the program (see Figure 1).

The new public policy document indicates the Government's concern for strengthening the field of active aging, but there is still a need to adjust policies to ensure conditions for active and healthy aging and change the approach to the aging phenomenon by highlighting opportunities.

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in creating conditions for active and healthy ageing. Key achievements include the launch and implementation of volunteer programmes and digital literacy initiatives targeting older persons, as well as the establishment of a small grants programme in the field of active ageing for civil society organizations, with nine editions implemented to date. Efforts to promote civic engagement among older persons have been further supported through a national competition recognizing the most active older individuals. Educational opportunities have been expanded through the introduction of University of the Third Age programmes within higher education institutions across the North, Centre, and South regions of the country. In addition, training and capacity-building sessions have been organized for central and local public authorities to facilitate the integration of ageing issues into public policies. The calculation of the Active Ageing Index has strengthened evidence-based policymaking, while access to day-care and dedicated active ageing centres has been further expanded etc.

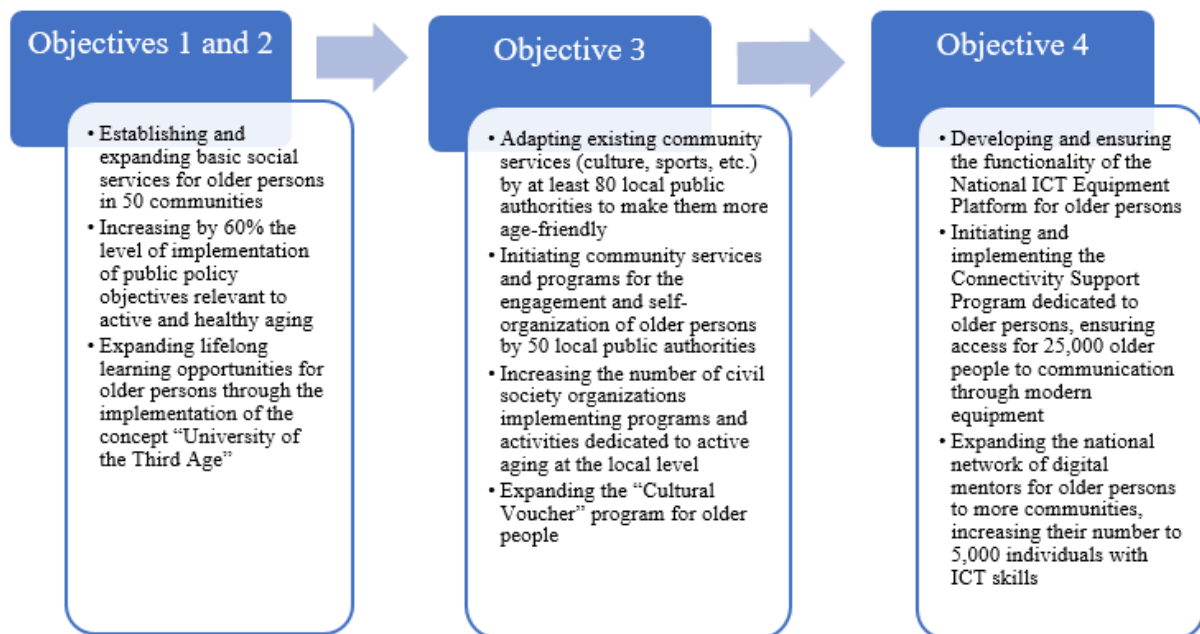


Figure 1. Main targets of the National Program for Healthy and Active Ageing for 2023-2027, the Republic of Moldova

The achievements of the Republic of Moldova in promoting and implementing active ageing policies can be attributed to several key factors, including: (i) the support of development partners for governmental initiatives, particularly UNFPA and UNDESA, including assistance in the development of policy documents and the implementation of planned activities; (ii) cooperation with civil society organizations actively engaged in promoting the rights of older persons and in implementing active ageing policies; (iii) increased awareness among local public authorities of the need to mainstream ageing issues into local policies; (iv) the participation of the Government of the Republic of Moldova in standing working groups on ageing, which facilitate the exchange and transfer of good practices; (v) the expansion of scientific and applied research highlighting the need for active ageing policies; and (vi) growing interest from the private sector in active ageing-related policies etc.

Conversely, the impact of these achievements could be further enhanced through adequate budgetary allocation for active ageing programmes and measures, greater political-level awareness of the need for integrated policy approaches in this field, and more intensive advocacy efforts by older persons and their representative organizations.

Active ageing policies in the Maldives

The Maldives is committed to implementing MIPAA, so the country aligns its national ageing policy with the MIPAA framework. The Government has developed a National Policy on Ageing and a National Action Plan on Ageing 2025-2028 that reflect the Maldives’ ongoing engagement with the framework. In September 2024, by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, 4 priorities of new ageing policy were launched, presented in the Figure 2.

But, the launched policy document on December, 2025, is focused on 16 goals, in areas such as: healthy ageing and preventive care; social inclusion and participation; long-term care and caregiver support; digital inclusion and access to services; community-based support systems and age-friendly infrastructure [7].

To promote active ageing, and with the support of government authorities, the social program „*Ufaaveri Raasthaa*” was implemented in 11 atolls of the Maldives, focusing on engaging older persons for better participation in community activities. The program aims to provide awareness sessions and interactive activities for the health and social integration of older persons, including simple daily exercises, nutritional guidance, and mental health support, in order to enhance their connection with the local community. Approximately 1,000 older persons have participated in the program [9].

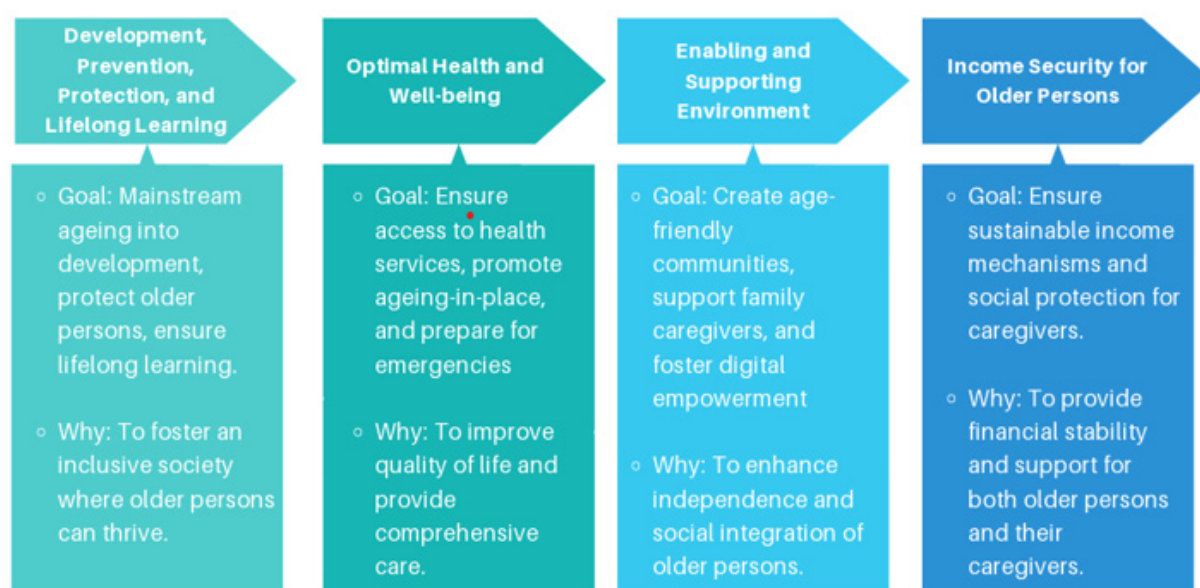


Figure 2. The priority of the National Ageing Public Policy in Maldives [10]

In the Maldives, *community centres for older persons*, called ‘Israhvehinge Naadhee’, have also been developed as part of the government’s efforts to engage older adults. The first center was opened in February 2024 in Malé, and this experience has been adopted by about 60 atoll administrations. The activities carried out include: light exercise and healthy living sessions; nutritional guidance and health screenings; cultural, religious and recreational activities; digital literacy and awareness programmes, and workshops on safety topics like scam prevention [11]. All the activities aimed to contribute to improving physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of older people.

Another initiative related to ageing, launched in 2025, is *the home-visit program* focused on addressing the social needs and wellbeing of bedridden older persons [12]. The program consists in mobilizing volunteers to visit bedridden older persons monthly in order to reduce isolation, assess social needs, and ensure that required support is delivered.

NGOs are also involved in carrying out activities aimed at older people. Thus, the Aged Care Maldives NGO provide several programmes and activities, such as: exercise and rehabilitation programmes to maintain mobility and health; friendly visits and community support to reduce loneliness; home healthcare services for older adults and awareness campaigns on healthy ageing and rights advocacy [13]. One aspect identified in the research refers to a poorly developed network of NGOs active in the field of aging in the Maldives, which makes it difficult to promote active aging in the atolls and dependent on measures taken by central authorities.

Based on the demographic situation in the Maldives, active aging had not been a national priority. Recent demographic changes and projections have raised awareness among authorities about the need to promote policies in this field. However, the high concentration of the young population in Malé creates a need to implement ageing-related policies in the more remote atolls, where the proportion of older persons is increasing.

Conclusions

Active ageing policies in the Republic of Moldova and the Maldives differ significantly in their origins, focus, and level of development, largely due to the distinct demographic realities of the two countries.

In the Republic of Moldova, active ageing became a policy priority as a direct response to an already advanced process of demographic ageing. The growing share of older persons has placed considerable pressure on the social protection, healthcare, and pension systems, which required the Government to adopt a structured and long-term approach. As a result, the Republic of Moldova has been developing and institutionalizing active ageing policies for more than a decade. Ageing is mainstreamed in several public policies and the approach is systemic and policy-driven, aiming to integrate ageing issues into all sectors of social life.

By contrast, in the Maldives, active ageing was not initially considered a priority because of the country's predominantly young population. Only recent demographic changes and future projections have raised awareness among authorities about the need to prepare for population ageing. Therefore, the Maldivian approach is more preventive and forward-looking, seeking to build structures and services before ageing becomes a critical social challenge. The public policy on ageing is a very recent initiative, and the focus is still on establishing practical mechanisms to support older persons rather than fully integrating ageing into all policy sectors.

In conclusion, Moldova's active ageing policy is more mature, institutionalized, and integrated into the public policy framework, developed as a response to an already ageing society. The Maldives, on the other hand, is at an earlier stage, adopting a preventive and community-oriented approach aimed at preparing for future demographic ageing by building supportive environments and social engagement mechanisms for older persons.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF GAIT- AND SWIMMING-BASED KINESITHERAPY IN MAINTAINING HEALTH STATUS IN OLDER ADULTS

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Maintaining the health of the elderly population represents a major priority in the context of demographic aging and the rising incidence of chronic degenerative diseases. Structured physical activity has emerged as an essential strategy for both prevention and therapeutic intervention. The present study highlights the role of physiotherapeutic programs based on dosed walking and swimming in promoting somatic and psychological health in older adults. Evidence from the specialized literature indicates that regular walking improves joint mobility, postural balance, and reduces cardiovascular risk. Swimming, through the global activation of the musculature and the reduction of joint overload, supports neuromuscular relaxation, coordination, and respiratory function. Both forms of physical activity contribute to enhanced functional capacity, stress reduction, and improved quality of life. In conclusion, the analyzed findings underscore the necessity of developing and implementing individualized physiotherapy programs grounded in walking and swimming, tailored to the functional level and specific characteristics of each older adult, as an effective strategy for maintaining optimal health and functional autonomy.

Keywords: *physical therapy, active aging, walking, swimming, older adults, functional decline, health.*

IMPORTANȚA KINETOTERAPIEI BAZATE PE MERS ȘI ÎNOT ÎN MENȚINEREA STĂRII DE SĂNĂTATE LA PERSOANELE ÎN VÂRSTĂ

Menținerea sănătății populației vârstnice reprezintă o prioritate în contextul îmbătrânirii demografice și al creșterii incidenței bolilor cronice. Activitatea fizică structurată se afirmă ca strategie esențială de prevenție și intervenție terapeutică. Studiul dat evidențiază rolul programelor kinetoterapeutice bazate pe mers dozat și înot în promovarea sănătății somatice și psihice la vârsta a treia. Datele furnizate de literatura de specialitate atestă că practicarea sistematică a mersului îmbunătățește mobilitatea articulară, echilibrul postural și reduce riscul cardiovascular. Înotul, prin activarea globală a musculaturii și diminuarea suprasolicitării articulare, susține relaxarea neuromusculară, coordonarea și funcția respiratorie. Ambele forme de mișcare contribuie la creșterea capacității funcționale, reducerea stresului și optimizarea calității vieții. În concluzie, rezultatele analizate susțin necesitatea dezvoltării și implementării unor programe kinetoterapeutice individualizate, fundamentate pe mers și înot, necesită adaptarea nivelului funcțional și particularităților fiecărui vârstnic, ca strategie eficientă pentru menținerea unei stări optime de sănătate și a autonomiei funcționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *kinetoterapie, îmbătrânire activă, mers, înot, vârstnici, declin funcțional, sănătate.*

Introduction

The aging process of the population is a major demographic trend worldwide, driven by the increase in average life expectancy and the need to implement effective measures aimed at maintaining health and functional independence among the elderly. With advancing age, the body undergoes progressive and irreversible physiological changes, which can favor the reduction of exercise capacity and physical activity levels, while also contributing to the emergence or evolution of chronic diseases.

The need to promote and maintain physical activity among the elderly is a major current issue, given the increasing number of chronic conditions, the decline in mental health, and the increased tendency towards marginalization and social isolation characteristic of this population category. Constant involvement in motor activities and specific physiotherapy programs significantly contributes to reducing the risk of developing severe pathologies, while also favoring the preservation of functional independence and optimizing general health and quality of life. In this sense, physical exercise represents a fundamental element in preventing and limiting degenerative

processes associated with aging. The recommended physical activities in the third age include in particular aerobic exercises, such as walking, swimming, cycling or dancing, complemented by physiotherapy interventions adapted to the functional capacities of each individual. These forms of movement are distinguished by their accessible nature and by the possibility of individualizing the level of demand, depending on the biological and functional particularities of the elderly. In this sense, supporting a physically active behavior constitutes a central element of the concept of active aging, having beneficial effects both on the general state of health and functional autonomy, and on the prevention of chronic pathologies associated with the aging process [1, 3, 6].

Practiced consistently and adapted to the physiological and functional particularities characteristic of old age, physical activities play an important role in limiting the processes of physical and cognitive decline, while also contributing to maintaining joint mobility, postural stability and the functionality of the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems. Among the forms of movement recommended for the elderly, walking and swimming stand out for their high degree of accessibility, increased level of safety and multiple beneficial effects on the body, being considered effective ways of supporting health and functional autonomy [2, 5, 11].

Due to its easy nature and the possibility of being practiced without special resources, walking stands out as an effective form of physical activity for the elderly. Its integration into the daily routine contributes to supporting the functional capacity of the body and preventing cardiovascular pathologies, having beneficial effects on the general state of health.

Swimming is considered one of the most complete forms of physical activity, as it allows for aerobic training with multiple benefits, without overloading the osteoarticular system. Thanks to the aquatic environment that reduces the impact on the joints and favors controlled movement, this activity involves the main muscle groups in a balanced way, contributing to increasing muscle strength, improving neuromotor coordination and optimizing respiratory function. At the same time, the reduced joint stress makes swimming a safe and effective option, recommended for a wide age range, having a favorable impact on maintaining and promoting general health [6, 11, 12].

In this context, this paper aims to highlight the importance of controlled walking and swimming in supporting health in the elderly, emphasizing the need to develop personalized physical activity programs, adjusted according to the level of physical fitness and the individual characteristics of each subject.

Aim of the study: Analysis of the process of designing treatment and functional recovery programs for the elderly, based on the controlled use of walking and swimming with a therapeutic role.

Objectives:

1. Identification and analysis of the fundamental principles underlying the design of physiotherapy programs focused on the use of walking and swimming, intended for the elderly.
2. Analysis of the initial assessment stages and the individualization of recovery programs for the elderly, in accordance with the functional and clinical particularities of each case.
3. Presentation and analysis of standardized protocol models used in the treatment and functional recovery process of elderly people, who present various associated comorbidities.

Materials and Methods: This paper is based on a comprehensive analysis of the specialized literature, including sources from both national and international literature. In this regard, relevant scientific papers and reference studies were consulted that reflect the practice and experience accumulated globally in the field of public health, with an emphasis on treatment and recovery strategies applied to elderly people with multiple associated conditions. The documentation of the information was carried out through online search engines and recognized scientific databases, such as Medline, ScienceDirect and PubMed, thus ensuring a solid and updated scientific foundation for the investigative approach.

Results and Discussion

Various studies in the specialized literature have demonstrated that consistent practice of moderate-intensity physical exercise has favorable effects on general health, contributing to the regulation of physiological functions and the maintenance of metabolic homeostasis [1, 2, 5].

Elderly people who regularly engage in physical activity frequently experience a decrease in blood pressure, an improvement in peripheral circulation, and an increase in the high-density lipoprotein (HDL) fraction, associated with cardiovascular protective effects. These changes contribute significantly to reducing the risk of major cardiovascular diseases, such as myocardial infarction and stroke [2].

At the same time, maintaining an adequate level of physical activity supports the preservation of muscle mass and bone mineral density, essential aspects in the context of the aging process. With advancing age, susceptibility to osteoporosis and episodes of postural instability with a risk of falling increases, and regular physical exercise acts as an important preventive factor, contributing to maintaining functional independence and quality of life [4, 6].

In addition to its beneficial effects on the body, physical activity also plays an important role in maintaining psychological balance and mental health. In the elderly population, social isolation is a frequent risk factor associated with the onset of depressive symptoms, accelerated cognitive decline and deterioration in quality of life.

In this context, involvement in social activities and maintaining interpersonal interactions contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging and social involvement, having positive effects on the affective state and reducing the psychological stress experienced.

Regular exercise is associated with the stimulation of the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters involved in regulating mood and inducing a general state of well-being. At the same time, specialized studies indicate that physical activity can contribute to slowing down the neurodegenerative processes specific to aging, having a role in supporting cognitive functions [3].

In particular, aerobic exercise is correlated with improving memory, improving attention capacity and increasing the level of concentration, aspects that favor the maintenance of intellectual performance in the long term [4].

According to the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), adults aged 18 to 64, as well as those over 65, should practice between 150 and 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or between 75 and 150 minutes of high-intensity physical activity per week, in order to achieve significant effects on health, including reducing the risk of chronic diseases. In addition, exercises aimed at developing and maintaining muscle strength are an indispensable component of an active and balanced lifestyle [14, 16].

Walking is included in the group of the main forms of moderate-intensity physical activity that support the improvement of aerobic capacity, along with light running, swimming, cycling and cross-country skiing. Among all the modes of movement, it is distinguished by its natural and easily accessible character, being easily integrated into everyday activity. Therefore, walking has an important role in maintaining general health, especially among people with chronic conditions.

During walking, the main muscle groups of the body are engaged in a coordinated manner, with the predominant involvement of the lower limb muscles, the dorsolumbar region and the abdominal muscles, while the upper limb muscles and the shoulder girdle participate in a secondary manner, stabilizing and balancing the movement.

From a functional point of view, one of the most important effects of walking is its influence on the cardiovascular system. Being an aerobic activity, it stimulates cardiac activity and improves blood circulation, acting as a natural heart training factor, with favorable effects on functional capacity and resistance to effort.

At the same time, due to its biomechanical characteristics, walking stands out as a form of low-impact physical activity, which moderately demands the locomotor system, cardiovascular system and respiratory system, thus being recommended for maintaining general health and for its use for prophylactic and recuperative purposes [3, 4, 12].

Walking is recognized in the specialized literature as a therapeutic method with a scientific basis, being frequently integrated into prevention, treatment and functional recovery programs. This form of physical activity is widely used in the management of chronic conditions with high incidence, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and degenerative diseases of the osteoarticular apparatus, and can be adapted to different age categories and socio-professional levels. And due to its accessibility and the possibility of

individually adjusting the intensity and duration of the effort, walking contributes to the improvement of metabolic, cardiovascular and functional parameters, representing an effective component in maintaining and restoring health [6, 8, 10].

However, the effectiveness of dosed walking is not constant in all clinical situations, and it may vary depending on the particularities of each patient. Therapeutic results may be diminished when there is no appropriate correlation between the parameters of the effort (intensity, duration and frequency) and the actual level of physical condition or the individual's capacity for tolerance to effort.

At the same time, in the case of advanced degenerative rheumatic diseases or severe functional limitations, walking may become difficult to perform or even contraindicated, as it may cause overstrain of the joint structures and increase pain, which limits the therapeutic benefits of this form of activity.

In this context, swimming stands out as a particularly advantageous therapeutic option in certain situations, especially in the elderly. Due to its low mechanical impact nature and the effect of reducing the gravitational load specific to the aquatic environment, this activity significantly reduces the pressure exerted on the joints, facilitating the achievement of an efficient aerobic effort in safe conditions.

In addition, the global and balanced involvement of the main muscle groups, the improvement of joint mobility and the stimulation of cardio-respiratory function give swimming an important role in supporting functional independence and improving the quality of life in old age [3, 5, 11].

In this sense, the objective pursued consisted in the methodological substantiation of a functional recovery program for the elderly, based on the integration of dosed walking and therapeutic swimming as the main means of physiotherapy intervention, in order to support the recovery process and maintain functional capacity.

In the process of designing a treatment and prophylaxis program for the elderly, based on the use of dosed walking and therapeutic swimming, it is necessary to take into account some essential factors highlighted in the specialized literature. These factors condition both the safety of the intervention, as well as the efficiency and the degree of adequacy of the program to the physiological and functional particularities specific to the geriatric population.

It is recognized that the aging process is associated with a series of changes in the neuromuscular, cardiovascular and respiratory systems, including a reduction in muscle mass and strength (sarcopenia), decreased joint mobility and tissue elasticity, and disruption of balance mechanisms. These changes increase vulnerability to falls, the onset of frailty and the risk of functional decompensation. Consequently, such features must be carefully evaluated and integrated into the process of developing physical activity programs for the elderly.

The initial functional assessment is an essential step in planning the therapeutic intervention, as it provides the possibility of determining the level of aerobic capacity, joint mobility and fall risk, thus facilitating the individual adaptation of the recovery program.

In the case of the elderly patient, this assessment is a fundamental element in the development of interventions based on physical activity, ensuring the personalization, safety and efficiency of the exercise program. According to the recommendations of the World Health Organization, the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association, the assessment should be carried out in a complex and integrated manner, including the analysis of cardiovascular function, joint mobility, postural balance and exercise tolerance capacity.

In the functional assessment of the elderly, it is necessary to use tests that meet the criteria of simplicity, safety, reproducibility and relevance to the usual activities of daily life. In this context, functional walking tests, such as the 6-minute walk test (6MWT) and the Get Up and Go Test (TUG), are frequently used as standardized assessment tools, due to their high sensitivity in detecting changes in functional level and significant prognostic value.

These tests can objectively assess the overall functional capacity of the individual, which facilitates the development of individualized physical activity programs. Thus, the intensity and volume of the effort are adjusted in accordance with the physiological peculiarities and the real level of tolerance to effort of each subject [7, 10, 12, 15].

The 6-minute walk test (6MWT) is recognized as a standardized tool for assessing submaximal aerobic capacity, endurance to walking, individual tolerance to stress and cardiovascular response under conditions of physical activity. The procedure consists of measuring the total distance covered by the subject in a six-minute interval, at a self-imposed pace, close to the usual walking, which gives it a high functional value and practical applicability in the assessment of the effort capacity in everyday life.

Due to its submaximal nature, the test is well tolerated and can be used safely including in elderly people or in patients with stable chronic conditions, without it being necessary to reach the maximum effort limits. Due to its specificity, the 6MWT faithfully reflects the level of functional performance necessary to carry out daily activities and provides relevant data for the initial assessment of cardiorespiratory capacity, including in the context of the development of therapeutic swimming programs.

The parameters resulting from the test, such as distance covered, heart rate and perception of dyspnea, are used in establishing the intensity of the effort (related to functional capacity), in determining the initial training pace and distance, as well as in planning the gradual progression of exercises and monitoring the body's adaptation to the effort. Thus, this test constitutes an essential objective benchmark in the individualization and optimization of recovery and training programs [1, 2, 16].

The parameters obtained – namely the total distance walked, heart rate, and perceived level of dyspnea are used to determine exercise intensity (expressed as a percentage of functional capacity), to establish the initial walking distance and pace, and to plan the gradual progression of exercise. Furthermore, these indicators enable ongoing monitoring of physiological adaptation to training. Consequently, the 6MWT serves as an objective benchmark for the individualization and optimization of rehabilitation and training programs.

The „Timed Up and Go” (TUG) test is widely used in geriatric practice for the functional assessment of patients presenting with various pathologies, such as Parkinson's disease, dementia, deforming osteoarthritis, post-stroke sequelae, sarcopenia or frailty syndrome.

This test allows the assessment of global mobility, dynamic balance, the ability to perform transfers and the degree of risk of falling, by analyzing some common motor sequences from daily activity, namely getting up from a chair, moving, turning and returning to a sitting position.

An increase in execution time is suggestive of functional instability and indicates the need to introduce balance exercises before progressing the intensity of the walking program. Also, the results obtained within the TUG contribute to guiding the choice of training environment: good functional performances allow the exercises to be carried out in varied terrain conditions, while low values require the use of controlled and safe environments, such as a treadmill or an aquatic environment, including therapeutic swimming [1, 3, 7].

The simultaneous use of the two tests allows for a comprehensive assessment of functional level, balance and fall risk, thus offering the possibility of adequately adapting the dosed walking and therapeutic swimming programs to the individual capacity of the elderly.

In this regard, Table 1 presents the criteria for classifying elderly subjects according to the results obtained at the initial assessment, carried out through the 6-minute walking test and the „Get up and walk” test, which constitute the basis for establishing personalized physical activity programs, either through dosed walking or curative swimming.

Table 1. Parameters for Classifying Older Adults in Order to Design Graded Walking and Therapeutic Swimming Programs

Assessed Parameter	Instrument	Good Level	Moderate Level	Low Level	Program Implications
Aerobic capacity	6-Minute Walk Test (distance covered)	> 500 m	350 – 500 m	< 350 m	Good → sustained walking; Moderate → interval walking; Low → gradual initiation + light swimming
Exercise tolerance	Heart rate, perceived exertion (Borg scale)	Controlled increase	Moderate fatigue	Marked dyspnea	Adjust intensity and duration

Functional mobility	Timed Up and Go (TUG)	< 10 sec	10 – 14 sec	>14 sec	> 14 sec → prioritize balance training and safe environment
Balance	Clinical observation	Stable	Mild instability	Unstable	Unstable → aquatic environment preferred
Lower limb strength	Repeated chair stand test	> 12 repetitions	8 – 12 repetitions	< 8 repetitions	Low strength → strengthening exercises before increasing volume
Fall risk	TUG + fall history	Absent	Moderate	High	High risk → supervision + avoid uneven terrain
Cardiovascular comorbidities	Medical evaluation	Stable	Stable with limitations	Unstable	Unstable → only light, supervised activity

The effectiveness of any therapeutic approach directly depends on the completion of a complex, multi-dimensional initial assessment. In this context, the 6-Minute Walk Test (6MWT) stands out as a tool with important predictive value in assessing cardiorespiratory reserve, the distance covered being closely correlated with global functional status and, in certain situations, with indicators of longevity.

Aerobic capacity is recognized as a significant benchmark in estimating the level of health, the degree of functional independence and the prognosis in elderly people. Depending on the results obtained, the following situations can be outlined:

Good functional level (> 500 m): suggests the existence of an adequate physiological reserve, which allows the use of sustained walking as an effective method of cardiovascular training.

Reduced functional level (< 350 m): indicates limited physical capacity, in which case it is recommended to either gradually initiate the exercise program or focus on activities such as swimming, where the aquatic environment reduces cardiac stress by reducing gravitational effects and facilitates thermal regulation.

Functional mobility is closely correlated with the efficiency of the biomechanical mechanisms of gait, as well as with the ability of the central nervous system to coordinate and integrate the motor sequences necessary for movement and maintaining balance.

An increased execution time in the TUG test (over 14 seconds) reflects a decrease in functional performance, being associated with an increased risk of postural instability and falls. In such situations, the physiotherapeutic intervention must emphasize patient safety and the reduction of joint strain, by using means adapted to the functional level [7].

In this regard, alternative forms of physical activity can be recommended, such as Nordic walking, which provides additional support through the use of poles, contributing to improving stability and a more efficient distribution of effort in the upper and lower limbs. As an alternative or complement, therapeutic swimming is a particularly valuable option, thanks to the aquatic environment that reduces the gravitational load on the joints, facilitates controlled movement, and favors the maintenance and improvement of functional capacity in conditions of increased safety [1].

Physical activity programs based on dosed walking and therapeutic swimming represent effective methods of intervention both in the prophylaxis and in the management of complications associated with the aging process, having favorable effects on cardiovascular capacity, muscle strength and postural control.

In relation to individual functional indicators — such as distance covered, speed of movement, results obtained in the TUG test or the response of the cardiovascular system to effort — interventions can be adapted and oriented either towards progressive walking programs or towards therapeutic swimming programs. This differentiation allows increasing the efficiency and safety of the intervention.

At the same time, such a strategy facilitates the personalization of the kinetic program, ensuring a gradual and controlled increase in the level of demand, while reducing the risk of falls, injuries or functional overload.

Table 2 highlights the main functional parameters resulting from the gait test assessment, as well as how they can be interpreted to classify elderly people into different functional categories. Based on these data, guidance is made towards the most appropriate form of physical activity, adapted to the individual level of capacity and tolerance to effort.

Table 2. Clinical indicators used as benchmarks in assessing functional capacity and estimating injury risk in older people (65 and 74 years old)

Test	Parameter	Men 65–74 years (approx.)	Women 65–74 years (approx.)	Clinical Interpretation
6 MWT	Distance (m)	500 – 650 m	450 – 600 m	Compare with normative values/equations; < 400 m suggests significant limitation
6 MWT	Final HR	60 – 80% of estimated HR _{max} during submaximal effort	Similar, possibly slightly higher at the same relative workload	Assess chronotropic response and 1-minute recovery
6 MWT	Borg dyspnea	3 – 5/10 (moderate exertion)	3 – 6/10	HR–Borg disproportion → investigate deconditioning/comorbidities
6 MWT	Speed (m/s)	~1.4 – 1.8 m/s	~1.3 – 1.7 m/s	< 1.0 m/s indicates increased functional risk
TUG	Time (s)	8 – 10 s	8.5 – 11 s	≥ 13.5 – 14 s = increased fall risk

Note: The values are indicative for healthy community-dwelling adults; they are adjusted for age >75/80 years and comorbidities.

Research on the 6-Minute Walk Test highlights that this test allows for the accurate assessment of sub-maximal functional capacity, reflecting in an integrated manner the response of the cardiovascular, respiratory, and musculoskeletal systems to exertion [7].

This test is used to assess the patient's aerobic capacity and general level of physical performance, the distance covered being an important indicator of functional status and long-term health prognosis.

Typically, values considered normal range between 500–650 m in men and 450–600 m in women. Achieving a distance below 400 m indicates the presence of a significant functional limitation, a situation in which a more cautious and progressive intervention is necessary, sometimes it is recommended to initiate the program through activities carried out in the aquatic environment, where gravitational stress and the impact on the joints are reduced [1, 3].

Also, the final heart rate is an essential parameter of the evaluation, it being recommended to fall between 60–80% of the estimated maximum heart rate. The analysis of this indicator allows the assessment of the chronotropic response of the heart, namely the heart's ability to adapt its rhythm under stress conditions, as well as the evaluation of the cardiac recovery rate after the first minute post-stress, aspects of major importance in cardiovascular recovery programs [1, 2].

Conclusions

1. Interventions based on walking and swimming constitute fundamental pillars of active longevity, being validated by clinical and experimental research. These activities are not simple forms of movement, but complex therapeutic approaches aimed at systemic optimization of the elderly body, and the integration of these physiotherapeutic strategies, personalized according to the individual's capacity for effort, represents a safe and effective method to prevent the “deconditioning syndrome” and to maintain the functional independence of older people.

2. Walking is not just a form of exercise, but a rigorous clinical tool for the assessment and rehabilitation of the geriatric population. And specialist sources confirm that the use of walking as an assessment

tool provides the scientific rigor necessary to transform an everyday activity into a personalized, safe and clinically validated therapeutic approach.

3. The application of standardized progressive walking and therapeutic swimming programs confirms the efficiency and applicability of these methods in the functional recovery of elderly people diagnosed with associated chronic conditions.

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UNIVERSITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY SPORT: EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE MODELS

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This article analyses how university physical education and university sport are organized in different European contexts and how these forms may support students' physical activity during university studies. The study is based on a comparative documentary analysis of curricular documents, institutional regulations and public information provided by universities and university sport structures from four European areas: the Nordic countries, the Balkans, Central Europe and Western Europe. The analysed data show that European universities do not follow a single organizational model. Three main directions can be distinguished: physical education included in the curriculum, sport organized as a university service, and sport developed through clubs or competitive structures. For the Republic of Moldova, the analysis points to the need to strengthen the service-based component of university sport, as a complement to the existing curricular framework.

Keywords: *university physical education, university sport, physical activity, comparative analysis, institutional models.*

EDUCAȚIA FIZICĂ ȘI SPORTUL UNIVERSITAR: MODELE COMPARATIVE EUROPENE

Articolul analizează modul în care educația fizică și sportul universitar sunt organizate în diferite contexte europene și felul în care aceste forme pot susține activitatea fizică a studenților pe durata studiilor universitare. Studiul are la bază o analiză documentară comparativă a documentelor curriculare, regulamentelor instituționale și informațiilor publice oferite de universități și structuri ale sportului universitar din patru zone europene: țările nordice, Balcanii, Europa Centrală și Europa de Vest. Datele analizate arată că universitățile europene nu urmează un model unic de organizare. Se disting trei direcții principale: educația fizică inclusă în curriculum, sportul organizat ca serviciu universitar și sportul dezvoltat prin cluburi sau structuri competiționale. Pentru Republica Moldova, analiza indică necesitatea consolidării componentei de servicii a sportului universitar, în completarea cadrului curricular existent.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educație fizică universitară, sport universitar, activitate fizică, analiză comparativă, modele instituționale.*

Introduction

Motor activity is treated in the literature as one of the factors that supports health and helps individuals integrate into community life, including through adaptation to social dynamics [4, p. 242]. This understanding is close to the idea that health cannot be reduced to the biological state of the body, since it also includes social well-being [12, p. 61]. For this reason, motor activity should not be understood only as the movement required by everyday life: walking to classes, household tasks, commuting or professional routines. It also includes physical exercise chosen and practised deliberately, with a certain plan and regularity. This distinction is important. Daily movement may occur by necessity, while planned exercise requires personal decision, time organization and, in many cases, access to suitable conditions. Seen in this way, movement becomes part of self-care and self-regulation, helping to maintain physical fitness, prevent functional decline and support general health [4, 8, 9, 10].

The habit of practising physical exercise independently does not begin only at university. It is prepared earlier, through family routines, school experiences and the physical education lessons included in the national education system, from early education to higher education [11, 16]. Still, the university years are a sensitive stage. Students arrive with different motor experiences: some have practised sport for years, while others have only participated in compulsory school lessons. For many of them, the main challenge is no longer learning a movement task, but keeping physical activity in their weekly routine. In this sense,

university physical education and university sport should help students pass from guided participation to forms of practice that they can choose, organize and continue on their own.

Digitalization has changed the ordinary rhythm of daily life. For many students, study, communication and even part-time work now involve long periods spent in front of a screen. Movement does not disappear completely, but it is often reduced to short and irregular moments. In universities, this situation is easy to observe. Classes, individual study, assignments and assessments occupy a large part of the week, while the time available within the higher education framework plan is often limited [19]. As a result, physical activity is frequently moved to the end of the list. It is practised when there is free time, when facilities are accessible or when motivation is strong enough, not always as part of a stable academic routine.

Independent exercise also depends on how students organize their time. Many students may want to be more active, but intention alone rarely becomes routine. If physical activity is not planned, it is postponed. This happens during busy academic periods, but also when sport facilities are far away, schedules are unclear, places are limited or students do not have a group with whom to practise. Over time, prolonged sedentary behaviour may affect functional capacity and reduce tolerance to physical effort, with consequences for health and quality of life [18, 22]. Therefore, the university should not be viewed only as a place for professional training. It is also a space where students can be guided to protect their well-being and reduce the risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle.

The need to rethink university physical education is also supported by studies focused on students' actual participation in physical activity. Bragarenco N. et al. show that participation cannot be increased only by keeping the discipline in the timetable; universities also need to know what students prefer, what types of movement they need and what motivates them to attend or continue practising [7]. Leuciuc F. et al., using the IPAQ, draw attention to the need for concrete measures inside the university environment to reduce sedentary behaviour [17]. Pop C. et al. bring the discussion closer to students' own perceptions, showing that sedentary lifestyle is also linked to awareness and attitudes toward its consequences [20]. These studies point in the same direction: the problem is not only whether physical education exists in the curriculum, but whether the way it is organized can really keep students involved.

For the Republic of Moldova, European integration also raises questions about the place of physical education and sport in universities. European practices may serve as useful points of reference, especially for institutional development, compatibility and the recognition of educational pathways within the European space [14]. However, they cannot be taken over automatically. Any adjustment has to consider national regulations, university resources, available facilities and the real conditions in which students can participate.

At European level, physical activity is promoted through recommendations and policy documents that encourage movement and aim to reduce sedentary behaviour, including among young people and students [1, 15]. In universities, however, these directions are applied differently. Some institutions rely mainly on curricular physical education. Others develop sport services, clubs, competitions or mixed solutions. The differences depend on educational traditions, governance, infrastructure and the way each university understands its responsibility for student well-being. For this reason, a comparative analysis of European practices is useful not only for identifying existing models, but also for seeing how they help students remain active after the period in which physical education is compulsory [1, 2, 13].

Materials and Methods

Research aim: The study aimed to clarify how university physical education and university sport are organized in different European university contexts. More specifically, the analysis followed the institutional forms through which students gain access to physical activity and the ways in which these forms may support regular practice during the university years.

The research was carried out as a qualitative comparative document analysis. The materials consulted were not limited to study plans. They also included university regulations, course descriptions, information published by sport centres or university sport services, and data concerning clubs, associations and competitions. These documents were useful because they show not only whether physical education or sport exists in a university, but also how students actually enter, attend, validate or continue these activities.

The analysis covered four European areas. The Nordic group included Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland; the Balkan group included Croatia, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro; Central Europe was represented by Poland, Czechia, Hungary and Romania; and Western Europe included Belgium, Italy, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal and Germany. The countries and institutional cases were selected according to the availability of public information and the possibility of comparing similar aspects of university physical education and sport.

In reading the documents, attention was given to several practical indicators: the status of the activity, whether mandatory, elective or voluntary; the way students obtain access, through enrolment, membership, sport ticket or eligibility rules; the volume of participation, expressed in hours or ECTS credits where this information was available; the validation of participation, mainly through attendance, active involvement or make-up rules; the organizational form, such as courses, sport services, clubs or competitions; and references to inclusion, including adapted pathways, medical conditions or adaptive sport.

On this basis, each case was related to one or more organizational models: curricular, service-based or competitive. The information was then grouped by region, not to rank the systems, but to identify recurring patterns and differences in the way universities organize students' participation in physical activity. The synthesis is presented in Table 1, which brings together the dominant models, the usual status of activities, the main participation formats and the observations considered relevant for maintaining students' motor activity at university age.

European comparative models of university physical education and university sport

The documents analysed do not show a single European way of organizing university physical education and university sport. The picture is more varied. In some universities, physical education is still placed inside the study programme. In others, sport is found mainly outside the curriculum, through sport centres, clubs, associations or competitions. Therefore, the comparison cannot stop at the question of whether sport is present in a university. A more relevant question is how the student actually reaches these activities: through a compulsory class, through registration, through a sport ticket, through a club, or through selection for competitions.

From the analysed materials, three main forms of organization can be observed. The first is the curricular model, where physical education or sport is included in the academic programme. The second is the service-based model, in which the university offers sport activities through a sport centre or a similar structure. The third is the competitive model, organized mainly through clubs, associations and inter-university competitions [2]. These models are useful for analysis, but in practice they are not always found in a pure form. Many universities combine them, and the differences appear in the weight given to each component.

In the curricular model, students usually have scheduled physical education or sport classes and clear conditions for participation. This model has an advantage: it places movement in the student's weekly timetable, not only among optional activities. Still, its academic value is treated differently from one institution to another. In some universities, especially where participation is compulsory, the activity may be recorded without ECTS credits. In elective formats, credits can be awarded, most often in small values, such as 1–3 ECTS or other equivalent forms of recognition. The workload is also expressed differently. Some universities indicate one or two weekly sessions, while others use a total number of hours per semester. Thus, the curricular model does not function identically everywhere, but it usually ensures at least a minimum and regular contact with organized physical activity.

The service-based model has another logic. In this case, sport is offered as a university service, not necessarily as a curricular obligation. Students can choose activities according to their interests, level, timetable or available places. Access is often organized through enrolment, membership, a sport ticket or booking systems. This model may be attractive because it gives students more freedom. However, freedom of choice is useful only when the offer is real and accessible. If the schedule is inconvenient, if places are limited, if facilities are far from students or if costs are too high, participation remains difficult. For this reason, the service model depends strongly on management, communication and infrastructure.

The competitive model is built around clubs, associations and university competitions. It gives university sport visibility and creates opportunities for students who want a more structured or performance-

oriented form of participation. In some countries, this component is developed through national university championships and a wide range of sports. At the same time, this model addresses mainly students who are already prepared or motivated for competition. It cannot replace curricular or recreational forms of activity for the wider student population. Its value is greater when it completes the other models and offers an additional pathway for those who want to continue sport at a higher level.

Seen together, the three models show that no single solution is sufficient for all students. A curricular component can provide regularity, but it may remain formal if students do not continue activity beyond the scheduled classes. A service-based offer can give choice, but only if access is simple and the activities are adapted to different levels. Competitions can strengthen motivation and belonging, but they involve a smaller category of students. For this reason, the most functional arrangements are mixed ones, where students can move between compulsory, recreational and competitive forms of participation.

Table 1 summarizes these differences by European areas. It presents the dominant models, the usual status of activities, the participation formats and the main observations related to the continuity of students' motor activity. The table should be read as a synthesis of tendencies, not as a strict classification of all universities from the analysed countries.

Table 1. Institutional models and participation formats of university physical education and university sport in Europe

Region (countries analysed)	Dominant model(s)	Typical status of university ph. education/ sport	Typical participation formats	Key observation
Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland)	Mainly service-based model, supported by student associations and, in some cases, competitive structures	Mostly voluntary and extracurricular; usually not expressed through a common number of hours or ECTS credits for all students	Access through sport centres, memberships, subscriptions, booking systems, recreational classes and activities organized on campus or through associations	Students usually participate by choice, not by curricular obligation. The offer can support regular practice when access is simple, schedules are flexible and activities respond to different interests.
Balkans (Croatia, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro)	Curricular model combined with recreational and competitive forms	Often mandatory in the first years or semesters, later optional or extracurricular; validation is usually based on participation	Weekly classes or semester workloads, attendance requirements, make-up rules, medical exemptions, adapted conditions for athletes and participation in inter-university competitions	The compulsory component keeps students in contact with physical activity at the beginning of their studies. The difficult point is what happens later, when participation becomes optional.
Central Europe (Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Romania)	Mixed model: curricular component, sport services and competitive networks	Variable status: mandatory in some semesters or programmes, elective or voluntary in others; credits may be absent or limited, depending on the institution	University sport centres, digital registration, level-based courses, scheduled classes, voluntary activities and national university competitions	Students may reach sport through classes, services or competitions. This is useful when the routes are visible and connected, but less effective when each component works separately.

Western Europe (Belgium, Italy, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Germany)	Mainly service-based and competitive models; in some cases, curricular or credit recognition components are also present	Generally voluntary and extracurricular; not mandatory at national level, although some institutions may offer recognition or integration in specific programmes	Sport centres, university clubs, recreational activities, leagues, championships, sport tickets, memberships and registration-based participation	The offer is usually broad, but the student must take the initiative. Cost, distance, timetable, available places and club culture can decide whether participation continues or stops.

After the synthesis presented in Table 1, it becomes clear that European universities do not organize physical education and university sport according to one common formula. The differences are linked to educational traditions, available resources, infrastructure, student demand and the way each institution understands the place of movement in university life.

In the Nordic countries, sport is usually placed closer to the idea of a campus service than to a compulsory academic subject. Students choose activities according to their timetable, interests and available access conditions. This gives the model a flexible character. It can support regular practice, especially for students who already value physical activity and are ready to organize their own participation. At the same time, this model may leave aside less motivated students or those who need clearer guidance at the beginning. For them, flexibility alone is not always enough; beginner-friendly activities, visible information and simple access procedures become important.

The Balkan area shows a different situation. Here, the curricular component is more visible, especially in the first years or semesters of study. This has a practical advantage: students remain in contact with physical activity during a period when academic pressure increases and sedentary behaviour can become stronger. In many cases, validation is based mainly on attendance and active participation, which makes the system easier to apply. The limitation appears later, when the compulsory period ends. If students have not developed personal interest or if they do not find suitable voluntary options, participation may decrease. Therefore, the curricular model becomes more useful when it is connected with elective activities, recreational groups and opportunities that gradually transfer responsibility to the student.

Central Europe offers a more mixed picture. In some universities, physical education is still included in the academic programme; in others, sport services and competitive structures are more visible. This creates several possible routes for students: regular classes, voluntary activities, level-based courses, sport centres or competitions. Such diversity is useful, but only when the student understands how these routes are connected. If each component functions separately, participation may remain fragmented. A student may complete the compulsory part without knowing what options exist afterwards. For this reason, communication, guidance and progression by level are important, not only the existence of several sport opportunities.

In Western Europe, university sport is generally based on voluntary participation, supported by sport services, clubs, leagues and federations. The strength of this model is the variety of opportunities. Students can choose recreational activities, fitness programmes, club sport or competitive events, depending on their interests and level of preparation. However, voluntary participation also means that the student must take the initiative. During busy academic periods, or when activities involve costs, distance, limited places or inconvenient schedules, participation can easily become irregular. In this context, continuity depends less on obligation and more on how well the university designs access to sport: clear information, simple registration, suitable timetables and activities that can be integrated into the weekly routine.

Taken together, these regional tendencies show that no model solves the problem of student participation by itself. The curricular component can provide regularity, but it does not automatically create independent practice. Sport services offer choice, but they work only when access is real and visible. Clubs and competitions can strengthen motivation and belonging, but they involve only part of the student population. For this reason, the most useful arrangements are those that combine these components and allow students to move gradually from compulsory or guided participation toward autonomous physical activity during and after university studies.

Perspectives for sustaining physical activity in university physical education and university sport in the Republic of Moldova

In the Republic of Moldova, the problem of students' physical activity cannot be solved only by keeping physical education in the curriculum. This is important, but it is not enough. Participation also depends on what students are willing to practise, what forms of movement they need, how motivated they are and how they understand the risks of a sedentary lifestyle [7, 17, 20]. Competitive sport also has its role, but it usually involves a smaller group of students. For this reason, universities need a wider and more practical way of organizing physical activity.

A possible direction is to combine three components. The first is a curricular component with clear rules: when students attend, how participation is validated and what minimum level of involvement is expected. The second is a service-based offer that functions throughout the academic year, not only as an occasional activity. This means accessible schedules, activities for different levels and interests, simple registration procedures and clear information for students. The third component is the gradual development of clubs, associations and inter-university events, organized with institutional support and, where possible, with free or low-cost access. In this way, participation can become available not only for students already involved in sport, but also for those who need an easier entry point [2].

A practical difficulty remains the limited time allocated to physical education and sport within university studies. Under these conditions, the issue is not only the number of hours, but also how these hours are used. The content needs to be organized progressively, and the sessions should be structured so that students can develop competences even when contact time is reduced [5]. This also explains the usefulness of ICT tools. Digital resources, guided tasks and support materials can help students continue learning and practising beyond the lesson itself, especially when they are used for individual study or independent physical activity [21].

Assessment can also support this direction. Portfolios or other forms of alternative assessment make it possible to recognize physical activity carried out outside the university, when it is documented and related to the objectives of the discipline. Such an approach encourages students to assume more responsibility for their own practice and may help connect curricular participation with independent activity [3]. Therefore, in the case of the Republic of Moldova, the central question is not which model should replace the others. The more relevant issue is how the curricular component, sport services and competitive opportunities can be connected in a way that students can actually use during their university years [3, 5, 7, 21].

Conclusions

The analysis shows that students maintain physical activity more easily when participation is simple to start and can be continued without major difficulties. It is not enough for physical education to exist formally in the curriculum. What matters first are the conditions students meet in everyday university life: clear access, information that is easy to find, activities for different levels of preparation, suitable timetables and the possibility to practise physical exercise even during periods with a higher academic workload.

For the Republic of Moldova, the emphasis should be placed on access and continuity. University sport services should be developed as a permanent offer, not only as an additional activity beside the curriculum. This means activities organized by level and interest, simple enrolment, clear schedules, monitoring of participation and better communication with students. At the same time, such measures cannot function without practical support: functional spaces, minimum equipment, timetables compatible with the academic programme, common access rules and, where possible, free or low-cost participation.

The curricular component remains necessary because it keeps students in regular contact with physical activity. However, it should not remain isolated. It needs to be connected with sport services and with recreational or competitive opportunities, so that students have options after compulsory or scheduled activities end. In this logic, university sport can help students move from the intention to be active toward the formation of a routine and, gradually, toward independent practice.

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THE SELF-MONITORING REGISTER AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE ENACTED CURRICULUM IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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This article examines how the written curriculum in Physical Education is reflected in actual teaching practice, using teachers' self-monitoring registers as the main source of analysis. The registers were completed during monitored lessons and examined in relation to individualized long-term instructional planning. The study followed a descriptive-analytical approach, combining documentary analysis with qualitative interpretation of the information recorded by teachers. Two dimensions were considered: the organizational conditions of the lesson, including instructional space, number of students, equipment and material resources, and the educational process, including objective achievement, student participation, teaching strategies, assessment practices and difficulties observed during lessons. The data show that teachers do not apply the curriculum as a fixed scheme. They adapt content, methods and activity organization to available space, class size, students' level and teaching conditions. Thus, the self-monitoring register supports teacher reflection and helps explain how the Physical Education curriculum functions in school practice.

Keywords: *physical education, enacted curriculum, written curriculum, self-monitoring, curricular coherence, self-monitoring register.*

REGISTRUL DE AUTOMONITORIZARE CA INSTRUMENT DE ANALIZĂ A CURRICULUMULUI REALIZAT LA DISCIPLINA EDUCAȚIE FIZICĂ

Articolul examinează modul în care curriculumul scris la disciplina Educație fizică se reflectă în practica reală a lecției, utilizând ca sursă principală registrele de automonitorizare completate de cadrele didactice. Registrele au fost completate în cadrul lecțiilor monitorizate și analizate în raport cu proiectarea didactică de lungă durată individualizată. Studiul are un caracter descriptiv-analitic și îmbină analiza documentară cu interpretarea calitativă a informațiilor consemnate de profesori. Au fost urmărite două dimensiuni. Prima vizează condițiile organizatorice ale lecției: spațiul de desfășurare, numărul de elevi, inventarul disponibil și resursele materiale. A doua se referă la procesul educațional: realizarea obiectivelor, participarea elevilor, strategiile didactice, modalitățile de evaluare și dificultățile observate în lecție. Datele arată că profesorii nu aplică curriculumul ca pe o schemă fixă. Ei adaptează conținuturile, metodele și organizarea activităților la spațiul disponibil, efectivul clasei, nivelul elevilor și condițiile concrete de predare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educație fizică, curriculum realizat, curriculum scris, automonitorizare, coerență curriculară, registru de automonitorizare.*

Introduction

School curriculum is not only a normative document that lists aims, competencies, contents and methodological recommendations. It becomes meaningful when these elements can be connected with what actually happens in the classroom or, in the case of Physical Education, in the gymnasium, on the sports field or in other spaces where lessons are organized. The National Curriculum Framework defines curriculum as a coherent system, but this coherence has to be checked in relation to teaching practice, not only at the level of the document itself [5]. For this reason, curriculum monitoring is useful when it looks beyond formal compliance and examines how the written curriculum is taught, learned and assessed in real instructional contexts [10].

Studies focused on curriculum monitoring show that monitoring registers can support this type of analysis. In Mathematics, structured grids have been used to identify the relationship between competencies, contents and teaching strategies, and to formulate proposals for curriculum improvement [11, p. 121]. A similar direction is found in the monitoring of the taught curriculum in Visual Arts, where the register is

discussed not only as a reporting tool, but also as an instrument through which teachers reflect on their own professional decisions [6, p. 478]. In both cases, the register is more than a form to be completed. It helps show how the teacher understands, adapts and uses the curriculum in teaching practice.

At system level, the framework plan and curricular documents express the official form of the curriculum. Still, their real value is tested during the lesson, where the teacher works with a concrete group of students, available time, material resources and specific learning conditions [9]. The relationship between the prescribed curriculum and the enacted curriculum therefore becomes a useful indicator of educational quality. Previous analyses of the correspondence between the written and the taught curriculum show that differences may appear because of organizational, methodological or contextual factors [4]. These differences do not always mean failure of implementation. In many cases, they show how teachers adjust curricular requirements to the real conditions of instruction.

Physical Education makes this relationship even more visible. Compared with many other school subjects, it depends directly on space, equipment, class size, students' motor level and safety conditions. The lesson is practical by nature, and the development of motor competencies is closely connected with formative objectives, attitudes, cooperation and student involvement. For this reason, the curriculum cannot be implemented in exactly the same way in every school or in every class. Teachers often have to adapt the content, the organization of activities and the teaching strategies to the conditions available at that moment [1]. Monitoring the taught–learned curriculum in Physical Education should therefore include not only what content was planned, but also what decisions were made during the lesson and how these decisions influenced the achievement of specific competencies [4].

Curriculum can be discussed at policy level, but it becomes visible only when the teacher works with a real class. At this level, curricular policies meet teachers' professional reflection, lesson organization and students' actual participation [2]. In the case of Physical Education, the analysis of the relationship between the written and the enacted curriculum requires instruments that can record concrete aspects of implementation: the space used, the number of students, the equipment available, the objectives achieved, the methods applied, the assessment practices and the difficulties encountered [3].

In this context, the self-monitoring register completed by the Physical Education teacher can offer useful data for understanding the enacted curriculum. Unlike external or institutional monitoring, self-monitoring records the lesson from the teacher's perspective. It can capture not only what was planned, but also what had to be adjusted: the organization of the class, the use of equipment, the integration of students with temporary exemptions, the degree of student engagement and the methodological decisions made during the activity. Through these records, it becomes possible to analyse how coherent, applicable and functional the Physical Education curriculum is in actual school practice.

Although the literature provides methodological references for curriculum monitoring [6, 10, 11], the use of self-monitoring registers in Physical Education still needs deeper analysis. In particular, it is important to see whether these registers can show the connection between the written curriculum and the curriculum implemented in lessons. This is the point from which the present study starts: it examines self-monitoring registers completed by Physical Education teachers and asks how far they show the link between the written curriculum and actual teaching practice.

Materials and Methods

The research was organized as a descriptive-analytical study based on self-monitoring registers completed by Physical Education teachers. The focus was placed on the way the written curriculum is reflected in actual teaching practice. In other words, the analysis followed not only what the curriculum provides, but also how teachers apply, adjust and document these provisions during lessons.

The study included 21 Physical Education teachers, who completed self-monitoring registers for the six curricular modules taught during one academic year. In the curricular structure, each module is linked to a specific sport discipline. For this reason, the analysis did not focus on isolated lessons only. The main unit of analysis was the curricular module, because this made it possible to observe how the instructional process is organized and adapted across several sport disciplines.

The main research instrument was the self-monitoring register. Teachers used this document to record what happened during the lesson and to reflect on the way curricular provisions were applied in practice. The register included data on the achievement of lesson objectives, student engagement, teaching methods and strategies, assessment approaches and difficulties encountered during the lesson. It also recorded organizational aspects, such as the instructional space, the equipment used, the number of students and the presence of students temporarily exempted from physical effort.

The registers were read from two perspectives. The first was the organizational dimension, referring to the real conditions in which the Physical Education lesson took place: available space, material resources, class size and other factors that could influence the implementation of curricular content. The second was the educational dimension, focused on the achievement of objectives, the suitability of teaching methods, student participation and the relationship between teaching and assessment.

The methodological work combined document analysis with comparison of the information entered in the registers. The comparison was made across modules and sport disciplines, so that both common elements and discipline-specific situations could be identified. The interpretation remained mainly qualitative. The aim was not to quantify every recorded detail, but to understand how teachers adapt the curriculum to the real conditions of the class.

This approach offers a view of the enacted curriculum as it appears in teaching practice. It shows how the curriculum moves from the official document to the lesson itself, where decisions are influenced by space, equipment, students' level, available time and the teacher's methodological choices.

Results and Discussion

The self-monitoring registers show how teachers used this instrument to compare what was planned in the curriculum with what actually happened during the lesson. Each teacher completed the register in relation to the curricular module selected in the long-term instructional plan. Since the school year is organized into six modules, the registers included six representative lessons, each linked to a sport discipline taught during that year.

The entries also show that some sport disciplines are used more often in teaching practice. Gymnastics, athletics, basketball, volleyball, football and table tennis appear most frequently in the analysed registers. Their repeated presence suggests that these modules are already well established in the organization of Physical Education lessons. This also made them more suitable for comparison, because they appeared in a larger number of registers and allowed a clearer view of how teachers apply the curriculum in practice.

Other modules were also recorded, including oina, badminton and combat sports, such as judo or wrestling. However, these appeared only in a small number of registers and were not distributed evenly across the sample. For this reason, the analysis was focused mainly on the disciplines with the highest frequency. This choice made it possible to compare data more consistently and to observe how the curriculum functions in the case of the sport modules most often used by teachers.

The self-monitoring register was not treated only as a document for reporting the lesson. Its role was broader. Through this instrument, teachers recorded how curricular provisions were applied, what difficulties appeared and what adjustments were needed during teaching. In this way, the register became a tool for professional reflection, helping the teacher look at the connection between long-term planning and the real course of the lesson.

In Physical Education, this type of register is useful because the lesson depends on many concrete conditions. Some of these are organizational: the space available, the equipment, the number of students, weather conditions or the presence of students temporarily exempted from physical effort. Others are related to the educational process itself: the achievement of objectives, students' involvement, the methods used, assessment practices and the conclusions formulated after the lesson. For this reason, the analysis of the registers was organized around two dimensions: the organizational dimension and the educational dimension.

The organizational dimension. The data presented in Table 1 show that teachers adapt sport modules to the real conditions in which the lesson takes place. The way a module is implemented depends not only on the curriculum, but also on the sport discipline, the available infrastructure and the number of students in the class.

Regarding instructional space, most lessons were organized in standard-size gymnasiums, such as 9×18 m, 12×24 m or 18×36 m. Athletics and football were usually carried out on adapted outdoor fields, most often 18×36 m or 20×40 m. These data show that teachers did not apply the module content in a fixed way. They adjusted tasks, distances, formations and activity areas according to the space available.

Class size also influenced lesson organization. The registers included groups ranging from 13 to 31 students. In larger classes, teachers used grouping, station-based work or small-sided teams to keep more students active at the same time. These solutions helped distribute practice time more evenly and reduced waiting periods. The differences from one module to another show that the organization of the lesson was continuously adapted to the number of students, the content taught and the available space.

Table 1. Analysis and interpretation of the organizational dimension reflected in the self-monitoring registers

Sport	Instructional space	Nr. stud.	Students exempted	Equipment used	Notes on lesson organization and curricular adaptation
Athletics	Outdoor field 20×40; 18×36	13–31 students	1–4 students medically excused / 1–2 temporarily exempt from physical effort	20 cones; 12 hoops; 6 hurdles; 28 batons; 8 ropes; 16 balls; stopwatch; 29 small balls; markers	The module was organized on adapted outdoor fields. Teachers used cones and markers to delimit working areas and to organize tasks by stations. This made it possible to involve several groups at the same time and to adjust running, jumping or throwing tasks to the available surface.
Gymnastics	Sports hall 9×18; 12×24; 18×36	13–31 students	1–4 students medically excused / 1–2 temporarily exempt from physical effort	Mats; bench; wall bars; vaulting horse; 2 trampolines; hoops; ropes; weights	The lessons required careful use of space and apparatus. The selection of mats, benches, wall bars or vaulting equipment was linked to the content of the module, but also to safety conditions. Group organization allowed students to work progressively and under closer teacher supervision.
Volleyball	Sports hall 9×18; 12×24; 18×36	14–31 students	1–3 students medically excused / 1–2 temporarily exempt from physical effort	6–20 volleyballs; net; 12 cones; court markings; whistle; stopwatch; instructional charts	The organization of activities depended on the size of the hall, the presence of the net and the number of balls available. In larger classes, teachers used groups or teams to maintain active participation. Technical drills were combined with simplified game situations.
Basketball	Sports hall 9×18; 12×24; 18×36	14–21 students	1–2 students medically excused / 1–3 temporarily exempt from physical effort	9–15 balls; 4–6 baskets; 12–14 cones; backboard; court; ropes	The number of baskets and balls influenced the structure of the lesson. Teachers combined technical exercises with applied game situations, using small groups and role rotation to maintain rhythm and engagement.
Football	Adapted football field	24–28 students	1–2 students medically excused / 2–4 temporarily exempt from physical effort	6–8 footballs; 12–24 cones	The field was adapted to the available space, with working areas marked by cones. Because the groups were relatively large, small-sided games were used to increase the number of active students. The duration and intensity of tasks were adjusted to class size and students' level.

Table Tennis	Sports hall 9×18; 18×36	13–24 students	1–2 students medically excused / 1–2 temporarily exempt from physical effort	2–3 tables; 10–14 paddles; table tennis balls; 10–14 tennis balls	The limited number of tables required rotation and pair work. This organization helped include more students in practice, although waiting time remained an important factor. The content was adjusted to the indoor space and to the available equipment.

Class size had a visible influence on the way lessons were organized. The registers include groups between 13 and 31 students, and this difference required different forms of work. In larger classes, teachers used groups, stations or small-sided teams in order to keep more students active at the same time. These solutions helped reduce waiting time and allowed practice time to be distributed more evenly. The differences recorded from one sport module to another show that lesson organization was adjusted according to the number of students, the available space and the type of content taught.

The registers also show the constant presence of students who were medically excused or temporarily exempted from physical effort, usually between 1 and 4 students. Their presence required small adjustments in the lesson. In some cases, these students could receive alternative roles, observe execution, help with equipment, support organization or complete differentiated tasks. This aspect is important because it shows that participation in Physical Education was not understood only as direct physical effort, but also as involvement adapted to the student's condition.

The equipment recorded in the registers gives another indication of how lessons were prepared. In athletics and team sports especially, teachers listed the materials in detail: cones, balls, hoops, hurdles, batons, ropes, stopwatches and other resources. This quantitative recording is useful because it shows the connection between available materials and the way activities were structured. Where equipment was sufficient, teachers could organize more varied tasks and involve several groups at the same time. Where resources were limited, rotation or group work became necessary.

Taken together, the data related to the organizational dimension show that sport modules were not implemented in identical conditions. Each lesson depended on space, equipment, class size and the specific requirements of the sport discipline. The self-monitoring registers therefore reveal a flexible way of organizing the instructional process. Teachers did not simply follow a fixed scheme; they adapted the lesson to the conditions they had, while keeping the activity coherent from a curricular point of view.

The educational process dimension. To understand how the written curriculum was put into practice, the analysis also focused on the educational dimension of the Physical Education lesson, presented in Table 2. This dimension included the achievement of lesson objectives, student engagement, the methods and strategies used by teachers, the assessment approaches and the difficulties observed during the teaching–learning process.

The data recorded by the 21 teachers offer a comparative view of how sport modules were implemented. They also show the adjustments made during lessons, depending on the discipline, the level of the class, students' involvement and the concrete conditions in which the activity took place.

The information presented in Table 2 shows that most objectives planned for the sport modules were achieved. At the same time, the registers do not describe a rigid teaching process. Teachers often noted that some objectives were only partially achieved, adapted to the class level or simplified when the situation required it. These notes are important because they show how the lesson was adjusted to students' motor level, available time, working conditions and the difficulty of the tasks.

Student participation differed from one discipline to another. In team sports, especially volleyball, basketball and football, teachers recorded stronger involvement. Students were more active during game situations, where competition, cooperation and immediate use of skills increased interest. In gymnastics, athletics and table tennis, participation was less even. Some students worked more slowly, others were cautious, and in table tennis the limited number of tables created waiting time. These differences show that engagement depends not only on the curriculum, but also on the type of content and the way the lesson is organized.

Table 2. Analysis and interpretation of the educational process dimension reflected in the self-monitoring registers

Sport	Objective achievement	Student participation	Teaching methods and strategies	Assessment practices	Difficulties observed during lessons
Athletics	Objectives were generally achieved, although some tasks were simplified or adjusted because of time limits, weather conditions or the presence of students exempted from effort. Differentiated group work helped maintain the planned direction of the lesson.	Students were mostly active and showed interest in practical tasks. In endurance activities, the working pace was slower, and participation was uneven in more demanding exercises.	Short-distance drills, demonstration, station-based work, repetition, differentiate tasks and group organization were used to keep students involved.	Teachers used direct observation, timing, verbal feedback, individual correction and continuous assessment during practice.	Rapid fatigue, differences in motor level, insufficient time for consolidation, fluctuating attention and coordination difficulties were noted in some students.
Gymnastics	Objectives were achieved in most cases, with several exercises adapted to the class level. More complex elements required simplification and gradual progression.	Participation was good in basic exercises, but students were more cautious when working with apparatus or when new elements were introduced.	Step-by-step demonstration, methodological progression, group work, individual assistance, controlled repetition and detailed explanation were applied.	Assessment focused on individual observation, immediate correction, technical execution, verbal feedback and formative evaluation.	Fear of apparatus, incorrect execution, repeated need for explanation, reduced concentration and coordination differences were reported.
Volleyball	Objectives were achieved mainly through technical drills and applied game situations. New technical elements were sometimes only partially achieved and had to be adapted to the pace of the class.	Students were highly active during game-play, while involvement decreased during repetitive drills. Competitive situations increased interest, although attention during explanations was variable.	Teachers used technical drills, applied games, positional rotation, teamwork, demonstration and analytical exercises.	Continuous assessment, verbal feedback, participation assessment, technical observation and individual correction were used.	Coordination difficulties, repeated technical errors, maintaining attention, insufficient time for refinement and uneven engagement were observed.
Basketball	Objectives were generally achieved according to planning and adapted to class size. Applied game-play supported the achievement of objectives, while complex techniques required additional consolidation.	Students were active and competitive, especially during game-play. Some passive participation was observed, and involvement was sometimes selective in defensive tasks.	Game situations, dribbling and shooting drills, small-sided team organization, demonstration, applied games and rotation were used.	Teachers applied systematic observation, individual feedback, technical performance assessment, verbal appraisal and formative assessment.	Significant performance differences, reduced attention during explanations, excessive individual play, collaboration difficulties and unstable technical execution were reported.

Football	Objectives were achieved mainly through gameplay and repeated applied tasks. The content was adjusted to the group level, with emphasis on participation and consolidation through practice.	Students showed high enthusiasm and strong involvement. At the same time, disciplinary issues, uneven attention and a tendency toward individual play appeared in some situations.	Team-based games, technical-tactical drills, subgroup organization, demonstration, game situations and coordination exercises were used.	Assessment was based on active participation, verbal feedback, observation of technical execution and collective feedback.	Tendency toward individual play, difficulty following instructions, group management issues, differences in technical level and reduced concentration were noted.
Table Tennis	Objectives were achieved progressively and, in some cases, only at a basic level because of limited practice time. Rotational organization influenced the rhythm of learning.	Participation was good during execution, but involvement alternated because students had to rotate. Waiting periods reduced continuity, and interest was moderate in some cases.	Technical demonstration, pair work, systematic rotation, analytical drills and individual correction were used.	Teachers used individual observation, correction of stance and stroke, verbal feedback and formative evaluation.	Limited practice time per student, waiting during rotation, unstable technical execution, coordination difficulties and temporary passive involvement were reported.

The methods used by teachers were closely linked to each sport discipline. Demonstration, repetition, group work, station-based organization and applied game situations appeared frequently in the registers. Gymnastics required gradual progression, individual assistance and controlled repetition. Athletics was often organized through stations. In volleyball and basketball, rotation and applied games helped involve more students. In this way, the registers show that teaching strategies were adapted to the content, space, equipment and class level.

Assessment was mainly formative. Teachers relied on observation, verbal feedback, individual correction and assessment of participation. The registers contain fewer references to standardized assessment tools. This suggests that assessment was used mostly during the lesson, as a way to guide students and regulate the teaching process, rather than only as a final measurement of performance.

The difficulties recorded by teachers were also linked to the specific nature of each discipline. Some problems appeared repeatedly: differences in motor level, unstable technical execution, reduced attention, insufficient time for consolidation and, in team sports, the tendency of some students to play individually. Other difficulties were more specific: fear of apparatus in gymnastics, rapid fatigue in athletics and waiting time in table tennis. These observations show that the educational process is shaped by the real dynamics of the class, not only by the planned content.

A comparison between disciplines shows that team sports usually generated higher engagement, but also more challenges related to discipline, cooperation and group management. Individual or technically oriented disciplines required closer methodological control and more frequent adaptation to students' level. Each type of content therefore produced its own teaching problems and required different forms of teacher intervention.

The registers indicate a visible connection between planning, teaching and assessment. Teachers did not simply follow the initial plan. They adjusted objectives, methods and feedback according to the class, the discipline and the difficulties observed during the lesson. In this sense, the self-monitoring register records not only what was taught, but also how teachers evaluated the effectiveness of their own decisions.

The analysis of the two dimensions „*organizational and educational*” helps clarify the relationship between the written curriculum and the curriculum implemented in Physical Education lessons.

1. From the organizational point of view, the Physical Education curriculum provides the general framework for organizing the instructional process into sport modules connected with the development of specif-

ic competencies and motor capacities. It includes content, expected outcomes and methodological suggestions, but it does not impose identical material conditions for all schools. The data recorded in the registers show that lesson organization was influenced by the size of the sports hall, the availability of outdoor fields, equipment, class size and the presence of students temporarily exempted from effort. These conditions did not block curriculum implementation. They required adaptation. Teachers modified space, organized work by stations, rotated students or used small teams. Such decisions should not be seen as deviations from the curriculum, but as practical ways of applying it in real school conditions. The same applies to students temporarily exempted from effort, whose presence required differentiated tasks or alternative roles.

2. From the educational point of view, the registers show how curricular aims were translated into teaching and assessment activities. The curriculum emphasizes motor competencies, attitudes, practical application of knowledge and formative assessment. The records made by teachers show that these aims were pursued through adapted objectives, practical tasks, observation, feedback and correction. Team sports usually stimulated enthusiasm and competitiveness, while individual or technically oriented disciplines required more explanation, closer supervision and gradual progression. The reported difficulties — different motor levels, unstable execution, fluctuating attention and, in some cases, individual play or limited cooperation — confirm that the educational process depends on the real situation of the class, not only on the planned content.

3. Comparing the two dimensions, the registers do not indicate a major break between curricular intention and teaching practice. What appears instead is a relationship of flexible coherence. The written curriculum offers the direction, while the teacher adapts the lesson according to time, infrastructure, equipment, students' motor level and the specific requirements of each module. Differences between what was planned and what was implemented are therefore not necessarily signs of inconsistency. In many cases, they show how the curriculum becomes functional in concrete teaching conditions.

4. From the perspective of curriculum development, the registers suggest several directions that deserve attention. Modular flexibility should be maintained, because it allows teachers to adapt sport content to real school conditions. Differentiation and inclusion strategies need to be clearer, especially for students temporarily exempted from effort or for classes with very different motor levels. The assessment of specific competencies also needs more precise reference points. Used systematically, self-monitoring registers can support not only teacher reflection, but also broader analysis of how the Physical Education curriculum functions in practice.

Conclusions

The self-monitoring registers show that the written curriculum and the curriculum implemented in Physical Education lessons are connected, but not in a rigid way. Teachers did not apply the curriculum as a fixed scheme. They adapted it to the conditions of each lesson: available space, equipment, class size, students' motor level and the time available for practice. This relation can be described as flexible coherence, because the curricular direction was maintained even when organizational or methodological adjustments were made.

The organizational data confirm that infrastructure and material resources strongly influence the way sport modules are taught. In practice, teachers adjusted the working space, used stations, organized students in rotation or formed small teams in order to keep the activity functional. These decisions did not move the lesson away from the curriculum. On the contrary, they made it possible to apply the curriculum in different school conditions.

The educational dimension shows the same type of adaptation. Teachers recorded the achievement of objectives, the difficulties that appeared and the corrections made during the lesson. Assessment was mainly formative, based on observation, verbal feedback and individual correction. The differences between team sports and individual disciplines also show that each type of content creates a different lesson dynamic and requires different teaching decisions.

Overall, the self-monitoring register can be used as a practical instrument for analysing how the Physical Education curriculum works in real teaching situations. It provides qualitative data about the applicability of curricular provisions, the adjustments made by teachers and the conditions that influence lesson delivery. Used regularly, this instrument can support teacher reflection and can also provide useful information for the continuous development of the Physical Education curriculum.

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PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION AND THE PSYCHOSOCIAL QUALITIES OF JUNIOR TENNIS PLAYERS: A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ON SPORTS PERFORMANCE

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The importance of tennis as an individual sport transcends mere physical activity. It is a holistic discipline that cultivates not only a healthy and strong body, but also a sharp mind and solid emotional balance. Tennis players learn valuable lessons about self-discipline, resilience, strategic thinking, and managing emotions, skills that are useful not only on the court, but in all aspects of life. The quality of communication between parents and children is a determining factor not only in the sporting success of young tennis players, but also in their development as balanced and resilient individuals. A family environment based on open communication, unconditional support, and mutual respect is essential for developing athletes who not only excel on the court but also thrive in everyday life.

Keywords: *communication, competitive performance, family relationships, junior tennis players.*

COMUNICAREA PĂRINTE-COPIL ȘI CALITĂȚILE PSIHOSOCIALE ALE TENISMENILOR JUNIORI: O ANALIZĂ DETALIATĂ A IMPACTULUI RELĂȚIEI FAMILIALE ASUPRA PERFORMANȚEI SPORTIVE

Importanța tenisului ca sport individual transcende simpla activitate fizică. Este o disciplină holistică ce cultivă nu doar un corp sănătos și puternic, ci și o minte ageră și un echilibru emoțional solid. Jucătorii de tenis învață lecții valoroase despre autodisciplină, rezistență, gândire strategică și gestionarea emoțiilor, abilități utile nu numai pe teren, ci în toate aspectele vieții. Calitatea comunicării dintre părinți și copii este un factor determinant nu numai în succesul sportiv al tinerilor jucători de tenis, ci și în dezvoltarea lor ca indivizi echilibrați și rezistenți. Un mediu familial bazat pe comunicare deschisă, sprijin necondiționat și respect reciproc este esențial pentru dezvoltarea unor sportivi care nu numai că excelează pe teren, dar prosperă și în viața de zi cu zi.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare, performanță competitivă, relații familiale, jucători juniori de tenis.*

Introduction

In the world of competitive sports, especially at a young age, the interaction between parents and children goes beyond simple logistical support. It becomes an essential pillar in the overall development of the junior athlete. To fully understand this impact, it is important to clearly define the concepts of **parent-child communication** and **psychosocial qualities** in the specific context of sports [3, 4].

The exchange of information and emotions and thoughts and attitudes and expectations between parents and their children forms the basis of **parent-child communication**. The sporting environment contains specific communication elements which affect junior athletes through direct and indirect means during their athletic experience. The communication between parents and children in sports requires both verbal and non-verbal methods which include active listening and constructive feedback and emotional control [8].

The fundamental elements of sports-based parent-child communication consist of [1]:

- The expression of complete acceptance and love without any reference to athletic achievements defines emotional support in sports. The parent should provide comfort after losses and motivation during challenging times while recognizing the child's hard work instead of focusing only on winning.
- The delivery of performance feedback should include specific helpful observations which help athletes improve their results instead of using destructive criticism. The delivery of feedback requires balance because it should show both positive aspects and areas that need improvement while maintaining the child's self-assurance.

- The process of goal-setting involves parents discussing competitive sports challenges and performance expectations with their children. The child will avoid feeling overwhelmed or like a failure when parents maintain open dialogue about their expectations.

- The ability to handle pressure involves helping children discuss their competitive stress and anxiety and teaching them effective coping methods while creating a secure space for emotional expression.

- The process of autonomy development in sports requires parents to support their children in making their own decisions based on age and maturity level while encouraging self-responsibility and goal-setting. The communication process should support their opinions while giving them freedom to discover their own path.

- The coach and parents need to maintain effective communication to deliver consistent messages that support the shared objectives of the child.

The development of trust and mutual respect and understanding through balanced communication creates a secure environment for junior tennis players to thrive in their sporting careers [12].

Research hypothesis. It was assumed that effective communication between parent and child contributes significantly to the development of the psychosocial qualities necessary for top performance in junior tennis players.

Research objectives: to explore the mechanisms through which communication influences the competitive activity of junior tennis players, to identify specific qualities and to propose strategies for improving the parent-child relationship.

Materials and methods

The research focuses on junior tennis players between 12 and 14 years old who play at tennis clubs within Chișinău city together with their parents. The research included 40 parent-child pairs to achieve sufficient statistical power. The study required voluntary participation from all participants while both parents and children (with parental permission for minors) signed consent forms. The research used multiple validated assessment tools which previous studies had proven effective for data collection. The research instruments consisted of three standardized questionnaires [10, 13] which participants completed separately as parents and children.

- **The parent-adolescent communication scale** evaluated the quality of communication between participants through their assessment of open or problematic interactions.

- **The questionnaire about sports practice** psychosocial qualities measured tennis player attributes including resilience and self-esteem and emotion control and internal drive.

- **The parent questionnaire** evaluated parenting styles through three categories: authoritarian, permissive and democratic which impact both communication and child growth.

- **The sports performance record** contains factual information about junior tennis players' athletic achievements including their national standing and their win-loss statistics from previous seasons.

Tennis is characterized by a unique combination of physical, mental, and emotional demands, making it an extremely complex and rewarding discipline. Beyond the athletic spectacle, tennis is a true school of life, shaping strong characters and offering profound benefits on multiple levels.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of tennis as an individual sport is the intensity of its mental demands [9]. Players must make quick decisions under pressure from their opponent and the crowd, anticipate their opponent's movements, develop game strategies, and constantly adapt to changes during the match. **Concentration** is essential to keep focus on the ball and the opponent, while **tactical thinking** allows the player to identify the opponent's weaknesses and exploit them to their advantage. **Mental toughness** is important for overcoming difficult moments, such as losing a decisive point or set, and for maintaining a positive attitude regardless of the final score of the match.

In addition to physical and mental aspects, tennis is a major test of emotional intelligence. The player is alone on the court, without a partner to rely on and support them, and must manage their own emotions. **Emotional control** is crucial to avoid frustration, anger, or discouragement, which can affect the course of the match. **Perseverance** is necessary to keep fighting, even when things are not going according to plan. Tennis also trains **discipline** and **patience**, as success does not come overnight and the training process

must be consistent. The ability to withstand pressure in important matches, remain calm in critical moments, and maintain confidence in one's own abilities are emotional skills developed and strengthened through playing tennis.

The development of essential psychosocial qualities for high athletic performance in junior competitive sports requires parents to maintain effective communication with their children under the high-pressure environment of competition. The development of resilience and self-confidence and inner motivation finds its base in open family communication that supports physical and technical training [1].

The first step of effective communication requires parents to listen attentively while acknowledging their child's emotions. A child who feels secure in sharing their sports-related happiness and sadness and concerns and letdowns with their parents will develop a strong bond with their parents. The trust between parent and child develops into self-esteem which makes the child feel important and capable despite all their past failures.

Junior tennis players develop inner motivation through communication that emphasizes their enjoyment of playing tennis and their personal achievements instead of focusing solely on winning. Parents who help their children create individualized targets for improvement enable performance discussions to shift from winning requirements to achievement targets and development pathways. The child gains independence in their development process while experiencing fulfillment from their athletic training journey [5].

Through proper communication parents demonstrate important behaviors which include empathy and respect for opponents and referees and emotional control during matches. The combination of fair play discussions and sports ethics education and teamwork training within the training team framework helps young athletes develop social abilities and maintain emotional stability.

Kids often try hard to make their parents happy. They put their parents' needs and expectations ahead of their own skills, talents, interests, and preferences. Children can really achieve things; they can have passions that are fueled by hard work and parents who encourage them to do their best. These passions come from the children's own choices, with their parents' help. For high-achieving kids, healthy choices look like this:

Parents who expect too much from their kids

Most parents want their kids to do well. Kids today learn two or three languages in preschool, play at least one instrument, and do theater, arts, or sports. From a young age, kids „must” do well in as many areas as possible; they „must” do well in order to move up the social ladder as quickly and as high as possible. Our kids „must” achieve success in school, sports, or other activities. In these cases, we mean a „must” that doesn't work. A lot of the time, kids who do well in school give their parents „reasons to be proud” and make them feel good about themselves. But do kids always want to do their best? How do kids decide to do well? Do parents „push” their kids to do their best on the right path?

From these questions, we can see some differences between what we, as parents, want and what our kids really want. We can also see how much we put our own wants on them, which makes them, in a way, responsible for our happiness, which is not good.

What does it mean to be a mindful parent?

A mindful parent considers the child's true best interests, not just what is stated. A mindful parent pays attention to what their child can really do, not just what kids are learning these days or how to fill their free time.

Many kids are driven and supported by their parents, who also take charge of their own education and the activities they do outside of school. Kids who do well in school are those who are talented and have enough internal drive to keep going through the hard work and sacrifices it takes to reach their goals.

A mindful parent pays attention to the „desires-skills-talent” triangle, which includes the child's daily efforts to be successful. They are aware of what the child is giving up to reach a certain level of success and the cost-benefit ratio between what the child loses and what they gain. A mindful parent is interested in what performance really means in the field their child has chosen, such as how much time each day the child spends on the subject they are studying, what the child gives up to achieve performance, what the child's real chances are of getting good and very good results in the chosen subject, what it means for the child in the short and long term, and what work is needed to get those results.

Results and discussions

The role of parent-child communication in sports development

The different ways parents communicate with their children affect junior tennis player performance at both training sessions and competitive matches.

- **Verbal communication.** The way parents communicate with their children through words establishes the foundation which determines their athletic mindset and competitive results. The words parents use in their communication with their junior athlete either strengthen or weaken their motivation and self-assurance. Constructive feedback stands as an essential requirement for reaching performance levels in competitive sports at every stage. Parents should concentrate on how much effort their child puts into their activities instead of focusing solely on achievement results. A better approach to feedback would be to say "I observed your dedication during today's match" instead of "Your performance was terrible because you lost." The child should identify their next steps for improvement. The process of goal-setting discussions along with success and failure management helps players enhance their performance. Parents should refrain from excessive criticism because it creates burnout and anxiety which might cause their child to stop playing sports.

- **Nonverbal communication.** The way you communicate through body language and facial expressions and voice tone delivers stronger messages than spoken words. The way you express yourself through body language and facial expressions and voice tone delivers messages that often surpass the meaning of your actual words. A parent watching from the stands with their arms folded and their face showing displeasure will express their negative emotions even when they remain silent. The player on court receives complete support through a parent's calm demeanor and their encouraging smile and gestures even when the team loses a point. The game requires nonverbal communication to help players manage their anxiety while receiving essential support during challenging moments.

The way parents communicate with their children affects multiple vital elements of their relationship

The following elements determine the highest possible success for junior tennis competitors in competitive play [7]:

- **Motivation.** The way parents communicate with their children directly affects their internal drive to play tennis because they find joy in development rather than feeling forced to do so. Parents who emphasize effort and progress and the enjoyment of playing help their children develop internal motivation that stems from within. The use of external rewards such as excessive praise or material gifts for sports performance will eventually reduce player motivation because it creates dependency on external validation.

- **Managing stress and anxiety.** The individual nature of tennis creates overwhelming stress for players who compete on court while their support team faces similar challenges. Junior tennis players find emotional safety through open and empathetic communication which enables them to share their feelings about stress and failures and expectations. Athletes who engage in truthful conversations learn to handle their fears while acquiring effective strategies to deal with all types of challenges both on and off the playing field. The absence of open communication between parents and children allows negative emotions to accumulate into mental health problems.

- **Decision-making and problem-solving.** The process of developing independence and critical thinking skills stands as a major advantage for your child. Parents should promote dialogue through their questions which include "What did you learn from today's match?" and "What approach do you believe was best for that particular point?" The development of junior tennis players' court decision-making skills through these aspects leads to more mature and independent athletic behavior.

- **The coach-athlete relationship.** Parents serve as connectors between athletes and coaches but they sometimes create barriers between them. Parents who communicate effectively create a strong bond between athletes and coaches while maintaining their supportive role and showing respect for coaching authority. The combination of persistent coach criticism with conflicting instructions through problematic communication creates confusion that disrupts the professional growth of junior tennis players.

The essential psychosocial characteristics which determine success in junior competitive tennis need identification and thorough analysis

Any athlete requires mental and emotional strength to handle competitive stress while achieving their best potential in sports but tennis demands these qualities the most [2, 3].

- **Resilience** is perhaps the most important mental quality in tennis. This sport is full of defeats, lost points, and unforced errors. Resilience is a player's ability to bounce back after defeats, overcome disappointments, and reassert themselves against their opponent. Resilient athletes see failures not as the end of the road, but as an opportunity to learn. They are able to quickly refocus their energy and concentrate on the next point, regardless of the final score of the match.

- **Discipline and work ethic.** Success is not accidental, but the result of daily work and discipline throughout the athlete's competitive career. These qualities are manifested through commitment to training, adherence to physical and mental preparation routines, and dedication to the continuous improvement of the training process. A disciplined player understands that every element, technical procedure, training session, or sacrifice contributes to future performance.

- **Focus and attention.** In a match, a player's ability to maintain focus is a huge competitive advantage. Top players can block out distractions from the crowd, referees, and opponents' comments and remain present in the moment regardless of external challenges. This power of concentration allows them to make quick and correct decisions under pressure, anticipate their opponent's moves, and execute shots with precision to win the decisive point.

- **Self-confidence.** Self-confidence is the player's firm belief in their own abilities and potential. This confidence is not mere arrogance, but a certainty based on physical and technical training over many years of work. Under pressure, a self-confident player will risk a winning shot, serve with confidence, and make bold decisions on the court.

- **Managing emotions and adaptability.** Tennis is an emotional rollercoaster. Fear, frustration, and anger can arise at any moment during a match. The ability to recognize and manage one's own negative emotions is crucial to reaching the winning point. Various coping techniques (e.g., deep breathing, a short ritual before serving) are used to calm down and return to a positive attitude and focus on the match.

- **Perseverance.** Perseverance is the ability to continue sporting activity despite obstacles, a decline in professional performance, or a lack of immediate results. A persevering player will continue the training process even when they do not achieve significant results, trusting that hard work will eventually pay off.

Conclusions

It's hard to be a parent to young athletes, and it's even harder for parents of gifted kids. Because of this, coaches and teachers should help parents as much as they can when they teach their kids how to play sports. Every child requires help that is tailored to their requirements, and every parent-child connection is different.

Because of this, it's hard to come up with basic rules for what kind of help young athletes should have. The following topics show how parents' actions can affect kids who play sports in both good and bad ways.

Focusing on the good things. Every youngster requires emotional support, such constructive criticism or personal encouragement. Parents should also not talk about the outcome of the game, but instead about how dedicated their kids are and how much progress they have made. These kinds of support not only help kids do better in sports, but they also help them feel better overall. Instead of worrying about the score, parents should provide their kids emotional support and help them improve their sports skills. Give the child helpful feedback on their behavior and commitment. The delight of playing sports is important, and it gets even better when kids get support from their parents.

Not getting into negative cycles. Sadly, parental support can also hurt kids, even if they don't mean to. Some parents only praise their kids when they do well, but when they don't do well, they don't care about practices and contests. This kind of mindset might make kids too focused on doing well, which can make them feel bad when they can't do what they want to do. Strong parental participation can be seen as (negative) pressure or (positive) support. Parents may help their kids more by helping them meet four basic psychological needs:

Self-efficacy: Does the youngster think they are doing a good job? Parents may help their kids feel more capable by letting them do things that make them feel good, like winning at sports or doing well at home. This makes it easier for kids to reach their goals or perhaps do their finest work ever.

Intrinsic motivation: Is the child acting on a feeling they have inside? You can help your kids be intrinsically motivated by letting them play sports and by being a good role model as a parent.

Self-regulation: Can the youngster handle their own emotional changes? Kids can learn to control their emotions at home and at practice, which will help them control themselves better. This helps kids pay more attention during practice and better control and deal with their feelings. The main question about self-efficacy in a social setting is: Do kids know what kind of social environment they are in and how they affect it? Kids learn to work with others and observe how their actions affect them when they play sports. This makes people feel more confident in social situations. Success in competitive tennis is not only characterized by physical talent, but is a complex combination of psychosocial skills. Developing these qualities—from resilience and discipline to emotion management and communication—is a necessary and ongoing process that, like physical training, requires constant support, guidance, and dedication.

Improving parent-child communication takes effort and patience, but investing in this area is worthwhile and will bring huge benefits in the future for the harmonious development of the junior athlete and for strengthening an unconditional, strong, and loving parent-child relationship.

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VISIBLE LEARNING – TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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The benefits of visible learning in teaching Romanian are multiple: students become more responsible for their own learning, which leads to increased performance, whether it is creative writing, literary analysis or oral expression. Students who are aware of their progress and assessment criteria are less stressed and better prepared for tests and exams, visibly reducing testing anxiety. When students understand the purpose of the activities and see the results of their work, they are more motivated to learn. We propose the ILIADA method, which does not replace existing methods but complements them through integrated activities aimed at developing students' competencies. This approach involves solving real-world problems in diverse learning environments and producing concrete academic outcomes. By integration, we mean coordinating and combining various elements into a functional whole.

Keywords: *visible learning, ILIADA, teacher, student, tools, performance, digitalization.*

ÎNVĂȚARE VIZIBILĂ – STRATEGII DE PREDARE A LIMBII ȘI LITERATURII ROMÂNE

Beneficiile învățării vizibile în predarea limbii române sunt multiple: elevii devin mai responsabili pentru propria învățare, ceea ce duce la o performanță sporită, fie că este vorba de scriere creativă, analiză literară sau exprimare orală. Elevii care sunt conștienți de progresul lor și de criteriile de evaluare sunt mai puțin stresați și mai bine pregătiți pentru teste și examene, reducând vizibil anxietatea de testare. Când elevii înțeleg scopul activităților și văd rezultatele muncii lor, sunt mai motivați să învețe. Propunem metoda ILIADA, care nu înlocuiește metodele existente, ci le completează prin activități integrate care vizează dezvoltarea competențelor elevilor. Această abordare implică rezolvarea problemelor din lumea reală în diverse medii de învățare și producerea de rezultate academice concrete. Prin integrare, înțelegem coordonarea și combinarea diferitelor elemente într-un întreg funcțional.

Cuvinte cheie: *învățare vizibilă, ILIADA, profesor, elev, instrumente, performanță, digitalizare.*

Introduction

The world is in constant change, and globalization and modernization force us to adapt continuously. That is why 21st-century pedagogy must develop students' capacity for adaptation and change [14, p. 132]. Google already has all the information one might need; it is no longer realistic to expect students to memorize large amounts of information. What matters instead is how one can apply that knowledge in practice and for the benefit of society [16, p. 45].

What kind of reform is proposed for the 21st century? It is not possible to design a reform in a simplistic, punctual way, merely by issuing laws or orders just to have new programs or new disciplines included in curricula. New teaching-learning-assessment methods are needed. More than ever, theory must be combined with practice [6, p. 354]. Let us not forget the four defining goals of 21st-century education: learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live with others [9, p. 108].

A whole educational reform process must not only be learned, assimilated, and understood but first absorbed, digested, and accepted [18, p. 54]. The times we live in demand a reconfiguration of what we call education through the learning process. It is necessary to understand that things evolve, that the classroom can be the entire world, and that learning must be lifelong.

Learning does not mean just accumulating knowledge, but growth, enrichment, and evolution. Modern

technologies are not something extraordinary. Papyrus and paper, chalk and pen, overhead projectors – all were considered innovations at the beginning. PCs, the internet, and newer complementary technologies are only the latest evidence of human creativity observable around us. Like the previous innovations, these can be assimilated into pedagogical practice without affecting the fundamentals of learning [19, p. 153].

The 21st-century school must help students develop autonomy, identity, and the ability to communicate with others [20, p.23]. The school – viewed as a laboratory that allows students to discover, investigate, experiment, and evolve at their individual learning pace, with the support of the teacher who creates real learning scenarios [6, p.106]. Under current conditions, the teacher must find appropriate methods to maintain the quality of the educational process.

Traditional closed lessons must be replaced with "open-up" lessons, which allow students to receive the core information in a relatively short time, while deepening the respective notions asynchronously. Therefore, the primary role of the teacher is no longer merely to transmit rigid information but to guide students in the learning process [17, p. 54]. One way the teacher can stimulate students' creative and critical thinking is through project-based learning, which involves solving real-life problems through tasks that engage students in collaborative activities that support their capacity to identify solutions for the given challenges. [28, p. 101-102]. The themes of such projects must involve finding concrete connections with real life, with learning tasks as the core element, aiming to make connections between elements and to synthesize and organize information from various domains of interest. 21st-century pedagogy highlights a truly important issue: the way we educate students must change. Present-day education is not very different from what it was a hundred years ago. Current technology demands a change both in the knowledge students must acquire and in the methods used to educate them [9, p. 196].

The Importance of Visible Learning in Teaching Romanian Language

Visible learning was addressed in John Hattie's rigorously documented work, *Visible Learning: A Guide for Teachers*, a reading on learning effectiveness, a contribution to the teaching-learning-assessment process aimed at all those involved and interested in the field of education. This work is based on research conducted over the last decades. The guide presents lesson sequences and emphasizes the educational relationships created between the main actors in the field: teachers, students, and school principals. The book is full of practical advice for selecting the best teaching strategies and is complemented by exercises suitable for different stages of the teaching process.

What is visible learning? John Hattie mentions that "the visible aspect refers to making students' learning visible to teachers, ensuring clear identification of the attributes that make progress in students' learning visible, but it also refers to the fact that everyone in the school should visibly know the impact they have on learning". Learning is visible not only to the teacher but also to the student. Through this approach, the student becomes their own teacher, capable of improving their self-education process. Therefore, teaching must be considered from the perspective of the impact it has on the student.

Thus, we speak of visible learning when, in a space that offers safety and trust, the objective is clearly stated and both teacher and student are motivated to achieve it. Speaking of motivated teachers, John Hattie specifies that they "do not use grading as a punishment, do not mix academic and behavioral performance, do not promote quiet compliance over schoolwork, do not overuse worksheets, do not have low expectations and are not advocates of 'he can only do so much,' and do not prefer perfect homework over taking risks that involve mistakes" [17, p. 95].

The student is seen as a partner in the teaching-learning process, treated fairly and respectfully, with independence and autonomy encouraged in the classroom. It is very important to remember this, as in daily work, focused on tasks and objectives, teachers tend to dominate the entire process, forgetting that results depend on the work of the whole team. In this case, the teacher must have the ability to step back when they notice that the student is progressing toward the proposed objective. The teacher then assumes a supportive role, assuring the student that they are on the right path in completing the task.

When we talk about progress and performance, we often associate them with elite schools. It is uninspired to believe that only in these schools quality education occurs, that only there are the best teachers,

and that only there learning is visible to teachers, students, and the community. Learning becomes visible wherever the teacher wants to evaluate the impact their work has on students, regardless of the school they are in. This is also the message Hattie addresses to all teachers: "My role as a teacher is to evaluate the impact I have on students".

Regarding visible learning, we notice that it often becomes visible at the end of a learning cycle or after national exams. However, it is important that this practice becomes frequent, even permanent, so that progress can be recorded or remediated where necessary. If our goal is to work in a school where learning is visible, we must identify ways for it to be easily recognized.

Visible learning is a pedagogical approach focused on clarifying learning objectives, monitoring progress, and providing constant feedback. It requires that teachers and students have a clear understanding of what is being learned, why it is important, and how progress can be evaluated. In the context of teaching Romanian, this method is essential for developing linguistic, literary, and communication skills.

The key aspects of visible learning in teaching Romanian involve clear learning objectives, progress monitoring, constant feedback, the use of visual and practical tools, and student involvement in the learning process. In teaching Romanian, it is crucial for students to understand the purpose of the activities: for example, learning a grammatical rule, developing vocabulary, or understanding a literary text. Setting clear objectives helps students know what is expected of them and become more aware of their own learning process.

The benefits of visible learning in teaching Romanian are multiple: students become more responsible for their own learning, leading to increased performance, whether in creative writing, literary analysis, or oral expression. Visible learning encourages students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, skills essential in studying Romanian. Students who are aware of their progress and assessment criteria are less stressed and better prepared for tests and exams, visibly reducing test anxiety. When students understand the purpose of activities and see the results of their work, they are more motivated to learn.

Purpose and Structure of the Guide

This work aims to serve as a useful resource for teaching staff, both for novice teachers lacking practical experience and for experienced colleagues seeking to refine their teaching methods. Considering that Romanian language and literature is one of the core subjects of the national curriculum, teachers are called upon to become not only transmitters of knowledge but true developers of competencies and values [2, p. 15].

To achieve this goal, it is necessary, on one hand, to have theoretical support regarding the foundations of visible learning [17, p. 23] knowledge of teaching strategies based on this concept and the integration of technology into the educational process [16, p. 147] and on the other hand, the courage to apply these in classroom practice. One of the major challenges for any teacher is implementing methods through which, at the end of a learning sequence, student progress can be observed. When progress is visible, learning becomes authentic and lasting [17, p. 67].

Unfortunately, many works addressing visible learning are limited to a theoretical presentation, without providing sufficient practical examples applicable to Romanian language lessons [7, p. 54]. At the same time, textbooks do not always provide the necessary support for exercising critical and reflective thinking, and school programs do not offer explicit methodological suggestions for pedagogy based on visible learning [20, p. 34]. This context justifies the need for a practical guide dedicated to the Romanian language teacher.

The present work presents the fundamental principles of visible learning and provides concrete tools for monitoring student progress, aiming to promote a pedagogy centered on the student and the real impact of the teaching act [12, p.45]. Examples such as managing classroom diversity, adapting strategies for different learning styles, creating an inclusive environment, and differentiating learning activities to maximize performance constitute essential points of the proposed approach.

Visible learning is an especially effective method for teaching Romanian, as it emphasizes transparency, clarity, and active student engagement. It contributes to the development of the student's self-awareness, the refinement of linguistic skills, and the enhancement of academic performance [7, p. 11].

The structure of the work is intentional: the ten chapters cover both the theoretical framework and practical examples, resources, and methodological reflections. The first two chapters highlight the importance of visible learning in teaching Romanian and outline the high school student profile. Chapters 3-5 present teaching methods and strategies, technology integration, and tools for monitoring progress, while chapter 6 proposes practical applications. Chapters 7-9 address classroom diversity management and the role of assessment, and the final chapter provides additional resources and perspectives on innovation in teaching Romanian.

High School Student Profile: Challenges and Opportunities

The high school student represents a crucial segment of the educational process, going through a period of transition and transformation marked by adolescence – a stage characterized by significant physical, emotional, social, and intellectual changes [25, p. 142]. During this period, the development of a solid academic and personal identity is essential, and the learning process plays a decisive role [12, p. 89].

The high school student who is engaged in learning is in a dynamic stage of life, full of challenges but also opportunities. Through a balanced approach, which involves support from teaching staff, appropriate resources, and innovative teaching methods, the student's profile can evolve into that of a person capable of meeting the demands of contemporary society, which is complex and constantly changing [16, p. 211].

Characteristics of the learning high school student: *curiosity and desire for autonomy:* students explore new knowledge and assert independence in academic choices, *critical thinking skills:* adolescence is the stage in which analytical and interpretative abilities develop, necessary for forming independent opinions, *interest in learning relevance:* students are motivated when there is a connection between the studied content and real life or future careers, *social influences:* relationships with peers, teachers, and family shape attitudes and motivation toward school.

Challenges faced by high school students include academic pressure related to national exams, difficulties in time management, lack of motivation, the impact of excessive technology use, and social and emotional pressure [12, p. 74]. At the same time, opportunities are numerous: access to diverse educational resources, participation in extracurricular activities, stimulation of critical and creative thinking, preparation for professional life, and support from teachers or mentors.

To support high school students in the learning process, it is necessary to promote a flexible and stimulating learning environment, develop life skills, provide access to educational and psychological counseling, and most importantly, ensure constant collaboration between teachers, parents, and students, [8, p. 38],

What is Visible Learning?

Visible learning is a foundational approach that focuses on ensuring an educational environment in which students are actively engaged in their own learning process and are able to demonstrate their progress visibly. This approach is based on the idea that students become more motivated and engaged in learning when they have a clear understanding of expectations and what they need to achieve. Thus, visible learning is an educational approach grounded in the notion that the learning process becomes more effective when it is transparent and clear for both teachers and students.

Visible education is particularly important because it prepares students for the future, for adult life, and for their careers, providing them not only with examples and role models but, more importantly, with methods and tools that develop their adaptability. In the 21st century, critical, creative, and analytical thinking skills are essential, and students who benefit from visible education are much better prepared to face the challenges of a contemporary world where changes occur rapidly. Visible learning is a method centered on transparency, collaboration, and reflection, which facilitates better outcomes and increases students' confidence in their own abilities.

Principles of Visible Learning Applied to Romanian Language Teaching

Visible learning is considered a priority for Romanian education in the 21st century, as it can substantially contribute to improving the quality of education by motivating students and developing the skills and competencies necessary in a constantly changing world. In recent years, Romanian education has undergone major reforms aimed at improving the quality of education. Visible learning is the solution for implementing these reforms by actively involving the main participants in the educational process: teachers and students.

The principles of visible learning emphasize clarity, monitoring, and engagement, transforming education into an active, personalized, and efficient process. By applying these principles, teachers can provide students with the tools necessary to become autonomous, motivated, and well-prepared for future challenges. Visible learning relies on clear objectives, progress monitoring, and the use of feedback to improve student performance. Applying these principles in teaching Romanian can transform the educational process, making it more interactive and effective.

Visible learning places a strong emphasis on assessment methods and feedback, so that students can clearly, consistently, and continuously see where they are and what they need to do to improve their performance. This can be achieved only if teachers set precise objectives, organize formative assessments, and use peer assessment and self-assessment techniques [18, p. 97].

Another important component of visible learning is collaboration. Students, encouraged to work together - in pairs, teams, heterogeneous or homogeneous group – and to share their ideas and perspectives, can more easily learn from one another and develop communication and collaboration skills. The primary goal of visible learning is not merely knowledge acquisition but competency development. This requires the cultivation of critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills, as well as problem-solving and decision-making abilities. To implement visible learning in the instructional process, a radical change in the educational approach is necessary: the focus should be on the learning process rather than solely on final outcomes. Teachers must always be prepared to provide constructive feedback and remain open to change and innovation.

Visible education involves the use of tools and strategies that allow both students and teachers to better track and understand the learning process, including the use of technology, progress monitoring tools, or online platforms for collaboration and feedback. It can also be realized through active learning methods such as group discussions, role-playing, and practical projects.

With the implementation of visible learning, students can monitor their own progress and self-assess their performance, which can help increase self-confidence and develop the ability to manage their own learning process. Teachers can use visible learning to improve their teaching practice by monitoring student progress and providing constructive feedback in real time, which can help identify weaknesses in the learning process and develop strategies to enhance performance [2, p. 98].

Based on the premise that visible learning—a concept developed primarily from the research of John Hattie—emphasizes a clear understanding of how students learn and the use of methods that maximize teaching effectiveness, and requires that learning objectives, progress, and outcomes be „visible” to both students and teachers, we can rely on ten principles of visible learning applied to teaching the Romanian language.

1. Clarity of Learning Objectives

Description: Students must clearly understand what is expected of them and which competencies they are meant to develop.

Practical Application: Teachers set specific, measurable, and relevant objectives for each lesson.

Example: ”Today you will learn to identify the central theme of a narrative text.”

2. Well-Defined Success Criteria

Description: Students need to know what ”success” looks like in the task they are performing.

Practical Application: Teachers provide examples of correct responses or clearly describe expectations for a task.

Example: For an essay, criteria may include ”clear structure” „use at least three arguments” and „observe grammar rules.”

3. Constructive and Immediate Feedback

Description: Feedback should be specific, improvement-oriented, and timely to have an impact.

Practical Application: Teachers provide clear guidance after each activity, highlighting what is well done and what needs improvement.

Example: ”You analyzed the main character well, but it would be useful to add examples from the text to support your point of view.”

4. Progress Monitoring

Description: Both teachers and students need to track progress over time to identify strengths and areas needing improvement.

Practical Application: Use charts, self-assessment sheets, or diagrams to visualize student progress.

Example: After each test, students fill in a progress sheet to see where they faced difficulties.

5. Evidence-Based Learning

Description: Teachers must use methods that have been scientifically proven to be effective in learning.

Practical Application: Choose teaching strategies based on educational research, such as collaborative learning or explicit teaching.

Example: Organize group activities to stimulate critical thinking.

6. Student Engagement in Learning

Description: Students must be active participants, not just passive recipients of information.

Practical Application: Teachers encourage questions, debates, and participation in interactive activities.

Example: During a literature lesson, students analyze a text in teams and present their conclusions to peers.

7. Visualization of the Learning Process

Description: Students should clearly see the steps and progress in learning, which provides motivation and direction.

Practical Application: Use diagrams, concept maps, and detailed plans to organize information.

Example: Create a mind map for the structure of a narrative text.

8. Self-Assessment and Reflection

Description: Students are encouraged to analyze their own performance and identify areas for improvement.

Practical Application: Integrate self-assessment activities at the end of each lesson or study unit.

Example: "What did I learn today? What can I do better next time?"

9. Creating a Safe and Stimulating Learning Environment

Description: Students should feel encouraged to take intellectual risks in an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.

Practical Application: Teachers promote a culture of respect and mutual support.

Example: For every incorrect answer, the teacher provides a constructive explanation without criticizing the student.

10. Connection to Real Life

Description: Learning becomes more relevant and motivating when students see the connection between what they learn and their everyday life.

Practical Application: Teachers use concrete examples and apply theory to practical situations.

Example: Students write an official letter using grammar rules, simulating a real-life context such as applying for a scholarship.

The Role of the Teacher in Visible Learning

In the context of visible learning, the teacher plays a crucial role in supporting students in their educational development. Educators are responsible for facilitating the learning process and creating a safe, stimulating, inclusive, and effective environment. Teachers who adopt this approach are open to change and prepared to continually adjust their teaching practice, encouraging students to be active, responsible, and engaged in the learning process. By providing continuous feedback, creating opportunities for self-reflection and collaboration, teachers can identify and establish learning objectives together with their students. Progress monitoring tools allow teachers to track student performance, identify weaknesses in the learning process, and improve their own teaching practice [13, p.45-58].

Collaboration among teachers is also essential. This can be achieved through participation in discussion groups, joint projects, or specialized conferences and seminars, whether face-to-face or online, to share resources, methods, and experiences.

The Impact of Visible Learning Tools on Students

Visible learning tools increase students' engagement and responsibility in the educational process, developing critical thinking, self-reflection, and collaboration skills. For example:

- Self-reflection tools help students analyze their own skills and set learning objectives to improve performance.

- Students learn to monitor their progress, manage time and resources, make informed decisions, and collaborate with peers and teachers.

Visible learning has been adopted in many schools worldwide, promoting sustainable outcomes. At the center of the educational process is the millennial student, with specific interests, goals, and values. Real change does not lie in the values themselves but in the approaches: blackboards and chalk are replaced by digital platforms, applications, and interactive tools, while maintaining the same educational purpose.

Practical Approaches in Visible Learning

Visible learning requires a personalized approach to education, according to each student's needs, using formative assessment and clear, immediate feedback. It aims to develop socio-emotional competencies, such as empathy and emotional self-regulation, through collaborative and creative activities. Practical examples include:

- *Online collaboration and feedback platforms*: students work in groups and receive feedback from peers and teachers.

- *Creative activities*: creating videos, presentations, or artistic projects that stimulate imagination and creativity.

- *Interactive educational games*: digital games that increase students' motivation and engagement.

- *Socio-emotional skill projects*: activities that develop empathy, emotional self-regulation, and collaboration.

- *Digital tools for visible learning*: digital cameras for self-reflection, computers and the Internet for quick access to information, digital portfolios reflecting student and teacher progress.

- *Visibility of progress in the community*: class websites, school magazines, journals, and notice boards that showcase activities and student achievements.

The Most Innovative Idea in Visible Learning

The most innovative idea in visible learning is the creation of an individualized virtual learning environment for each student. This environment can only be designed after developing the student's profile, with the teacher collaborating with the class supervisor, school psychologist, counselor, parents, and the student themselves. The virtual environment may include diverse resources – presentations, videos, educational games, and interactive exercises – and allows for personalized feedback, enhancing the student's motivation and engagement [13, p. 154].

Through this environment, teachers can monitor progress in real time and intervene promptly in case of difficulties. Its flexibility and accessibility facilitate continuous learning tailored to the needs of each student.

Furthermore, the virtual environment contributes to students' socio-emotional development: effective communication, collaboration, reciprocal feedback, and emotional intelligence are encouraged, helping with stress management and conflict resolution.

Teachers implementing visible learning focus on three key questions: "Where am I going?", "How do I get there?", and "What do I aim to achieve?". They identify appropriate teaching methods, create an optimal classroom climate, monitor progress, and provide constructive feedback, fostering self-respect and respect for other students.

Modern Methods for Literary Text Reception

Traditionally, engaging with literary texts has been an individual and intimate experience. Modern methods open new perspectives for analysis, providing students and teachers with sophisticated tools:

- *Computerized text analysis*: computational linguistics and text mining to identify themes and stylistic features.

- *Data visualization*: semantic networks and heat maps that highlight structures and key areas of the text.

- *Virtual and augmented reality*: interactive experiences for exploring the narrative universe and visualizing character relationships.

- *Digital collaboration tools*: online platforms and digital annotations that facilitate discussion and idea exchange.

The advantages of these methods include deeper textual analysis, personalization of the reading experience, and facilitation of collaboration and knowledge sharing. Moreover, they open new avenues for exploring less-studied literary aspects, contributing to an innovative and dynamic reading experience.

New Method for Literary Text Reception

We propose the ILIADA method, which does not replace existing methods but complements them through integrated activities aimed at developing students' competencies. This approach involves solving real-world problems in diverse learning environments and producing concrete academic outcomes. By integration, we mean coordinating and combining various elements into a functional whole.

What is ILIADA? ILIADA stands for History, Language/Literature, Engineering, Art, Digitalization, Action. The concept integrates these domains into an interdisciplinary project, enabling students to apply knowledge and skills in varied contexts.

- *Cultural reference*: The name "Iliad" evokes Homer's epic and highlights the educational and cultural value of the project.

- *Interdisciplinarity*: Just as the epic combines historical and mythological narrative, the ILIADA method integrates multiple disciplines, reflecting the complexity of knowledge.

- *Attractiveness and memorability*: The short and suggestive name facilitates retention and student engagement.

- *Symbiosis between past and future*: Combining traditional disciplines with modern fields such as digitalization and engineering emphasizes continuity and adaptability of knowledge.

- *Versatility and adaptability*: The project can be customized according to students' needs and interests.

- *Educational resonance*: The term suggests an epic journey of knowledge, inspiring students to become heroes in their own educational process.

Integrated activities are carried out over several weeks, involving heterogeneous student groups and collaboration among teachers from different specializations. In a cross-curricular context, the objectives pursued include discovery, learning through practice, teamwork, self-awareness, and overcoming personal limits.

Activities can be conducted in groups of 4, 6, or 8 participants, with mentor teachers supporting less familiar subjects. The heterogeneous age composition is recommended to reflect real-life diversity and stimulate cooperation.

Example of a Project:

Theme: FRIENDSHIP

Dilemma: "You have the chance to travel back in time and listen to a secret conversation between Mihai Eminescu and Ion Creangă. How would this experience influence our imagination and creativity?"

Title: The Secret File of the Great Classics

- *School Products*: research magazines, educational infographics, video projects, digital portfolios, multimedia presentations, models, posters, essays, applications, or websites.

Domain HISTORY: Students research the lives of Eminescu and Creangă, investigate contemporary publications, analyze memoirs and letters, describe 19th-century lifestyles, reconstruct the atmosphere, and synthesize collected data to corroborate and transcribe it into a manuscript.

Domain ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: Students write messages and leaflets, prepare speeches, start a debate club, imagine conversations between writers, create infographics and posters, compose dramatic texts, and perform them in roles.

Domain ENGINEERING: Students set up a TV studio, install microphones and lighting, design and sew period costumes, and create models and exhibitions.

Domain ART: Students draw, paint, photograph, decorate the stage, improvise performances, and design graphics for models.

Domain DIGITALIZATION: Students program and edit, create digital collages, digital books, videos, and photo albums.

Domain ACTION: Students publicly present their outputs, organize interactive exhibitions and cultural weeks, distribute leaflets, and promote project activities.

Examples of Dilemmas for the Project

- *Identity and Cultural Heritage*: How does knowing the lives and works of writers influence students' cultural identity?
- *Technology and Social Change*: How did 19th-century technologies change daily life?
- *Evolving Values and Traditions*: How have societal values evolved, and what role did major historical events play?
- *Adapting to Change*: How did people manage social and material changes in the past?
- *Innovation and Creativity*: What were the literary and technical innovations, and how did they influence culture?
- *Memory and Remembrance*: How do contemporaries preserve classical works, and how can they be passed to future generations?
- *Knowledge and Lifelong Learning*: What lessons about language and literature can we learn from the lives of great writers?

Examples of Tasks for Each Domain

HISTORY

- Conduct an imaginary interview with the two writers, using historical documents and testimonies.
- Create a visual timeline of significant historical events in the writers' lives.
- Write an essay on the impact of historical events on Eminescu and Creangă.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on an important 19th-century historical event.

ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

- Write a short fictional story about a day in the writers' childhood.
- Compose a poem inspired by the writers' lives and testimonies.
- Write an argumentative essay on friendship using examples from their biographies.
- Create imaginary interviews with Eminescu and Creangă.

ENGINEERING

- Build a model of a technology used in the writers' childhood.
- Design and construct a model of the Humulești house.
- Create a simple device illustrating a technological innovation from that period.

ART

- Create collages of photos and artistic elements inspired by the writers' era.
- Paint or draw illustrations representing stories and memories.
- Organize a school art exhibition.
- Produce a short documentary film about the writers' lives.

DIGITALIZATION

- Create a digital album with photos and documents.
- Make digital presentations comparing modern technologies with 19th-century ones.
- Design a mobile app for collecting and organizing literary texts.

ACTION

- Organize a project launch day and present creations.
- Perform role-playing and dramatizations of literary fragments.
- Hold a cultural event and awareness campaign in the community.
- Role of the Student in the Project

The student presents, discusses, demonstrates, explains, argues, interprets, organizes, coordinates, creates, promotes, participates, collaborates, develops, publishes, and communicates. In this way, the literary text becomes a desire for knowledge, and the student becomes an active participant in their own education, developing self-esteem and interest in cultural values.

Conclusions

Visible learning emerges, within the landscape of contemporary education, not merely as an effective instructional approach, but as a genuine shift in paradigm in the teaching of Romanian language and lit-

erature. It redirects the focus from the simple transmission of knowledge toward a conscious, reflective, and continuously monitored construction of learning, where the student assumes an active role, while the teacher becomes a facilitator and guide of the educational process. In a society defined by rapid change and immediate access to information, the relevance of learning is no longer determined by the quantity of acquired knowledge, but by the ability to use it critically and creatively in real-life contexts [17, p. 24].

The implementation of visible learning principles in teaching Romanian leads not only to improved academic performance, but also to the development of essential competencies necessary for shaping autonomous individuals. Clearly defined objectives, ongoing feedback, and active student engagement contribute to reducing school-related anxiety and enhancing intrinsic motivation for learning [17, p. 87]. As a result, the educational process becomes more transparent, predictable, and genuinely oriented toward meaningful progress rather than solely toward final outcomes.

The ILIADA method, introduced in this study, adds significant value through its integrative and interdisciplinary nature. It demonstrates that teaching Romanian language and literature can move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, becoming a space where culture, technology, creativity, and action intersect. Through authentic, reality-connected activities, students develop not only linguistic competencies but also complex social, digital, and cognitive skills [7, p. 112].

Furthermore, the integration of technology and modern tools within visible learning supports the personalization of education and enables real-time monitoring of student progress. Virtual learning environments, digital portfolios, and collaborative tasks contribute to the creation of an educational ecosystem tailored to the needs of today's learners, without undermining the fundamental values of education [16, p. 56].

Another key aspect highlighted is the evolving role of the teacher, who must demonstrate flexibility, openness to innovation, and the ability to engage in constant reflection on their own teaching practice. The real impact of the educational act becomes the central criterion of effectiveness, while success is defined by the visible progress of each student, regardless of the educational context [17, p. 143].

In conclusion, visible learning provides a coherent and adaptable framework for modernizing the teaching of Romanian language and literature, aligning it with the demands of 21st-century education. By fostering transparency, collaboration, and reflection, this approach supports the development of competent, autonomous learners capable of navigating the challenges of an ever-changing world. Its consistent implementation in teaching practice represents not only an opportunity, but a necessity for ensuring a relevant and high-quality educational system.

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INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN TEACHERS' MOTIVATION AND STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Motivation represents one of the central psychological factors that influence the efficiency of the educational process and the quality of the implementation of the school curriculum. The article analyzes the relationship of interdependence between teachers' motivation and students' motivation, highlighting the psychological mechanisms through which they mutually influence each other within the educational context. It is argued that the implementation of the curriculum is not only a technical act of applying normative contents, but also a dynamic process mediated by the attitudes, beliefs, values, and motivational states of the actors involved. The implications regarding teachers' and students' motivation for monitoring the psychological dimension of the curriculum are presented.

Keywords: *motivation, teacher, student, curriculum, educational climate, academic performance.*

INTERDEPENDENȚA DINTRE MOTIVAȚIA PROFESORILOR ȘI MOTIVAȚIA ELEVILOR ÎN REALIZAREA CURRICULUMULUI ȘCOLAR

Motivația reprezintă unul dintre factorii psihologici centrali care influențează performanța procesului educațional și calitatea implementării curriculumului școlar. Articolul analizează relația de interdependență dintre motivația cadrelor didactice și motivația elevilor, evidențiind mecanismele psihologice prin care acestea se influențează reciproc în context educațional. Se argumentează că realizarea curriculumului nu este doar un act tehnic de aplicare a conținuturilor normative, ci un proces dinamic, mediat de personalitatea profesorului, precum și de atitudini, convingeri, valori și stări motivaționale ale tuturor actorilor implicați în procesul educațional. Sunt prezentate și analizate implicațiile privind motivația cadrelor didactice și a elevilor pentru monitorizarea dimensiunii psihologice a curriculumului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *motivație, profesor, elev, curriculum, climat educațional, performanță academică.*

Introduction

The implementation of the school curriculum involves more than simply covering content and achieving operational objectives. It implies a complex process of interaction between teacher and student, in which the motivation of both actors becomes decisive for the quality of learning. From a psychological perspective, the curriculum is mediated by cognitive, affective, and volitional processes, and motivation represents the internal energy that directs, sustains, and regulates both teaching activity and learning.

From this perspective, the role of teacher motivation in the implementation of the curriculum is very important, because the way in which the teacher understands and capitalizes on the formal curriculum directly influences the organization and development of the educational process. Thus, as Oana Popa emphasizes in the work *The Teacher and the Curriculum: Connections, Dissonances, Constraints*, "the way teachers relate to the formal curriculum (knowledge, adherence, level of confidence in the possibilities of implementing the formal curriculum) interrelates with the way teachers assume their own role in the implementation of the formal curriculum (awareness of the role and its nature, attitude towards their own role)" [Apud 1, p.19]. The author also highlights that the way in which the teacher relates to the formal curriculum directly influences the way in which teaching activity is carried out. This depends on how well the teacher understands the philosophy and principles of the curriculum, the extent to which these principles are accepted and supported, the level of confidence in the possibility of applying them in practice, as well as the manner in which the teacher assumes their own role in the implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, the

implementation of the curriculum does not represent merely a technical application of curricular prescriptions, but rather a process mediated by the teacher's interpretation and professional motivation, which gives meaning and coherence to teaching and learning activities.

The interdependence between teachers' motivation and students' motivation must be analyzed systematically, within a paradigm that integrates the psychological dimension of the curriculum with the relational dynamics in the classroom. In this context, teacher motivation is not merely an individual factor, but a catalytic element of the educational climate, directly influencing students' engagement, interest, and perseverance in learning activities. The teacher's attitudes, expectations, and teaching style can create either a stimulating learning environment or, conversely, a demotivating one. At the same time, students' reactions and level of participation feedback into the teacher's motivation, shaping a dynamic process of mutual influence. Thus, educational success largely depends on the quality of this bidirectional motivational relationship, which fosters the development of a climate of trust and recognition of effort. From this perspective, curriculum design should explicitly include mechanisms that support and strengthen the motivation of both parties involved in the educational process.

The interdependence between teachers' motivation and students' motivation in the implementation of the school curriculum can also be explained through the theoretical perspective developed by Joseph Nuttin. He was a Belgian psychologist. Nuttin is known for his important contributions to the psychology of motivation and personality psychology. In his theory, motivation is understood as a system oriented toward goals and future perspectives, which organizes and directs an individual's behavior in relation to the objectives set. From this perspective, the interaction between teacher and student in the educational process becomes a space of mutual influence, where the motivations of both parties are shaped and supported in the effective realization of curricular activities. Joseph Nuttin considers motivation to be the dynamic element of the interaction between the individual and the environment. According to him, motivation directs behavior toward situations or objects that are perceived as important or desirable. From this perspective, motivation can be understood as a cognitive and dynamic structure. It guides human actions toward the achievement of concrete goals.

The origin of motivation cannot be reduced solely to internal or external stimuli, but derives from the dynamic character of the relationship between the individual and the surrounding environment. Motivation can be understood as a set of internal, structured, and interdependent factors that condition and regulate human behavior [1]. Nuttin's approach to motivation as a dynamic process between the individual and the environment can be applied directly in the educational context, where the interaction between teacher and student becomes central. A student's motivation is not determined solely by learning tasks or external stimuli, but is also built and sustained through the relationship with the teacher, who shapes learning objectives and conditions. In this framework, the teacher acts not only as a provider of information but also as a facilitator of motivation, guiding the student toward concrete and relevant goals within the curriculum. The interdependence between teacher motivation and student motivation thus becomes an essential factor in the effective implementation of the school curriculum, generating a stimulating learning climate and supporting students' perseverance and engagement. Therefore, integrating a dynamic perspective on motivation can guide teaching strategies and curriculum planning, ensuring alignment between the teacher's effort, the student's commitment, and the desired educational outcomes.

A study conducted by De Volder and Lens examined the relationship between students' future time perspective and their academic performance. The findings showed that students who attach greater importance to long-term educational and professional goals usually achieve better academic results. At the same time, these students perceive learning activities and the effort invested in studying as necessary for achieving their goals [3].

These findings also have important practical value. Teachers who support students in setting clear and meaningful long-term goals, as well as in understanding the connection between effort and results, can contribute to the creation of a stimulating learning environment. The study highlights that teachers' and students' motivation support each other and should be connected with effective teaching strategies.

Teacher motivation plays a fundamental role in the educational process, directly influencing how the

curriculum is interpreted, adapted, and translated into concrete activities for students. It represents a psychological process that enables the initiation, goal-orientation, and sustained energy of individual activity. Through motivation, human behavior acquires direction and meaning, determining the choice of teaching strategies, engagement in activities, and the maintenance of the effort necessary to achieve educational objectives. Thus, teacher motivation not only stimulates personal performance but is also directly reflected in the quality of the teaching process and in students' outcomes, highlighting its importance in the successful implementation of school activities.

The Romanian psychologist Ion Neacșu, in a study on the relationships between curriculum, competencies, motivation, learning, and academic outcomes, highlights the importance of student motivation for success in the learning process. Teachers have at their disposal numerous effective motivational strategies that can transform student engagement and stimulate curiosity and the desire to learn. As Neacșu emphasizes, "the place of natural learning behavior will be taken by its opposite, the behavior of rejecting learning," which demonstrates that the correct application of positive techniques can prevent disinterest and reinforce learning habits [Apud 4, p.28]. The use of subtle and varied motivational methods supports the development of students' competencies, increases their engagement, and contributes to better academic performance, transforming the educational process into an active and stimulating experience. Therefore, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum, teachers use different motivational strategies. These strategies are aimed at increasing students' participation and interest in learning. The main types of these strategies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Motivation Through Which the Teacher Stimulates the Student for Curriculum Implementation

Type of Motivation	Description	Examples/Techniques Applied by the Teacher	Effect on the Student
Intrinsic Motivation	Based on the student's natural interests and curiosity, passion for the subject, and the pleasure of learning.	Encouraging exploration, creative projects, autonomy in choosing topics, connecting content with students' interests.	Increases active engagement, curiosity, and desire to learn; supports sustainable academic performance.
Extrinsic Motivation	Based on external factors that influence the student's behavior, such as rewards or sanctions.	Grades, prizes, certificates, public recognition, positive feedback.	Stimulates effort and adherence to curriculum requirements, but may be less sustainable if rewards are absent.
Motivation through Negative Sanctions	Techniques that discourage undesirable behaviors, based on fear or punishment.	Reprimands, low grades, threats, warnings.	May lead to temporary compliance but risks rejection of learning and a reduction in natural motivation.
Motivation through Positive Sanctions	Subtle and constructive techniques that increase motivation and positive behavior.	Praise, encouragement, recognition of progress, symbolic rewards, interactive activities.	Increases engagement and the pleasure of learning, fostering consistent and sustainable performance.

Starting from the concepts of the cognitive approach to motivation and goal theory, teacher motivation can be understood as an internal process through which the teacher's professional and personal needs are transformed, through cognitive elaboration, into concrete educational goals that guide and regulate teaching activity.

From this perspective, the teacher is not only responsible for implementing the curriculum, but also plays an active role in organizing and directing the teaching process according to the goals that he or she sets. Teachers' professional needs, such as the desire for achievement, recognition, teaching effectiveness,

or personal growth, are initially broad and general. Through reflection and analysis, these needs are gradually transformed into clear educational objectives, such as improving students' academic results, developing their competencies, creating a positive classroom climate, or ensuring the efficient implementation of the curriculum. The establishment of instructional goals is accompanied by the planning of the means and strategies necessary to achieve them. The teacher anticipates teaching methods, learning activities, forms of assessment, and educational resources that may lead to the attainment of the proposed objectives. In this process, the teacher continuously evaluates the results obtained in relation to the established criteria and may adjust both the strategies used and the initial goals, depending on the educational context and the particular characteristics of the students.

Teacher motivation is closely related to the capacity for self-regulation and professional development. The teacher assumes responsibility for achieving educational goals, demonstrating initiative, flexibility, and creativity in adapting teaching activities to the concrete situations in the classroom. This internal regulation of professional behavior contributes to the individualization of the pedagogical style and to increasing the effectiveness of the teaching–learning process.

Therefore, from the perspective of goal theories, teacher motivation represents a dynamic process through which professional needs are transformed into pedagogical goals, and through planning, reflection, and self-regulation the teacher directs his or her activity toward achieving educational objectives and supporting students' development.

Students' Motivation – An Indicator of Curriculum Relevance

Students' motivation shows how relevant, understandable, and meaningful the curriculum is for them. Motivated students usually show real interest in learning activities, make consistent efforts in completing academic tasks, use different learning and self-regulation strategies, and continue working even when they face difficulties.

Research in the field emphasizes that students' motivation is influenced by several important educational factors. One of these is the teacher's instructional style, which can increase students' interest and involvement in learning. Another important factor is the clarity of learning objectives, because clear goals help students better understand the purpose of school activities. The practical value of the taught content also plays an important role, since students become more motivated when they see how knowledge can be applied in real-life situations. In addition, opportunities for active participation and autonomy encourage responsibility, initiative, and authentic engagement in the learning process.

The authors Isabel Soares, Maria Salomé Lemos, and Cristina Almeida, in the study *Attachment and Motivational Strategies in Adolescence: Exploring Links*, analyze the motivational strategies of adolescents, specifically high school students, starting from the cognitive perspective on motivation and from the way individuals set goals and organize their behavior in order to cope with difficult situations. Based on five dimensions of analysis—intentionality, behavior, coherence between goal and behavior, adaptability, and emotions—the authors identify four main types of motivational strategies: the flexible strategy, the rigid strategy, the passive strategy, and the disorganized strategy [Apud 5, p. 13].

The flexible and rigid motivational strategies are considered constructive, as they reflect active, goal-oriented behavior. Students employing a flexible strategy demonstrate cognitive and behavioral engagement: they analyze situations, seek information, evaluate alternatives, and set priorities to find appropriate solutions. In contrast, the rigid strategy involves the active pursuit of goals, but in a less adaptable manner, characterized by limited cognitive elaboration and a tendency to apply the same modes of action regardless of the situation. Conversely, the passive and disorganized strategies are less adaptive. The passive strategy is characterized by the absence of a clear goal, mechanical behaviors, and low involvement in problem-solving. The disorganized strategy reflects incoherence, impulsivity, and difficulties in establishing and maintaining a coherent course of action, often accompanied by intense negative emotions. Research findings indicate that the passive strategy is the most frequent (36%), followed by the disorganized strategy (23%), the flexible strategy (25%), and the rigid strategy (15.9%). These results highlight the diversity of ways in which adolescents organize their motivational behavior and emphasize the importance of cognitive and emotional processes in guiding their actions [Apud 5, p. 14].

Students' motivation can also be explained and understood by reference to the phases of the motivational process, as students' learning behavior follows, in a similar way, the stages of goal-setting, initiation, maintenance, and disengagement [6]. In the educational context, these phases reflect how students set learning goals, initiate school activities, sustain effort throughout the learning process, and, at times, give up or redirect their efforts.

In the goal-setting phase, the student establishes learning objectives and directs effort toward specific tasks or subjects. Personal interests, academic aspirations, as well as the influence of the educational environment, the teacher, and the social context, all contribute to defining these goals. At this stage, the teacher plays an important role by clearly formulating instructional objectives, ensuring the relevance of the content, and stimulating interest in knowledge, which contributes to the positive orientation of students' motivation.

The initiation of motivation occurs when the student moves from intention to action, becoming actively engaged in learning activities. At this stage, the level of engagement depends on the importance the student assigns to the goal and on their confidence in their own abilities to succeed. The teacher can facilitate this phase by providing accessible tasks, creating opportunities for success, and fostering students' sense of self-efficacy.

The maintenance of motivation is the phase in which the student sustains effort over a longer period to achieve the proposed objectives. In the learning process, this phase is supported by the continuous feedback provided by the teacher, recognition of progress achieved, and the existence of a positive educational climate. Perseverance, the ability to overcome difficulties, and social support from teachers and peers contribute to sustaining students' engagement in learning activities.

In the disengagement phase, the student may reduce or abandon effort toward achieving a particular goal, either because the goal has already been attained, because the obstacles are perceived as too great, or because the goal is no longer considered relevant. In the educational context, disengagement can occur when students do not understand the content, do not receive adequate support, or do not perceive the usefulness of learning activities. However, this phase can also serve an adaptive function, allowing the student to redirect effort toward other, more meaningful educational objectives [6].

Student Motivation and Academic Performance

Student motivation represents a means for achieving academic performance and fulfilling the curriculum, as it stimulates active engagement in the learning process, perseverance in completing learning tasks, and orientation toward the attainment of educational objectives. In school activities, students typically act under the influence of a motivational constellation, with their behavior often determined by multiple motives. These motives interconnect like a parallelogram of forces, generating a certain level of activation and engagement in the learning process. Within this motivational constellation, momentary factors can be distinguished, which influence students' participation in immediate learning activities, and enduring factors, which sustain interest in learning and engagement in school activities over the long term.

Among the momentary factors are interest in a particular lesson, the way the teacher organizes the instructional activity, the classroom atmosphere, the feedback received, or the desire to obtain a good grade. In contrast, enduring factors include a stable interest in knowledge, educational values developed over time, students' academic and professional aspirations, as well as support provided by the family and the educational environment. Together, these factors contribute to maintaining motivation for learning and to achieving curricular objectives.

Motivation should not be considered an end in itself, but rather a means to achieve performance. The relationship between the level of motivation and the performance attained is influenced by the difficulty of the task a person must perform. Psychological studies show that, when tasks are simple, repetitive, or routine and offer few solution options, an increase in motivation generally leads to improved performance. In contrast, for complex tasks that require creativity, analysis, and multiple possible solutions, an increase in motivation initially enhances performance, but beyond a certain point, it may begin to decline. Thus, in simple activities, increasing motivation does not affect the ability to identify correct responses.

However, in complex tasks, the presence of multiple alternative courses of action makes the decision-making process more difficult, and excessive motivation can reduce critical analysis and negatively influence decision-making. The relationship between the level of motivational activation and the performance achieved is not directly proportional throughout the task. As the level of activation increases, performance tends to improve until it reaches an optimal threshold. Beyond this level, further increases in motivation can lead to a decrease in performance, and overmotivation may produce negative effects on outcomes.

Therefore, the effectiveness of an activity does not depend solely on the relationship between the intensity of motivation and task complexity, but also on the alignment of motivation with the level of task difficulty. The better the match between the level of motivation and the difficulty of the activity, the higher the likelihood of achieving better results. In this context, the concept of the “motivational optimum” refers to the appropriate level of motivation that facilitates the attainment of high performance. According to the Yerkes–Dodson law, this optimal level varies depending on the complexity and difficulty of the task.

Recent research indicates that the law of the motivational optimum requires certain nuances. Specifically, the relationship between the level of activation and performance does not apply identically in the case of intrinsic cognitive motivation. When a person demonstrates genuine interest or passion for a particular domain of knowledge, task efficiency can increase even without a significant rise in the level of activation. Furthermore, for simple, repetitive, or easily automated tasks, the level of activation required for efficient task completion may be lower, which can sometimes hinder the achievement of optimal performance. In these situations, the perception of task difficulty plays an important role. If a task is perceived as too easy, it may be underestimated and approached with less attention, whereas if it is perceived as very difficult, it can generate tension or negative emotions prior to its execution. Underestimating a task may lead to neglect, while overestimating it can provoke stress or anxiety. Therefore, for the effective completion of simple tasks, a slight increase in motivation before and during the activity can be beneficial.

At the same time, studies highlight that the optimal level of motivation also varies according to the characteristics of each individual’s nervous system. Individuals with a strong and balanced nervous system generally manage difficult and demanding tasks more effectively, whereas those with a more sensitive or less balanced nervous system may encounter difficulties in mobilizing themselves efficiently to complete complex tasks.

Mechanisms of Motivational Interdependence

The interdependence between teachers’ motivation and students’ motivation can be explained through several psychological mechanisms:

1. Social Modeling – Students adopt the teacher’s attitudes and level of engagement.
2. Classroom Emotional Climate – Motivated teachers create a safe environment that supports initiative and self-expression.
3. Bidirectional Feedback – Positive responses from students reinforce teacher motivation, while instructional success strengthens the sense of professional efficacy.
4. Reciprocal Self-Regulation – Both the teacher and students adjust their behaviors based on each other’s responses.

Thus, motivation operates within a circular loop: a motivated teacher stimulates motivated students, and motivated students, in turn, reinforce the teacher’s motivation. Through their teaching style, the organization of activities, and the type of feedback provided, the teacher creates a framework in which students’ motivation can be either stimulated or diminished. At the same time, students’ level of engagement, interest, and reactions influence the teacher’s motivation, prompting adjustments in teaching strategies and interaction with the class.

This interdependence manifests through several mechanisms. First, the relational mechanism, in which positive relationships and a climate of trust between teacher and students foster the emergence of intrinsic motivation. Second, the cognitive-regulatory mechanism, through which the teacher provides feedback, sets clear objectives, and structures learning activities, contributing to students’ motivational self-regulation. Third, the emotional mechanism, in which the teacher’s attitude, enthusiasm, and recognition of students’ progress generate positive affective states that support engagement in learning.

Teacher and student motivation operate within a reciprocal system of influences, in which behaviors, attitudes, and teaching strategies contribute to the creation of an educational climate that fosters interest in learning and the achievement of academic performance.

To stimulate students' motivation, the teacher plays a role in developing a set of competencies that help students become more aware of their own learning process and more engaged in school activities. An important first aspect is supporting students in the process of self-knowledge by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their preferences, interests, and expectations regarding learning.

The teacher should encourage students to set their own learning goals and to develop self-direction skills by providing opportunities for personal choice in completing school tasks. At the same time, it is important for the teacher to guide students in planning and prioritizing activities that contribute to achieving the proposed objectives.

Another important role of the teacher's activity is the development of students' self-regulation capacities, at affective, cognitive, and behavioral levels. In this regard, the teacher can support students in monitoring their own progress relative to established goals, reflecting on the results obtained, and adjusting their learning strategies. Through such actions, the teacher contributes to strengthening motivation for learning and to students' active engagement in achieving educational objectives.

In addition, to enhance students' motivation, the teacher organizes learning activities in a manner that draws on their interests and real-world experiences. Teachers' involvement in fostering intrinsic motivation can be achieved by presenting, during lessons, problems or situations inspired by real life. In this way, students are able to better understand the usefulness of the knowledge acquired, which contributes to the development of their personality and to the formation of competencies necessary for professional activity and social life. An increase in learning motivation is supported by enhancing the quality of the teaching process. In this context, the teacher should focus on identifying and prioritizing key information, preventing excessive content, and guiding the instructional process toward a thorough and meaningful understanding of knowledge. Employing an active-participatory teaching style, which encourages dialogue, cooperation, and student engagement in learning activities, contributes to strengthening the teacher-student relationship.

At the same time, emphasizing the practical dimension of the taught content, through the use of concrete examples, practical exercises, or case studies, helps students establish the connection between theory and practice. Through such approaches, the teacher creates a stimulating educational environment that promotes students' active engagement and the development of motivation for learning.

Conclusion

Teacher motivation and student motivation constitute primary factors in the process of implementing the school curriculum. The relationship between these two forms of motivation is dynamic, reciprocal, and dependent on the educational context, with each influencing and supporting the other. The teacher's level of engagement, attitude, and enthusiasm can stimulate students' interest and active participation, while their positive responses, in turn, contribute to reinforcing the teacher's professional motivation.

The results of the theoretical reflection indicate that the effective implementation of the curriculum does not depend solely on the structure and content of curricular documents, but also on how these are applied in educational practice. The quality of education is largely determined by the engagement and motivation of educational actors, who transform the formal curriculum into an authentic learning experience. Thus, the process of curriculum implementation acquires a relational and participatory character, with students becoming co-creators of the educational experience rather than passive recipients of information. Integrating the motivational dimension into curriculum development and monitoring becomes a crucial condition for enhancing the efficiency of the educational process. This implies incorporating psychological indicators into the assessment of curriculum implementation, providing teachers with training in motivation and strategies for fostering learning interest, supporting teachers' professional autonomy, and ensuring that curricular content corresponds to students' actual needs and interests.

An effective curriculum is not limited to the transmission of knowledge; rather, it creates learning con-

texts that generate meaning, engagement, and a desire for progress, leveraging teacher and student motivation as fundamental resources for educational development.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL ANXIETY AND LEARNING MOTIVATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION

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The present study aims to analyze the characteristics of school anxiety and learning motivation among primary school students, as well as potential gender differences in the manifestation of these variables. The research was conducted on a sample of 108 students aged 9 to 10 years. The findings indicate an overall high level of learning motivation, with the majority of students reporting high or very high levels of academic motivation. At the same time, the results reveal a moderate level of school anxiety within the investigated sample, as most students display normal levels of anxiety. Comparative analysis revealed statistically significant gender differences in the level of school anxiety, with girls reporting higher scores than boys. In contrast, no statistically significant gender differences were found in learning motivation.

Keywords: *digitalization, school anxiety, learning motivation, primary school students, gender differences.*

PARTICULARITĂȚI ALE ANXIETĂȚII ȘCOLARE ȘI MOTIVAȚIEI PENTRU ÎNVĂȚARE LA COPIII DE VÂRSTĂ ȘCOLARĂ MICĂ ÎN CONTEXTUL DIGITALIZĂRII

Studiul de față are ca scop analiza particularităților anxietății școlare și ale motivației pentru învățare la elevii de vârstă școlară mică, precum și posibilele diferențe în manifestarea acestor variabile în funcție de aspectul gender. Cercetarea a fost realizată pe un eșantion de 108 elevi cu vârste cuprinse între 9 și 10 ani. Rezultatele indică un nivel general ridicat al motivației pentru învățare, majoritatea elevilor prezentând niveluri înalte sau foarte înalte ale motivației școlare. În ceea ce privește anxietatea școlară, rezultatele nuanțează un nivel moderat al acesteia la nivel eșantionului investigat, majoritatea elevilor manifestând niveluri normale ale anxietății. Analiza comparativă a scos în evidență diferențe semnificative statistic între fete și băieți în nivelul anxietății școlare, fetele raportând valori mai ridicate, în timp ce în cazul motivației pentru învățare nu au fost identificate diferențe semnificative între cele două grupuri.

Cuvinte-cheie: *digitalizare, anxietate școlară, motivație pentru învățare, elevi de vârstă școlară mică, diferențe gender.*

Introducere

The past few decades have brought fundamental changes to how education is organised and experienced. Digital technologies have not only reshaped the logistics of teaching - the tools, platforms, planning and managing classroom activities, scheduling and resources - but have progressively altered the cognitive and emotional landscape in which children learn [22, p.222]. This shift is particularly visible at the level of primary schooling, where digital integration has moved from an occasional supplement to a routine instructional expectation. International research increasingly reveals that digital resources outline not just how content is delivered, but how do students relate to learning itself - their engagement, their motivation and their effective responses to academic tasks [10]. In the Moldovan primary school context, this integration has taken distinctive and multifaceted forms. Teachers at this level regularly draw on platforms such as *educatieinteractiva.md*, Deploy visually dynamic tools like Canva for lesson design and also incorporate interactive assessment applications: Kahoot, Wordwall, Quizzes, Menti.com into formative practice. These tools are not pedagogically neutral; each makes distinct demands on attention, executive functioning, and emotional regulation in children aged 8 to 10. What remains underexplored, however, is how this digitalized teaching environment interacts with the motivational and affective profiles of younger primary school children specifically. The present study addresses precisely this gap.

The digitalization of education has intrinsically modified the conditions under which students encounter information, relate to their teachers and construct meaning alongside their peers, generating in this way a new set of psychological and pedagogical challenges that surpass the merely technical dimension of instructional change. While this transformation generates new opportunities for enriched learning experiences, it also introduces novel challenges related to children's emotional and motivational adjustment within the educational environment. Recent empirical studies indicate that the effects of digital technologies on students cannot be categorized as uniformly beneficial or detrimental; rather, their impact is contingent upon the quality of pedagogical integration and the relational context in which learning occurs [4]. Consequently, the affective and motivational dimensions of school activity emerge as critical determinants in understanding how students perceive and engage with the educational process [26]. School anxiety and learning motivation represent two pivotal psychological variables that significantly influence students' engagement in academic activities, educational performance, and their broader adaptation to the demands of the school environment [18]. During the early years of primary schooling, children pass through a developmental stage marked by the progressive formation of learning motivation, the consolidation of an emerging self-concept, and the gradual acquisition of social-emotional competences. This developmental phase may also be accompanied by the emergence of anxiety-related experiences associated with evaluative situations, peer relationships, or academic expectations [7]. Accordingly, examining the specific characteristics of school anxiety and learning motivation among primary school children becomes not merely relevant but necessary for understanding how younger students adapt or struggle to adapt to the evolving demands of the contemporary educational landscape.

Anxiety

The emotional difficulties most consistently documented in developmental psychology research. Anxiety occupies a particularly prominent place, appearing with notable frequency across childhood and adolescence and constitutes one of the leading concerns that bring families to seek mental health services for their young ones [2]. Within the specialized literature, anxiety is broadly conceptualized as a multi-dimensional affective state characterized by apprehension, psychological tension, and persistent worry, typically arising in response to situations perceived as threatening, unpredictable, or exceeding their available coping resources [1]. Empirical investigations conducted within the Romanian academic context converge in suggesting that anxiety may manifest as early as childhood, developing in close association with the progressive formation of emotional competences and with children's capacity for adaptation to the social and educational environments in which they are embedded. [3]. Childhood represents a critical developmental stage for the emergence and consolidation of anxiety-related symptoms, as children encounter substantial cognitive, emotional, and social transitions. During this period, the school environment becomes one of the primary frameworks in which feelings of unease and worry may arise, particularly in assessment-based situations and circumstances involving academic performance [18]. Thus, studies focusing on the mental health of Romanian students indicate that anxiety constitutes one of the most frequently undergone psychological concerns among children and adolescents, with an estimated prevalence of approximately 13% for anxiety disorders [6]. A UNICEF report analyzing the well-being of students in Romania in the same way emphasizes that academic pressure, evaluative procedures, and broader transformations within the educational system may contribute to elevated levels of stress and anxiety among students. These findings underline the importance of supporting social-emotional development within the school environment [25]. Concurrently, research conducted in the Republic of Moldova highlights that anxiety among school-aged children may be influenced by a myriad of social and educational determinants, including family climate, peer relationships, and experiences related to academic evaluation [20]. International empirical studies further corroborate these observations, consistently demonstrating that anxiety disorders constitute one of the most widespread mental health concerns encountered across childhood and adolescence, and may significantly impair their academic performance, social relationships, and family interactions [13]. Taken together, these findings indicate that anxiety represents a versatile psychological phenomenon molded by the dynamic interchange of individual, educational, and

social determinants. This interplay explains the growing scholarly interest in examining the mechanisms through which anxiety manifests and develops within educational contexts.

School anxiety

Within the broader landscape of anxiety research, the specialised literature draws an important conceptual distinction by identifying school anxiety as a distinct and contextually situated form of anxiety. It arises specifically within educational settings and is characterised by recurrent experiences of apprehension, psychological tension, and concern triggered by evaluative situations, academic demands, or the interpersonal dynamics that unfold within the school environment [23]. This specific manifestation of anxiety regularly surfaces as students attempt to adapt to the expectations of the learning process, to the normative structure of the school environment, and to the pressures linked to scholastic achievement. From this perspective, school anxiety is conceptualized as an intricate psychological phenomenon encompassing both fears and negative emotional reactions associated not only to learning activities but also to the social dynamics built in the educational setting [15]. Research in educational psychology provides compelling evidence that elevated levels of school anxiety may diminish students' interest in academic activities, thus narrowing their engagement with the learning process and ultimately interfering with the harmonious and balanced development of the child's personality as a whole. It is also significantly important to mention that school anxiety does not emerge in a relational vacuum, it is deeply embedded in the concrete circumstances of educational life, shaped by the nature of students' relationship with their teachers, and constituting, through these mechanisms, a critical factor in the consolidation of emotional and adaptive difficulties within the school environment [15, 23].

International research perspectives lend further weight to these observations. Empirical studies reveal that school anxiety is frequently associated with evaluative contexts and with students' perceptions of their own academic competencies [18]. Findings from research examining school anxiety indicate that elevated levels of anxiety negatively impact academic performance, learning motivation, and students' mental health and emotional stability [23]. Overall, the academic literature underlines that school anxiety embodies a multifaceted phenomenon, determined by the dynamic interaction of individual, educational, and social factors, all of which substantially influence students' capacity to adapt to the demands of the contemporary educational environment.

Learning motivation

Learning motivation occupies a position of particular significance in educational activity, as it considerably influences the initiation, direction, and maintenance of behaviors involved in the accomplishment of academic tasks. Within the context of the educational process, motivation may be conceptualized as an intricate configuration of internal and external processes that predispose students to actively participate in learning activities, invest consistent effort, and demonstrate perseverance in the pursuit of educational objectives [24]. Research in the field of educational psychology consistently demonstrates that students characterized by lifted levels of learning motivation manifest deeper cognitive engagement, employ more effective and refined learning strategies, and display a greater capacity to overcome challenges faced in academic contexts. These motivational characteristics contribute in direct and measurable ways to the attainment of higher levels of academic performance, generating through their cumulative influence on engagement, effort, and perseverance the conditions under which more favourable and sustainable educational outcomes become not merely possible but genuinely achievable for the primary school child. [21].

The scholarly literature further underlines the inherently multidimensional nature of learning motivation, which emerges from the interaction among cognitive, emotional, and contextual determinants. From this perspective, students' motivational orientation is substantially influenced by the degree to which they perceive learning activities as relevant and worthwhile, by their sense of personal competence in relation to academic tasks, and by the expectations they hold regarding their own capacity to succeed. These psychological dimensions outline both the selection of learning activities and the degree of effort invested, as well as the persistence with which they pursue and complete educational tasks [11]. Motivation may thus

be conceptualised as a dynamic system of factors that mobilise students' behaviour and orient their activity toward educational goals, thereby constituting a central explanatory construct for understanding variability in students' academic engagement and school performance.

Moreover, within the broader context of the digitalization of education, recent empirical research suggests that digital learning environments may enhance students' motivation and engagement, particularly when digital technologies are integrated through interactive and cooperative learning activities that position the learner as an active participant rather than a passive recipient of knowledge [4]. In addition, studies suggest digital tools, when purposefully integrated into educational settings, may improve both students' motivation for learning and their academic achievement by facilitating a learning process that is more flexible and better aligned with individual learning needs [14]. The specialised literature is equally careful to note, however, that the motivational effects of digital technologies on students' learning is conditional on the quality of their academic integration and the broader educative context in which the learning process unfolds [9, 22]. Recent reports from international organizations corroborate that the digital transformation of education can produce novel opportunities for fostering academic engagement and promoting the development of learner autonomy. These reports emphasize the necessity of ensuring a pedagogically grounded use of educational technologies within instructional environments [10].

Research Methods

The primary aim of the present study is to conduct a descriptive and comparative analysis of the specific characteristics of school anxiety and learning motivation among primary school students, while also examining potential differences in these variables as a function of students' gender, within the broader context of transformations generated by the digitalization of the educational process.

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the level of school anxiety and learning motivation among students of primary school age;
2. To analyze gender-related differences with respect to school anxiety and motivation for learning.

Study population

The empirical study was conducted on a sample of 108 primary school students. An examination of the gender distribution indicates an equal representation within the sample, consisting of 54 girls (50%) and 54 boys (50%). Participants ranged in age between 9 and 10 years, corresponding to the developmental stage of middle childhood, a period characterized by the rapid development of cognitive competencies, the formation and consolidation of learning motivation, and the strengthening of self-concept. The participants were students enrolled in general education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, where the instructional process is organized and implemented in accordance with the national curriculum for primary education. This educational framework emphasizes both academic development and the gradual formation of socio-emotional and motivational competencies relevant to successful school adaptation.

Research instruments

The instruments employed in this study include the school anxiety subscale from the School anxiety test developed by Phillips, as well as the methodology "Study of learning motivation in students" elaborated by M. R. Ginzburg. To assess school anxiety, the study utilized the school anxiety subscale from the School anxiety test. A total of 22 specific items from the scale were considered, namely items 2, 3, 7, 12, 16, 21, 23, 26, 28, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, and 58. These items are formulated as statements to which respondents are required to provide one of two possible answers: "yes" or "no". The analysis of responses to these items allows for the determination of the general level of anxiety within the school context, thereby reflecting the student's overall emotional state in relation to experiences and activities specific to school life. Based on the processing of responses, the level of school anxiety can be classified into three categories: normal level of anxiety, elevated level of anxiety, and high level of school anxiety.

Learning motivation was assessed using the methodology developed by M. R. Ginzburg, an instrument specifically designed to identify the dominant motivational structures underlying student engagement with the academic activity and to determine their overall level of school motivation. The method consists of a set of incomplete statements accompanied by multiple response options. Students are instructed to select

three responses that best reflect the reasons why they engage in learning activities or the difficulties they encounter within the school context. The total score for learning motivation is calculated by summing the points corresponding to the responses selected by the students. Based on the obtained score, the overall level of school motivation is classified into four categories: very high level of school motivation; high level of school motivation; moderate level of school motivation; below-average level of school motivation.

The statistical processing and analysis of the collected data were conducted using the SPSS Statistics. In the first stage of analysis, descriptive statistical indicators were calculated, including the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values, which allowed for the characterization of the levels of school anxiety and learning motivation within the investigated sample. To examine gender differences in the levels of school anxiety and learning motivation, the independent samples t-test was employed as the primary inferential statistical procedure. This analysis enabled the identification of potential statistically significant differences between boys and girls with regard to the investigated psychological variables.

Results and discussion

Analysis of the descriptive indicators reveals an overall high level of learning motivation among the primary school students in the investigated sample, with a mean score of $M = 40.63$. The observed score range of 24–48 denotes the presence of individual variations in the level of school motivation; however, an examination of the score distribution indicates a clear concentration within the upper segment of the scale, putting forward that the majority of participants demonstrate a consistently favourable orientation toward learning. Relatively moderate standard deviation ($SD = 4.16$) further suggests that although differences among students are present, they are not particularly pronounced, indicating a relatively homogeneous distribution of motivation within the examined sample. A more differentiated picture of motivational structure within the sample emerges from the categorical analysis of school motivational levels. The results indicate that 62% of students fall within the category of very high school motivation, while 32.4% of students demonstrate a high level of learning motivation. In contrast, 5 students (4.6%) exhibit a moderate level of motivation, and only 1 student (0.9%) falls below the average level of school motivation.

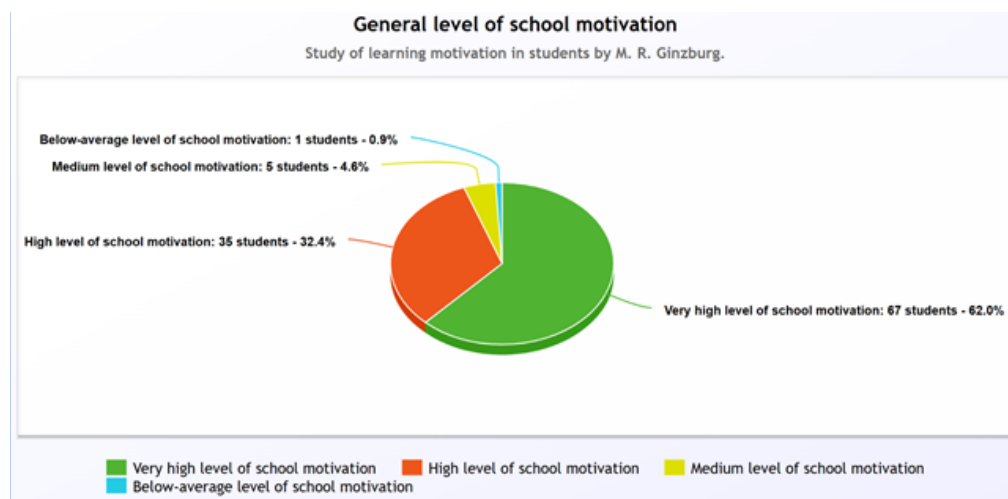


Figure 1. The distribution of students according to the overall level of learning motivation

Overall, the data indicates that the vast majority of primary school students ($N=102$, 94.4%) reveal high or very high levels of learning motivation. This finding suggests that, for children in the early years of schooling, engagement in learning activities remains an embedded and personally meaningful dimension of their developmental experience. At this developmental stage, the school environment functions not only as a primary context for cognitive development competencies but also as a significant framework for social validation and the gradual consolidation of self-concept. A graphical representation of the distribution of school motivation levels among the pupils is presented in Figure 1.

These results are consistent with contemporary research in educational psychology, which broadly delin-

states that primary school children tend to exhibit relatively high levels of motivation for academic activities. For example, the study conducted by Guay and his colleagues in 2010 [12] on a sample of 425 primary school students indicates that children of early school age commonly report high levels of intrinsic motivation and identified motivation, which indicates authentic engagement in learning activities and a personal valuing of school-related tasks. These results are consistent with the idea that, during the early years of schooling, children experience learning as an opportunity for the development of competencies and for the affirmation of their own abilities within the educational environment.

On the other hand, a complementary perspective on the motivational structure of the sample emerges from the examination of the dominant motives underlying primary school children's engagement in academic activities. In this regard, the analysis of dominant motives indicates the predominance of the position/status motive in the motivational structure of pupils ($N = 86$, 80%), which reflects their orientation toward recognition and appreciation within the school environment. This result is congruent with the psycho-pedagogical literature, which outlines that during the early school years children become increasingly sensitive to social evaluation and to their position within the peer group, while academic achievement gradually acquires a significant meaning, functioning simultaneously as evidence of personal competence and as a meaningful basis for social integration and belonging [8]. Mitrofan S. [17] further highlights that the child's position within the class collective and the associated need for social recognition constitute crucial determinants of school experience, influencing both their engagement in learning activities and the affective experiences they develop in relation to the educational environment.

Turning to the remaining motivational categories, the learning motive, understood as an intrinsic orientation toward knowledge acquisition and intellectual engagement is present among a smaller number of pupils ($N = 12$, 11.1%). Likewise, the social motive is observed among a considerably smaller number of pupils ($N = 9$, 8.3%), reflecting an orientation toward interaction and cooperation with peers within the context of school activities. The external motive, in contrast, is observed among only a single participant, an almost negligible presence within the overall motivational structure, indicating that only a very small number of pupils base their engagement in school activities on external factors, such as material rewards or external pressures ($N = 1$, 0.9%). A particularly noteworthy finding highlighted by the data analysis is the complete absence of certain types of motives, namely the grade-oriented motive and the ludic motive. The absence of the grade-oriented motive suggests that at this developmental stage, academic performance is not primarily perceived as an end in itself. Equally, the absence of the ludic motive indicates that a school activity is not predominantly experienced as play. Taken together, these absences suggest that people's motivational orientation is more meaningfully anchored in the social dimensions of academic performance, in the desire for recognition, affirmation, and a valued position within the educational community.

Descriptive analysis of school anxiety scores reveals a moderate overall level of anxiety within the sample ($M = 40.78$), suggesting that, for the majority of participating primary school children, anxiety represents a present but not overwhelming feature of their daily school experience. The observed score range, spanning from 0 to 100, indicates the presence of substantial individual differences in the intensity of school anxiety within the sample, suggesting that primary school children do not respond uniformly to the demands and evaluative situations characteristic of the educational environment, but bring to these experiences meaningfully distinct emotional profiles and coping capacities. Furthermore, the relatively high standard deviation ($SD = 21.96$) confirms the considerable variability in pupil's emotional responses to school activity, reflecting the diversity of ways in which primary school children perceive, interpret and manage evaluative situations and interpersonal interactions within the school environment.

A more comprehensive perspective on the distribution of school anxiety is displayed by the categorical analysis of anxiety levels within the investigated sample. The observed results indicate that 77 pupils (71.3%) fall within the normal level of school anxiety, which normally points to satisfactory adaptation to the demands of the educational environment. At the same time, 22 pupils (20.4%) present a heightened level of school anxiety, which may denote an elevated sensitivity to evaluative situations and to the pressure associated with academic performance. In addition, 9 pupils (8.3%) display a high level of school anxiety, a pattern that may reflect more pronounced difficulties in regulating emotional responses

to school situations perceived as demanding, evaluatively threatening, or exceeding the child's available coping resources. Thus, the results indicate that the majority of the primary school children participating in the study ($N = 77$, 71.3%) manifest a normal level of school anxiety, suggesting a relatively balanced adaptation to the demands of the educational environment. Nevertheless, the presence of a significant group of pupils who exhibit elevated or high levels of anxiety ($N = 31$, 28.7%) highlights that some children may encounter emotional difficulties in relation to evaluative situations and academic demands. The distribution of school anxiety levels among pupils is graphically illustrated in Figure 2.

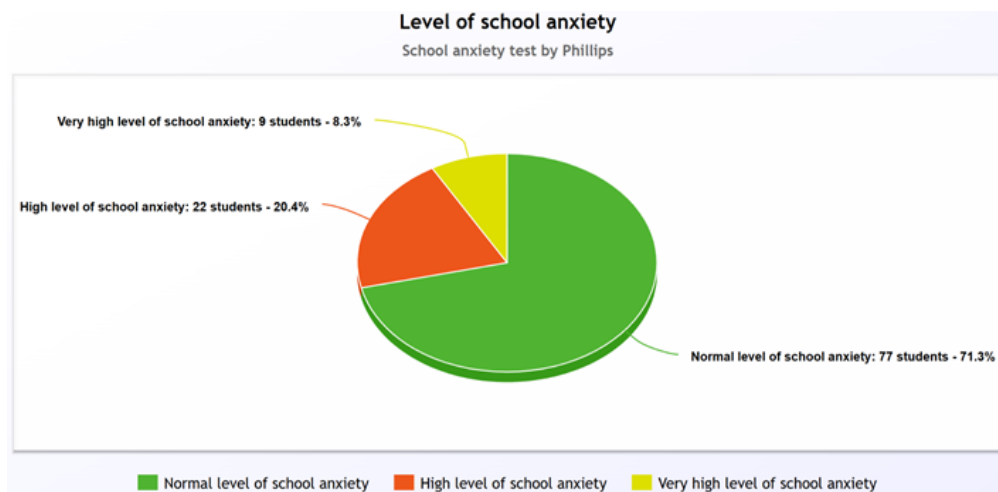


Figure 2. The distribution of school anxiety levels among primary school aged students

In order to examine whether meaningful differences in school anxiety levels exist as a function of pupils' sex, an independent samples t-test was applied. The results of Levene's test for equality of variances indicated a significant difference between the variances of the two groups ($F = 6.27$, $p = 0.014$), with the p-value being lower than the established threshold of statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). The analysis of the t-test indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between girls and boys with respect to the level of school anxiety, $t(99.44) = -2.38$, $p = 0.019$. The obtained probability value ($p = 0.019$) falls below the conventionally accepted significance threshold of $p < 0.05$, permitting the rejection of the null hypothesis and supporting the conclusion that the observed difference in school anxiety levels between male and female pupils reflects a statistically reliable group difference rather than a product of random sampling variation. The analysis of the mean values shows that female pupils report a higher level of school anxiety ($M = 45.71$, $SD = 24.11$) compared to male pupils ($M = 35.86$, $SD = 18.54$). The mean difference between the two groups is approximately 9.85 points, indicating a tendency toward a more pronounced manifestation of school anxiety among girls.

The results acquired are in line with research conducted in the Eastern European context regarding the manifestation of anxiety in children and adolescents. The study carried out by Racu I. (2011) [19] emphasizes that the majority of preadolescents manifest moderate levels of anxiety, although the data reveal statistically significant sex-based differences in the level and expression of school anxiety within the investigated sample. The findings of the study indicate that, at certain developmental stages, girls tend to display higher levels of anxiety more frequently than boys. Moreover, a comprehensive review of anxiety disorders indicates that women and girls exhibit higher prevalence rates of anxiety compared with boys and men. For example, the prevalence ratio of anxiety in the general population is approximately 1:1.7 in favor of females, suggesting a significantly higher frequency of anxiety among the female population [16]. These findings are further supported by research examining gender differences in emotional expression among children. Thus, the meta-analytic review conducted by Tracy M. Chaplin and Amelia Aldao [5] outlines that girls tend to report higher levels of fear and anxiety symptoms compared with boys, particularly in situations involving social evaluation or interpersonal relationships. These differences are further interpreted by the authors as potentially reflecting girls' characteristically greater sensitivity to the social and emotional

dimension of interpersonal interactions. In this regard, the school environment may represent a specifically relevant background for the manifestation of anxiety, as it frequently involves situations of social appraisal, peer interaction, and academic comparison, factors that may intensify experiences of worry and emotional strain among pupils.

To examine potential sex-based differences in learning motivation, the same independent samples t-test was applied. The results of Levene's test for equality of variances did not indicate significant differences between the variances of the two groups ($F = 0.97$, $p = 0.327$), the p-value being higher than the established threshold of statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). The analysis of the t-test indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between girls and boys with respect to the level of school motivation, $t(106) = -0.14$, $p = 0.890$. Because the obtained probability value ($p = 0.890$) substantially exceeds the conventional significance threshold of $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis of no sex-based difference in learning motivations is retained, the observed difference between the two groups being attributed to random sampling variation in the data rather than reflecting a genuine and replicable group difference. The analysis of the mean values substantiates this tendency, as the level of learning motivation is very similar in the two groups: male pupils recorded a mean school motivation score of $M = 40.57$ ($SD = 4.42$), while female pupils recorded a mean of $M = 40.69$ ($SD = 3.92$). The results obtained are closely aligned with research in the field of educational psychology, which indicates that pupils in primary education commonly manifest relatively high levels of motivation for academic activities. For example, the study conducted by Guay et al. (2010) [12] shows that children of early school age exhibit high levels of academic motivation and active engagement in learning activities. The specialized literature suggests that gender differences in academic motivation may nonetheless emerge as early as primary education; however, these differences tend to manifest primarily in preferences for particular school subjects rather than in the overall level of motivation for learning [8].

Conclusions

The results of the present study highlight that, during the formative period of early schooling, school anxiety and learning motivation constitute two important and interrelated psychological dimensions for understanding how children perceive, experience and respond to the demands of the contemporary educational environment. The obtained data indicate that the majority of the investigated pupils display high or very high levels of learning motivation, suggesting a positive orientation toward school activities and a consistent engagement in the completion of academic tasks. The identified motivational structure further reveals a clear predominance of the position/status motive, reflecting the central importance of social recognition and peer validation within the class group at this stage of development.

With regard to school anxiety, the findings reveal a moderate overall level, with most pupils demonstrating normal levels of anxiety, which suggests a relatively balanced adaptation to the demands of the school environment. Nevertheless, the presence of a significant group of pupils who exhibit elevated or high levels of school anxiety indicates the need for increased attention to the emotional dimension of the school experience, particularly in relation to evaluative situations, performance pressure, and social integration within the class group. The comparative analysis according to sex revealed the existence of statistically significant differences in the level of school anxiety, with girls reporting higher scores than boys, whereas no significant differences were identified between the two groups in terms of learning motivation. These findings suggest that emotional and motivational variables do not develop in an identical manner and therefore require differentiated approaches in educational and psycho-pedagogical practice. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the affective and motivational characteristics of primary school pupils and underscores the importance of developing balanced, supportive, and pedagogically adapted educational contexts, including under conditions of digitalization, that simultaneously foster engagement in learning and the emotional well-being of children.

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COGNITIVE EXTERNALIZATION AND PERCEIVED CHANGES IN THINKING IN THE CONTEXT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE

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This study examines cognitive externalization and perceived changes in thinking in the context of artificial intelligence (AI) use among university students. Drawing on theoretical perspectives of extended cognition and metacognition, a descriptive-analytic cross-sectional design was employed with a sample of 228 students from diverse academic fields. The findings indicate widespread integration of AI into academic activities, primarily for clarification, summarization, and information structuring. Duration of AI use was significantly associated with perceived changes in thinking and learning processes, suggesting possible adjustments in cognitive strategies and a tendency toward externalizing information processing. Although nearly half of the participants reported a positive impact on cognitive efficiency, a substantial proportion expressed concerns regarding reduced intellectual autonomy. Fear related to diminished independent thinking was associated with more negative evaluations of AI's impact. Overall, the results highlight an ambivalent dynamic between functional cognitive optimization and challenges related to metacognitive self-regulation.

Keywords: *cognitive externalization; artificial intelligence; cognitive autonomy; epistemic dependence; metacognitive knowledge; automation bias; extended cognition; perception of changes in thinking.*

EXTERNALIZAREA COGNITIVĂ ȘI SCHIMBĂRILE PERCEPUTE ÎN GÂNDIRE ÎN CONTEXTUL UTILIZĂRII INTELIGENȚEI ARTIFICIALE

Studiul examinează externalizarea cognitivă și schimbările percepute în gândire în contextul utilizării inteligenței artificiale în rândul studenților universitari. Pornind de la perspectivele teoretice ale cogniției extinse și metacogniției, cercetarea a utilizat un design transversal descriptiv-analitic, realizat pe un eșantion de 228 de studenți din diverse domenii academice. Rezultatele indică o integrare largă a aplicațiilor de inteligență artificială în activitățile academice, utilizate în principal pentru clarificarea conceptelor, rezumarea informațiilor și structurarea conținutului. Durata utilizării inteligenței artificiale s-a asociat semnificativ cu schimbările percepute în procesele de gândire și învățare, sugerând posibile ajustări ale strategiilor cognitive și o tendință de externalizare a procesării informației. Deși aproape jumătate dintre participanți au raportat un impact pozitiv asupra eficienței cognitive, o proporție considerabilă și-a exprimat îngrijorarea cu privire la reducerea autonomiei intelectuale. Teama legată de diminuarea capacității de gândire independentă a fost asociată cu evaluări mai negative ale impactului inteligenței artificiale. În ansamblu, rezultatele evidențiază o dinamică ambivalentă între optimizarea funcțională a proceselor cognitive și provocările legate de autoreglarea metacognitivă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *externalizare cognitivă; inteligență artificială; autonomie cognitivă; dependență epistemică; cunoaștere metacognitivă; biasul automatizării; cogniție extinsă; percepția schimbărilor în gândire.*

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) systems has substantially transformed the cognitive environment in which individuals learn, make decisions, and solve problems. While early digital tools were used primarily as informational support, contemporary conversational and generative systems intervene directly in processes of analysis, synthesis, and information organization. In this context, the human – AI relationship can no longer be understood solely in terms of technological efficiency; rather, it requires a psychological analysis of how cognitive externalization shapes the subjective experience of thinking.

The concept of cognitive externalization refers to individuals' tendency to transfer mental tasks to external supports in order to reduce cognitive effort and optimize performance. In contemporary digital environments, AI functions not merely as an information repository but as an epistemic agent capable of generating

explanations, structuring arguments, and offering alternative solutions. This functional expansion raises a question of central relevance for cognitive and educational psychology: how do users perceive the influence of AI on their own thinking processes?

The idea of cognitive externalization is closely related to the theory of the “extended mind” [1, 8], which argues that cognition does not take place exclusively within the brain. In everyday functioning, people often incorporate external resources into their thinking processes. Digital technologies, for example, may support memory, attention, or decision-making to such an extent that they become part of the broader cognitive system itself. At the same time, this integration is not entirely neutral. Its effects depend on how actively individuals preserve their own evaluative and reflective involvement while using external supports. In the context of intensive reliance on digital tools, cognitive delegation can gradually shift from a practical strategy to a habitual mode of functioning. This tendency has been described as epistemic dependence — a reduced capacity or willingness to critically examine information obtained from external sources. From our perspective, such dependence may weaken cognitive autonomy, particularly in situations where information is accepted without sufficient reflection or verification.

Research defines cognitive externalization as the use of the external environment to reduce the demands placed on working memory and executive control. Experimental studies indicate that individuals tend to prefer externalization when internal cognitive costs are high or when the external alternative is perceived as more efficient [6].

Artificial intelligence changes the way cognitive externalization operates in everyday academic activity. In this case, externalization no longer refers only to storing information or recording ideas in notes. AI systems can participate more actively in the thinking process itself by generating text, reorganizing information, suggesting interpretations, or assisting with problem solving. Because of this, the delegation of cognitive tasks becomes more complex than in traditional interactions with digital tools. It may also affect the way individuals monitor and regulate their own thinking strategies, especially in situations where AI-generated responses are accepted with limited reflection.

The increasing use of AI applications in universities and other educational settings makes this issue particularly relevant. Students interact with such technologies not only for information search, but also for writing, summarizing, idea development, and academic planning. Although existing research offers important theoretical perspectives on extended cognition and metacognition, fewer empirical studies have focused on how users themselves experience these changes.

Against this background, the present study explores cognitive externalization and perceived changes in thinking associated with AI use. The analysis focuses on students’ patterns of interaction with artificial intelligence, the risks they associate with intensive use, and their own interpretations of how these technologies may influence cognitive autonomy and information processing.

Method and Objectives.

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence applications has significantly transformed contemporary academic practices. Students increasingly use AI for writing, information synthesis, problem solving, idea generation, and organizing their learning process. At the same time, the literature highlights an ambivalence: AI can enhance cognitive efficiency and provide rapid access to information, yet it raises concerns regarding intellectual autonomy, superficial information processing, and the risk of cognitive dependence.

Study Objectives:

1. To identify the frequency, duration, and patterns of AI application use among students;
2. To analyze forms of cognitive externalization in academic and non-academic contexts;
3. To investigate perceptions of AI’s impact on thinking and cognitive autonomy;
4. To explore the relationship between AI exposure (frequency and duration) and perceived changes in thinking style;
5. To examine the role of affective evaluation (fear of reduced independent thinking) in interpreting AI’s impact on personal cognitive processes.

The study adopted a descriptive–analytical cross-sectional design, based on a questionnaire developed by the author to assess students' perceptions and use of AI. The sample included students at different levels of study (undergraduate and master's) from diverse academic fields.

The AI usage questionnaire covered the following dimensions:

- Demographic information: age, gender, level of study, academic field;
- Weekly frequency and duration of AI use;
- AI use in academic and non-academic contexts;
- Usage typology: writing, summarization, problem solving, idea generation, etc.;
- Fear of diminished capacity for independent thinking;
- Perceived advantages and risks (open-ended item);
- Self-assessment of changes in thinking and learning compared to the period prior to AI use.

The questionnaire items were formulated in both closed- and open-ended formats to capture not only the frequency of use but also the subjective experience of participants.

To assess the psychometric quality of the questionnaire, a preliminary validation was conducted using a pilot sample of 50 students. The purpose of this step was to evaluate the conceptual correctness of the items, their internal consistency, and the latent factorial structure of the scale, ensuring the reliability and validity of the constructs measured. Content validation was performed through consultation with three experts in psychometrics and educational psychology. The experts assessed the relevance, clarity, and adequacy of each item with respect to the targeted theoretical constructs. Inter-rater agreement coefficients indicated a high level of consensus, supporting the conceptual appropriateness of the items and confirming the content validity of the instrument.

Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's α for the identified subscales: the scale capturing perceptions of AI's impact and the scale addressing concerns about its negative effects. Cronbach's α values ranging from .71 to .81 indicate satisfactory internal consistency for an exploratory instrument, suggesting cohesion among items and their capacity to measure coherent psychological constructs. Exploratory factor analysis applied to identify the latent structure of the items revealed a clear two-factor structure. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) index reached an adequate value, and Bartlett's test confirmed the sphericity of the correlation matrix. The first factor reflects the dimension of perceived personal impact of AI use on thinking, learning, emotional regulation, and social relationships; the second factor reflects concerns about AI's negative effects. Factor loadings exceeding the .50 threshold confirm the validity of the identified structure.

The questionnaire was administered online, voluntarily and anonymously. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and assured of data confidentiality. Data collection occurred within a defined period, without any experimental intervention.

Data analysis was conducted in two complementary stages. The first stage involved a descriptive analysis to highlight general patterns of AI use among students, through the calculation of frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. In the second stage, a correlational analysis was performed to explore the relationships between AI usage frequency and duration, on one hand, and the fear of diminished independent thinking as well as the perception of changes in thinking and learning, on the other. Correlation coefficients were interpreted in terms of strength and statistical significance to identify relevant trends regarding the psychological impact of AI use.

Results

We first present the results, beginning with a descriptive analysis of the sample characteristics. The study was conducted on a sample of 228 respondents, all enrolled in formal academic programs at higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 60 years. The distribution is asymmetric, with a significant predominance of young adults (18–22 years), who represent 64.5% of the sample. The remaining age groups are represented as follows: 23–29 years (12.7%), 30–39 years (12.7%), 40–49 years (7.0%), and 50–60 years (3.1%).

The sample structure indicates a dominance of students engaged in an academic trajectory, a factor that should be considered when interpreting findings related to cognitive externalization and AI use.

Regarding gender distribution, the sample is predominantly female, with 80.8% women and 19.2% men. Concerning field of study, 67.5% of participants are from the humanities, while 32.5% represent STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines. This distribution reflects a predominance of humanities-oriented training within the sample, which may influence cognitive styles, information-processing strategies, and patterns of AI utilization in academic activities.

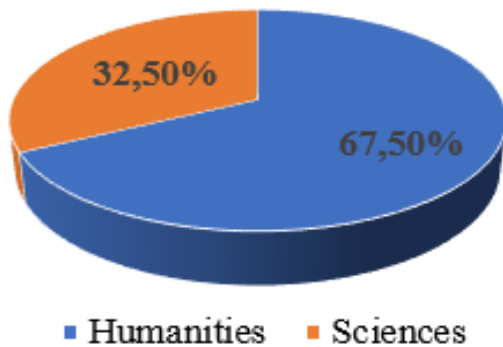


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents by field of study / high school profile

Regarding the duration of frequent use of artificial intelligence applications, most respondents report having more than one year of experience (59.2%), of which 31.6% have been using AI for 1–2 years and 27.6% for over 2 years. A further 33.4% indicate relatively recent use (less than one year), while 7.5% report that they do not use such applications frequently.

This distribution suggests a significant integration of AI technologies into the participants' academic activities. It is also relevant to hypotheses concerning cognitive restructuring, as cognitive externalization is a gradual process, and automation bias strengthens with repeated exposure.

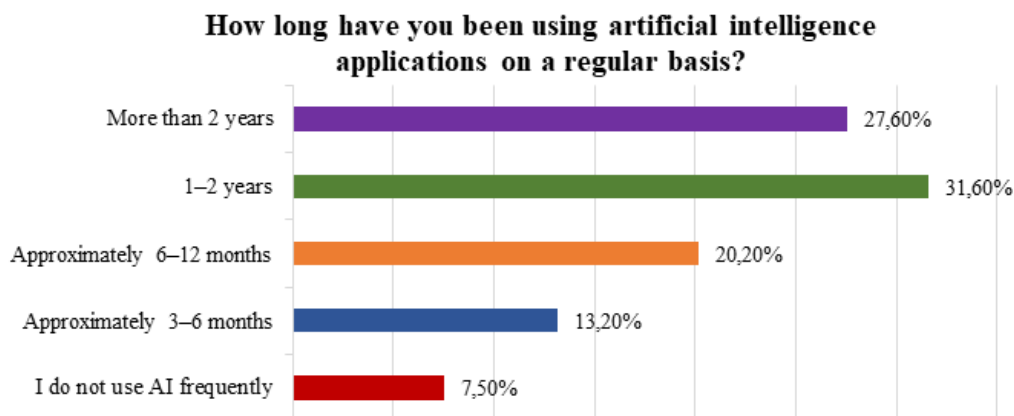


Fig. 2. Duration of frequent use of artificial intelligence applications among students

An even stronger variable than the duration of use is the current intensity of cognitive exposure to AI.

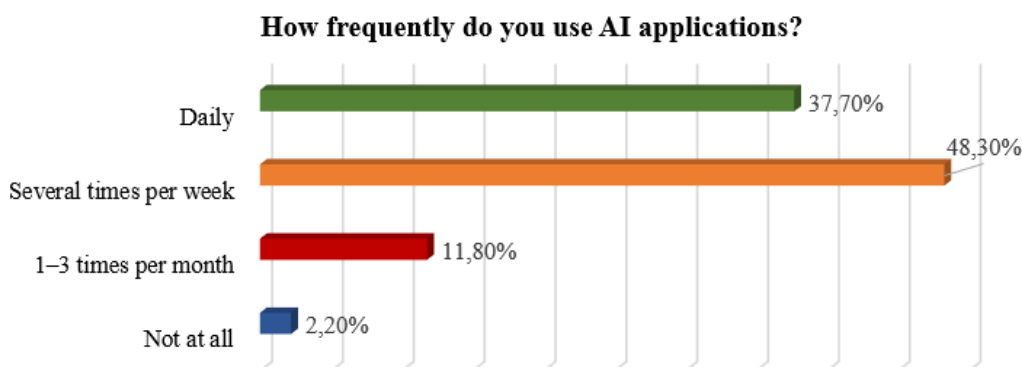


Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents by frequency of ai application use

Regarding the frequency of AI application use, 37.7% of respondents report daily use, while 48.2% use AI several times per week. Only 11.8% use it occasionally (1–3 times per month), and 2.3% report not using such applications at all. Overall, 85.9% of participants integrate AI into their weekly or daily activities, suggesting a high level of cognitive exposure to these technologies. This distribution supports the potential emergence of systematic cognitive externalization and perceived changes in metacognitive monitoring.

AI is integrated into the cognitive routines of the majority of respondents. Nearly 4 out of 10 use AI daily, indicating the possible formation of stable patterns of cognitive externalization.

Concerning the average weekly time spent using AI, most respondents (68.4%) report 1–3 hours, 18% use AI for 4–7 hours, and 7% exceed 7 hours per week. A further 6.6% indicate that they do not use AI. These data suggest a predominantly moderate use, with a minority of intensive users, indicating that AI is mainly used as a supportive tool rather than a constant substitute for cognitive activity.

On average, how much time do you spend using AI in a typical week?

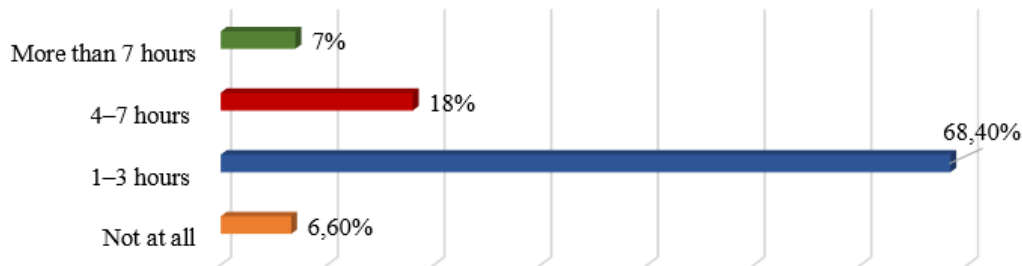


Fig. 4. Average weekly duration of artificial intelligence application use

A highly relevant question – because it reflects cognitive externalization specific to the academic context – concerns the use of AI in the preparation of assignments, projects, and academic studies (see Figure 5).

Do you use AI in an academic context (studies, assignments, projects)?

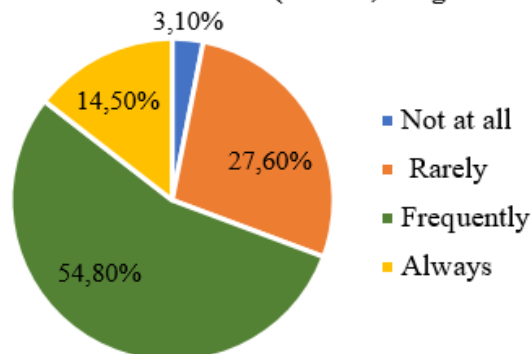


Fig. 5. Use of AI applications in academic contexts

Regarding AI use in academic contexts (studies, assignments, projects), 54.8% of respondents report frequent use, 14.5% use it consistently, 27.6% use it rarely, and 3.1% do not use it at all. These results indicate a strong integration of AI technologies into academic activities, suggesting that the majority of respondents partially or fully externalize certain cognitive processes to these tools.

The key question, reflecting concrete modes of cognitive externalization and enabling analysis of the types of tasks participants delegate to AI, is illustrated in Figure 6.

In an academic context, what do you most often use AI for? (check all that apply)

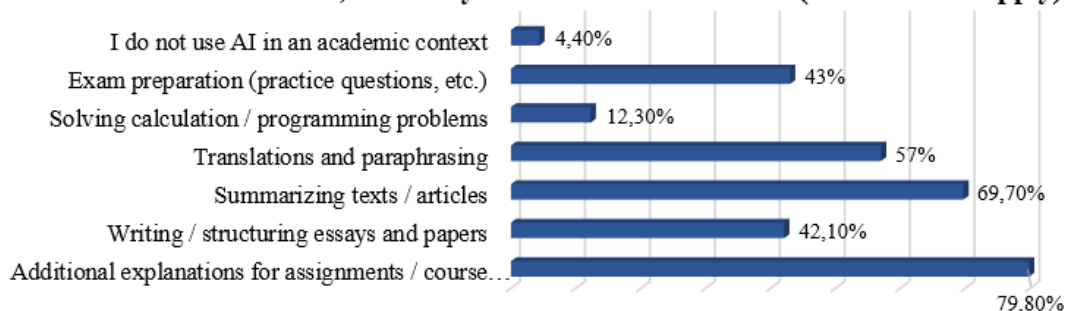


Fig. 6. Typology of AI use in academic activities

Participants were allowed to choose more than one response option; therefore, the total percentages exceed 100%. The results indicate that AI is used primarily as a support tool for understanding and processing academic information. The activities reported most often were requesting additional explanations for assignments or course-related concepts (79.8%) and generating summaries of texts or articles (69.7%). More than half of the respondents also used AI for translations or reformulations (57%). By comparison, tasks such as essay writing and exam preparation were mentioned by approximately 42–43% of participants, whereas the use of AI for technical or programming-related problems was relatively limited (12%). Only a small proportion of students (4.4%) reported that they do not use AI in their academic work at all.

Overall, these findings suggest different levels of cognitive externalization depending on the type of task involved. In many situations, AI appears to function mainly as a supportive cognitive aid. This is especially visible in activities such as clarifying information, summarizing content, or reformulating ideas, where students still remain actively involved in the learning process. At the same time, the use of AI for essay writing or exam preparation may reflect a more advanced form of cognitive delegation, since these activities involve not only information processing but also organization, interpretation, and production of responses.

Another interesting aspect concerns the uneven distribution of AI use across domains. Technical problem solving was reported less frequently, which may be related to differences between educational profiles, particularly between STEM and humanities students. Equally important is the very small number of non-users. The fact that only 4.4% of respondents avoid AI entirely suggests that these technologies are already integrated into everyday academic routines for most students.

Previous studies on decision automation describe the phenomenon of „automation bias”, namely the tendency to trust suggestions generated by automated systems even when those suggestions may be inaccurate [4, 5]. In the context of conversational AI, the issue extends beyond simple factual mistakes. Repeated reliance on automatically generated answers may gradually reduce the habit of critical verification and independent evaluation. From our perspective, this is particularly relevant in educational settings, where excessive dependence on external cognitive support could influence intellectual autonomy and reflective judgment over time.

The ways in which AI is integrated into students’ personal lives outside the academic environment are illustrated in the following figure.

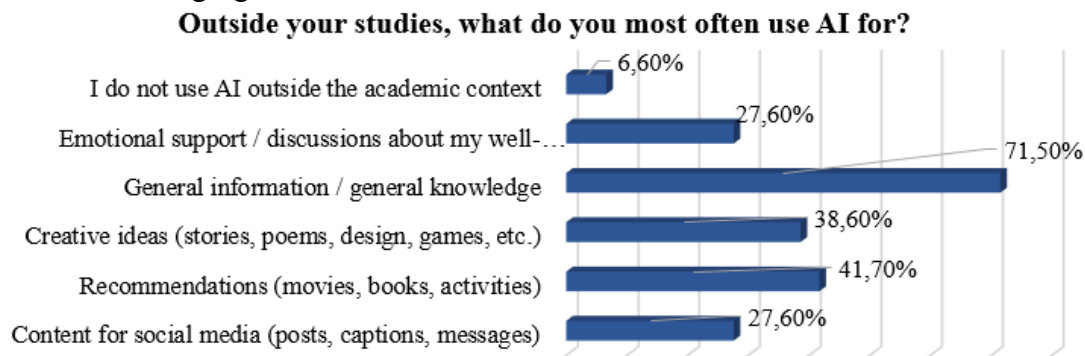


Fig. 7. Purposes of AI application use in non-academic contexts

Outside the academic context, participants primarily use AI for general information and general knowledge acquisition (71.5%). Other frequent uses include recommendations for movies, books, and activities (41.7%) and creative idea generation (38.6%). Use for social media content creation and emotional support is less frequent (27.6%), while 6.6% of participants do not use AI outside their studies.

From the data, we can observe different types of externalization:

- General/informational cognitive externalization: AI as a tool for rapid access to knowledge and as a guide or decision assistant.
- Creative/playful cognitive externalization: AI supporting imaginative and experimental processes.
- Socio-emotional externalization: AI as a semi-reliable interlocutor for personal reflection.
- Instrumental/practical use: AI as a tool for optimization and efficiency.
- Non-use: 6.6% do not use AI outside academics – a minority, indicating AI’s integration into daily life.

Thus, AI use outside academic activities is predominantly informational, suggesting that participants externalize processes of information search and filtering. Creative and playful activities indicate an extension of AI into personal metacognitive functions, reflecting a restructuring of how thinking and imagination are supported by AI. Emotional support represents a minor, yet interesting, use from the perspective of AI–human psychological interaction.

Drawing on the literature, frequent AI use is not limited to occasional cognitive externalization but may lead to a restructuring of the balance between internal cognitive processes and those externalized. This restructuring may take different forms:

1. Adaptive – AI is integrated strategically, without reducing internal monitoring;
2. Compensatory – AI supplements perception of personal limitations;
3. Dependent – internal metacognitive control is systematically reduced.

Therefore, the human–AI interaction should be analyzed not only as technological optimization but also as a process transforming the architecture of cognitive self-regulation [3, 9].

Another important question examines the subjective perception of the risk of cognitive dependence and fears related to the externalization of thinking (see Figure 8).

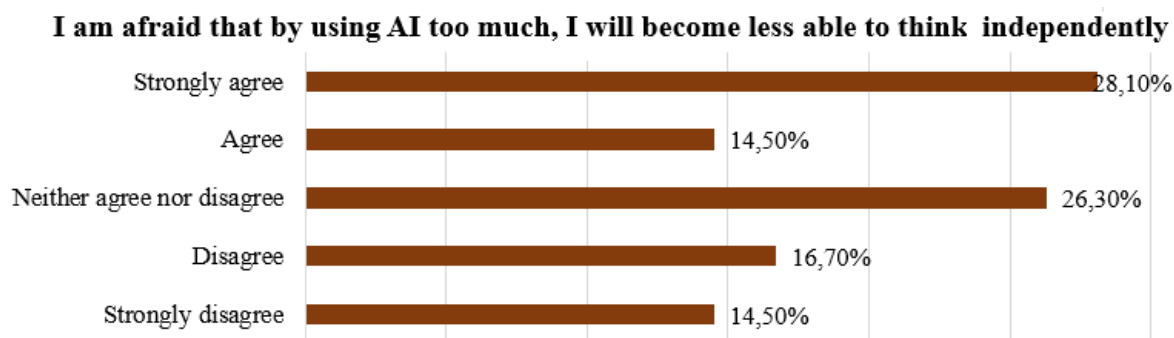


Fig. 8. Perceived risk of reduced cognitive autonomy associated with AI use

Regarding the perceived risk of losing the ability to think independently, 28.1% of respondents strongly agree and 14.5% agree that excessive AI use could reduce their capacity for autonomous thinking. In contrast, 14.5% strongly disagree and 16.7% disagree, while 26.3% remain neutral. Overall, nearly half of the participants (42.6%) perceive a potential risk of cognitive dependence, whereas roughly one-third do not share this concern. These results indicate that, while AI supports cognitive externalization, there is an awareness of its limitations and associated risks.

A qualitative observation highlights the high frequency of AI use in academic contexts (85.9% weekly or daily) and the fact that almost half (42.6%) perceive a risk of cognitive dependence. This suggests that more frequent AI use is associated with greater awareness of potential cognitive dependence, as respondents who integrate AI daily or weekly appear more likely to recognize its impact on autonomous thinking.

To test the hypothesis that AI usage frequency is significantly associated with the level of fear regarding diminished independent thinking, we applied the Chi-square test of independence (χ^2). The result, $\chi^2(12) = 18.88$, $p = 0.092$, indicates that the association between AI usage frequency and fear level did not reach statistical significance (χ^2 not significant, $p > .05$). Therefore, fear of reduced autonomy is not statistically determined by AI usage frequency, and frequent use does not automatically imply cognitive anxiety.

We also tested the hypothesis that duration of AI use significantly influences the perception of changes in thinking and learning. Results from the Chi-square test were statistically significant: $\chi^2(12) = 21.68$, $p = 0.041$. This indicates that AI usage duration is significantly associated with how respondents perceive changes in their thinking and learning processes. From this, we can infer that prolonged AI use may lead to: restructuring of cognitive strategies, externalization of information processing, metacognitive changes, and adjustments in learning style. Duration appears to be a more relevant predictor than frequency of AI use.

The next question concerns the perception of changes in thinking under the influence of AI use. In our study, when asked about their perceived changes in thinking, respondents provided the following answers (see Figure 9).

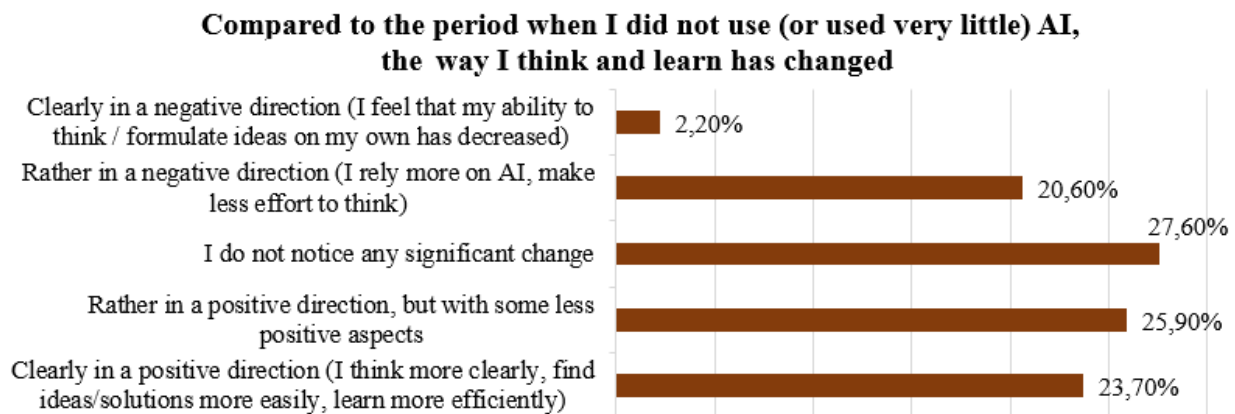


Fig. 9. Perceived changes in own thinking in relation to AI use

Regarding how AI has influenced thinking and learning, 23% of respondents consider the change clearly positive, and 25% view it as rather positive. 27.6% report no significant change, while 20.6% perceive a rather negative influence, and 3.8% see it as clearly negative. Overall, nearly half of the participants (48%) experience a positive impact on their cognitive and learning processes, whereas approximately a quarter (24.4%) perceive a negative effect. This suggests that AI can serve as a supportive tool but may also influence cognitive effort.

The distribution is bipolar, with a slight tendency toward positive effects. The “rather negative” segment is more pronounced than the “clearly negative” one, indicating that most participants perceive moderate cognitive dependence effects rather than severe deterioration.

Another hypothesis examined the relationship between fear of reduced independent thinking and the perception of negative changes in thinking. Binary logistic regression analysis indicated that fear levels are significantly associated with the perception of negative changes ($p < .001$). Higher fear correlates with a greater likelihood of interpreting AI’s impact negatively ($OR > 2$). Specifically, for each one-unit increase in fear, the odds of perceiving a negative change increase 2.38 times. Therefore, the hypothesis is statistically supported, suggesting that fear functions as a cognitive-evaluative factor influencing how participants interpret the impact of AI on their mental processes.

To integrate dimensions of AI exposure and perceived cognitive impact, we constructed a „cognitive externalization map”, combining frequency and duration of AI use, types of externalized tasks (academic and non-academic), and perception scores of risks and change in thinking. This map highlights: groups with high exposure and positive impact, groups with high exposure and negative impact, groups with low exposure and variable effects, providing a visual and integrated representation of how AI reshapes cognitive strategies and subjective experiences of thinking in both academic and personal contexts.

High Exposure, Positive Perception Individuals characterized by high AI exposure and a predominantly positive cognitive appraisal. <i>Examples:</i> 23% “clearly positive” + 25% “rather positive,” daily/weekly frequency.	Low Exposure, Positive Perception Use AI minimally, but perceive positive effects.
High Exposure, Negative Perception Frequent use, but perceiving a risk of cognitive dependence. <i>Examples:</i> 20.6% “rather negative” + 3.8% “clearly negative.”	Low Exposure, Negative Perception Non-users who believe AI may affect thinking (minority).

To identify the main tendencies in students’ perceptions of AI use in cognitive activities, a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out on the open-ended responses to the question: „In a few sentences, briefly describe what you consider to be the most important advantage and the most important risk of using AI.”

The categories were developed inductively by grouping similar semantic patterns that appeared repeatedly across participants' answers. After this stage, the categories were organized according to the frequency and consistency with which particular themes were mentioned.

The analysis shows a clear predominance of positive perceptions regarding AI use. Students described advantages in more concrete and detailed ways, whereas risks were usually mentioned briefly and in hypothetical terms. This suggests that AI is viewed primarily from a practical and utilitarian perspective, with emphasis on its immediate academic benefits. At the same time, some responses also reflected concerns related to dependence on technology, reduced critical thinking, and excessive reliance on AI, although these aspects were discussed less extensively.

The frequency analysis shows that *the perceived advantages of AI* can be organized into several main categories, depending on how often they are mentioned and how central they are in students' responses.

- The most prominent theme concerns the speed of access to information (around 35–40% of responses). Students frequently refer to time-saving, instant answers, and the possibility of obtaining information within seconds. In practice, this aspect seems to play a key role in how AI is valued in academic work, since efficiency in time management is repeatedly emphasized in their descriptions.

- A second important category refers to support in understanding and structuring information (25–30%). Here, AI is described as useful when dealing with complex concepts or when organizing academic content in a clearer form. Rather than simply providing answers, it is seen as a tool that helps make information more accessible and easier to follow.

- Another frequently mentioned aspect is the improvement of efficiency in routine or mechanical tasks (approximately 18–22%). This includes activities such as summarizing texts, correcting language errors, or selecting relevant information from larger materials. Although clearly useful, this dimension appears somewhat less central compared to speed and conceptual support.

- Finally, a smaller proportion of responses (10–15%) refers to support for independent learning and self-assessment. This metacognitive dimension is less visible overall, but it tends to appear more often in the answers of students who reflect more explicitly on their own learning strategies.

The risks associated with cognitive externalization can be grouped into several categories, depending on their frequency and perceived importance. The most prominent concern refers to dependence on AI and a gradual reduction in autonomous thinking (approximately 40–45%). This is the most frequently reported issue in students' responses. They mention, in various forms, the weakening of critical thinking skills, difficulties in producing independent answers, and the tendency to rely on AI outputs without sufficient verification.

A second category concerns the reduction of research engagement and in-depth analytical capacity (25–30%). In many responses, this is described as a continuation of cognitive dependence, particularly in situations where students bypass original sources or avoid detailed analysis of academic materials.

Less frequently, respondents refer to excessive simplification of tasks and the over-automation of cognitive processes (around 15%). In these cases, students express concerns about reduced intellectual effort and a potential decline in creativity when AI is used extensively in academic work.

Finally, a smaller proportion of responses (5–10%) mention the possibility of errors or incomplete information provided by AI systems. Although this issue is epistemologically relevant, it appears to be less salient for students compared to longer-term concerns related to the development of independent thinking and learning habits.

The hierarchical structuring of themes suggests the existence of a pragmatic cognitive profile regarding AI use among students. In most cases, AI is valued mainly for its speed and practical efficiency, especially in tasks that require quick access to information or text processing. The metacognitive dimension – meaning reflection on one's own thinking processes – appears less prominent in students' responses and is usually mentioned only indirectly.

When discussing risks, students focus less on the accuracy of information and more on potential effects on cognitive autonomy and critical thinking. In other words, the concern is not so much that AI might be wrong, but that it might gradually reduce independent intellectual effort.

Overall, the data point to an ambivalent pattern. On the one hand, AI is clearly perceived as useful and efficiency-enhancing in academic work. On the other hand, there is a parallel awareness—though less strongly articulated—that frequent reliance on such tools may affect the development of independent thinking skills.

Conclusions

- The findings of this study show that artificial intelligence is already embedded in students' academic routines and is regularly used in a variety of learning-related activities. In most cases, students rely on AI in a supportive way, especially for clarifying concepts, summarizing materials, and organizing information. This pattern suggests that AI is mainly functioning as a tool for increasing efficiency in everyday academic work, rather than replacing core cognitive effort entirely.

- The results indicate that longer exposure to AI tools is more strongly associated with students' perceptions of cognitive change than the simple frequency of use. This pattern is consistent with the extended cognition theory, which suggests that external tools can become progressively integrated into cognitive processes over time, particularly when they are regularly employed in problem-solving and learning activities.

- Students tend to emphasize the practical benefits of AI, especially time efficiency and easier information management. At the same time, they also point to risks such as dependency on technology and a possible decline in critical thinking skills, although these concerns are expressed less consistently.

- Cognitive externalization through AI is not perceived as a direct epistemic threat. Rather, it is experienced as a gradual shift in how learning is organized and how thinking is supported. From an educational perspective, this highlights the importance of strengthening students' metacognitive awareness and encouraging critical, reflective use of AI tools, so that technology functions as a support for intellectual development rather than a substitute for it.

Study Limitations

The data were collected exclusively through self-report, which may introduce distortions related to social desirability, estimation errors, or discrepancies between subjective perceptions and objective cognitive changes. The sample structure – predominantly female and largely from a humanities background – limits the generalizability of the findings to other academic or professional populations. These limitations highlight the need for future research employing a longitudinal design and more diverse samples, which would allow for a clearer understanding of the nature and extent of perceived changes in thinking in the context of artificial intelligence use.

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FUNCTIONAL BURNOUT VS. CLINICAL BURNOUT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINED PERFORMANCE UNDER CONDITIONS OF EXHAUSTION

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The article advances a conceptual extension of the burnout phenomenon by introducing a distinction between clinical burnout and functional burnout in the context of contemporary transformations in the organizational environment. While clinical burnout is well documented and associated with performance deterioration, functional burnout describes a latent form of exhaustion in which performance is maintained through compensatory psychological mechanisms. The paper employs an integrative theoretical analysis of the literature in occupational health psychology, stress theory, and self-regulation theory. The central argument is that classical burnout models are insufficient to explain this emerging form, leading to an underestimation of psychosocial risks in modern organizations. The analysis highlights the role of excessive self-regulation, emotional dissonance, and internalized organizational performance norms in sustaining performance under conditions of exhaustion. The article concludes that functional burnout requires a reconceptualization of the relationship between performance and occupational health and opens avenues for the development of more sensitive diagnostic frameworks.

Keywords: *functional burnout, clinical burnout, sustainable performance, compensatory performance, self-regulation, emotional dissonance, occupational health, occupational stress.*

BURNOUT FUNCȚIONAL VS. BURNOUT CLINIC: O ANALIZĂ PSIHOLAGICĂ A PERFORMANȚEI MENȚINUTE ÎN CONDIȚII DE EPUIZARE

Articolul dat prezintă o extindere conceptuală a fenomenului burnout prin delimitarea între burnout clinic și burnout funcțional, în contextul schimbărilor actuale ale mediului organizațional. În timp ce burnout-ul clinic este bine documentat și asociat cu deteriorarea performanței, burnout-ul funcțional descrie o formă latentă de epuizare în care performanța este menținută prin mecanisme psihologice compensatorii. Articolul face referire la o analiză teoretică integrativă a literaturii din psihologia sănătății ocupaționale, teoria stresului și teoria autoreglării. Argumentul central susține că modelele clasice de burnout sunt insuficiente pentru a explica această formă emergentă, ceea ce conduce la subestimarea riscurilor psihosociale în organizațiile moderne. Se evidențiază rolul autoreglării excesive, disonanței emoționale și normelor organizaționale internalizate în menținerea performanței în condiții de epuizare. Se concluzionează că burnout-ul funcțional necesită o reconceptualizare a relației dintre performanță și sănătate ocupațională și deschide direcții pentru dezvoltarea unor modele diagnostice mai sensibile.

Cuvinte-cheie: *burnout funcțional, burnout clinic, performanță sustenabilă, performanță compensatorie, autoreglare, disonanță emoțională, sănătate ocupațională, stres ocupațional.*

Introduction

Burnout is widely regarded as one of the most extensively investigated phenomena in occupational health psychology, conceptualized as a syndrome resulting from prolonged exposure to chronic job-related stressors and characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy [15, 16]. Theoretical advances over recent decades have been supported by robust explanatory frameworks such as the Job Demands–Resources model [4] and Conservation of Resources theory [9], which conceptualize burnout as an outcome of imbalance between environmental demands and available psychological resources. Despite these developments, the existing literature continues to focus mainly on the manifest forms of burnout, where functional impairments are visible and can be measured [20]. In most assessment instruments and empirical studies, burnout is treated as being directly linked to reduced performance, psychological disengagement, and lower organizational involvement [17].

This perspective implicitly assumes a relatively direct relationship between psychological exhaustion and professional performance—a relationship that is only rarely examined critically. Contemporary organizational dynamics suggest a more complex reality. In environments characterized by high performance pressure, intense competition, and the internalization of performance norms, individuals are increasingly observed to sustain high levels of performance despite significant psychological exhaustion [21]. This pattern of functioning is supported by mechanisms such as intensive self-regulation, emotional labor, and identity investment in the professional role [6, 1].

Within this context, a promising research direction is emerging, although it remains underdeveloped. While the literature acknowledges the psychological costs associated with sustained high performance, these processes are often addressed only indirectly and in a fragmented way. In particular, a form of burnout characterized by the maintenance of performance has not yet been clearly defined. As a result, current studies offer only partial explanations for situations in which psychological exhaustion does not lead to a decline in performance, but is instead masked or compensated through adaptive mechanisms.

This state of affairs points to limitations in existing approaches. Conceptually, prevailing models primarily capture manifest expressions of burnout and are less sensitive to latent or less visible forms of exhaustion. In practice, organizational systems often struggle to identify employees at risk, as performance is frequently used as a proxy for occupational health.

In this framework, the present article advances the theoretical field by introducing a conceptual distinction between **clinical burnout**, characterized by observable dysfunction, and **functional burnout**, defined by sustained performance under conditions of compensated psychological exhaustion. This distinction enables a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between performance and occupational health. It contributes to the development of analytical models and assessment tools that are more sensitive to the internal dynamics of professional adaptation.

Results and Discussion

Limitations of Classical Burnout Conceptualization.

Dominant theoretical models of burnout, particularly the three-dimensional framework proposed by Maslach and the Job Demands–Resources model, have substantially contributed to advancing the understanding of the relationship between occupational stress and exhaustion [15, 4]. These frameworks conceptualize burnout as the outcome of an imbalance between job demands and the individual's available resources, highlighting the important role of both organizational and psychological factors in shaping the development and persistence of the phenomenon [9]. A closer examination suggests that these models are primarily oriented toward contexts in which psychological exhaustion is accompanied by observable changes in professional performance. While this perspective has provided valuable insights, it may not fully encompass the range of ways in which burnout can manifest in contemporary organizational environments. In practice, it is not uncommon for individuals to maintain relatively high levels of professional functioning despite experiencing significant psychological exhaustion. This pattern of functioning indicates a more nuanced relationship between external performance and internal experience, suggesting that certain dimensions of burnout may be less readily captured by traditional performance-based indicators.

Clinical Burnout vs. Functional Burnout: A Difference in Psychological Organization.

The distinction between clinical burnout and functional burnout cannot be reduced to a difference in intensity; rather, it reflects different modes of organizing the psychological response to stress.

Clinical burnout is marked by the failure of adaptive mechanisms, which is reflected in lower professional engagement, diminished performance, and the appearance of psychosomatic symptoms. In this condition, exhaustion becomes observable and is acknowledged both at the individual and organizational level [20].

In contrast, functional burnout involves the maintenance of performance through the intensive activation of self-regulatory mechanisms. The individual remains engaged, effective, and apparently well-adapted; however, this balance is sustained through increased psychological effort. Thus, functional burnout can be conceptualized as a form of maladaptive adaptation, in which external functioning is preserved at the expense of internal equilibrium [9, 8]. This perspective suggests that functional burnout should not be con-

sidered a “milder” form of burnout. Instead, it may be more difficult to detect. It can also be associated with higher long-term risks. This is due to its latent nature. [20, 5].

Excessive Self-Regulation as a Central Mechanism.

One of the fundamental psychological mechanisms involved in functional burnout is excessive self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to the individual’s capacity to control emotions, cognitions, and behaviors in order to achieve goals [2]. It is generally regarded as an essential adaptive factor for performance and effective functioning.

However, the literature indicates that self-regulatory resources are limited and may be depleted over time, a phenomenon commonly referred to as “ego depletion” [2]. Under chronic stress, the continuous mobilization of these resources leads to a gradual deterioration in self-regulatory capacity and the emergence of exhaustion.

In functional burnout, the individual compensates for high demands through sustained self-control efforts, which enable short-term performance maintenance but generate an internal imbalance in the long term [2, 7]. This mode of functioning is often reinforced at the organizational level, contributing to its persistence.

Emotional Dissonance and Hidden Psychological Costs.

Emotional dissonance represents another central mechanism in functional burnout and refers to the incongruence between experienced and expressed emotions. In organizational environments, employees are frequently required to display emotional behaviors that align with professional norms, regardless of their internal state.

This incongruence entails additional emotional regulation effort and is associated with increased levels of exhaustion and reduced psychological authenticity [6]. Over time, maintaining such dissonance leads to emotional alienation and a diminished sense of internal coherence [1].

In functional burnout, emotional dissonance becomes a stable adaptive strategy, supporting the maintenance of performance while simultaneously amplifying psychological costs.

Performance as a Defensive Mechanism.

An aspect that remains insufficiently explored in the classical burnout literature concerns the defensive function of performance. Traditionally, performance has been interpreted as the outcome of competence, motivation, and professional engagement [15, 20]. However, in contexts characterized by chronic occupational stress and heightened normative pressure, performance may acquire an additional function—that of a psychological protection mechanism, consistent with contemporary theories of stress and adaptation.

From an integrative perspective, performance can be conceptualized not only as a behavioral output but also as a strategy of internal regulation. The literature on self-regulation and emotion regulation suggests that individuals may rely on goal-directed behaviors to maintain psychological stability under conditions of stress [2, 7]. In this sense, maintaining a high level of performance may contribute to avoiding confrontation with states of psychological vulnerability, such as exhaustion, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy. Thus, performance becomes a “functional screen” that masks internal dysfunctions and enables the individual to preserve a coherent sense of self and professional functioning [1].

First, performance may operate as an **avoidance mechanism**. In conditions of incipient exhaustion, intensive engagement in professional tasks reduces cognitive and emotional availability for self-reflection. Continuous activity and a strong focus on results function as a form of distraction, limiting conscious access to internal signals of fatigue or imbalance. This form of avoidant coping is well documented in the stress and self-regulation literature, which highlights the role of task-oriented behaviors in the temporary reduction of psychological discomfort [2, 12].

Second, performance fulfills an identity-validation role. In many organizational settings, professional identity is closely tied to achieved results, and performance becomes a key standard for self-evaluation [1]. In cases of functional burnout, this dynamic becomes even stronger. Individuals continue to perform not only in response to external demands, but also to prevent a mismatch between their self-perception (as competent and effective) and their internal state (feeling exhausted and overburdened). Research on emotional labor and professional identity indicates that maintaining consistency between identity and behavior is a strong motivator of organizational action, even when it involves considerable psychological strain. [6, 1].

Third, performance may function as a mechanism for **maintaining psychological control**. In situations characterized by uncertainty, pressure, or ambiguity, achieving professional goals provides individuals with a sense of predictability and control, an aspect emphasized in cognitive stress theory [12]. Even when other dimensions of experience (emotional or personal) become unstable, professional performance remains a domain in which individuals perceive themselves as capable of acting effectively. This perception contributes to maintaining an apparent psychological equilibrium, although it involves increased consumption of self-regulatory resources [2].

From this perspective, performance in functional burnout cannot be seen only as an indicator of optimal functioning. It should be analyzed in relation to the individual's internal dynamics. It may reflect competence. At the same time, it can also indicate intensive compensatory effort. This aligns with contemporary perspectives on the relationship between resources and occupational stress. [9, 8].

This reinterpretation has important theoretical and practical implications. At the theoretical level, it suggests the need to integrate identity-related, emotional, and defensive dimensions into burnout models, moving beyond exclusively behavioral approaches [20, 13]. At the practical level, it indicates that the assessment of occupational health cannot rely solely on performance indicators, but must also incorporate measures of internal psychological states, such as emotional exhaustion and emotional dissonance [6, 7].

Thus, within the context of functional burnout, performance should be understood as a complex coping strategy that, while effective in the short term, may contribute to the maintenance and amplification of exhaustion over the long term, in accordance with theoretical models of progressive resource depletion [9].

Organizational Implications: The Vulnerable High Performer Paradox.

Functional burnout gives rise to a significant organizational paradox: employees who are consistently evaluated as “high performers” may simultaneously be those most exposed to psychological risks. This incongruence stems from the fact that visible performance can mask substantial internal costs, while organizational systems tend to rely primarily on behavioral and outcome-based indicators that are insufficient to capture the internal dynamics of exhaustion [8].

First, such employees are less likely to seek support. A professional identity centered on competence and efficiency reduces the likelihood of acknowledging vulnerability or requesting assistance. Moreover, organizational norms may implicitly discourage the expression of difficulties, particularly in roles associated with high responsibility. As a result, a pattern of apparent self-sufficiency emerges, in which genuine needs remain unexpressed, and exhaustion progresses without intervention [1]. Second, high performers are less easily identified by organizational systems as being at risk. Traditional evaluation tools, such as KPIs, productivity metrics, and deadline compliance, do not capture subtle signs of psychological strain. These include emotional dissonance, rigid self-regulation, and reduced recovery capacity. As a result, early detection methods, such as pulse surveys and periodic assessments, may fail to identify individuals at latent risk. This is because high performance scores can mask early warning signs. [6]. Third, these employees are more vulnerable to overload. Organizational task allocation practices often favor redistributing workload toward those who consistently deliver results. This “principle of rewarded competence” leads to the progressive accumulation of responsibilities, role expansion, and increased task complexity. In the absence of protective mechanisms, performance becomes a predictor of overload rather than of sustainability [3].

These dynamics point to a structural limitation in current organizational practices—namely, the tendency to equate performance with optimal functioning. Such an assumption overlooks the possibility that performance may be sustained through compensatory effort and elevated psychological cost, in line with resource depletion frameworks [9]. Consequently, organizations risk reinforcing unsustainable patterns of functioning and delaying preventive interventions.

Reconceptualizing the Performance–Psychological Health Relationship

The findings of the present analysis highlight the need to rethink the relationship between performance and psychological well-being. This involves moving beyond the implicit assumption that high performance automatically reflects optimal functioning. In the traditional literature, performance is often used as an indirect measure of effective adaptation. This is based on the idea that individuals who meet or exceed organizational standards have sufficient psychological resources and maintain internal stability [17].

Although this assumption holds in certain contexts, it becomes insufficient in light of the complexity of contemporary organizational environments, where performance may be sustained through compensatory mechanisms associated with elevated psychological costs, in line with stress and resource-based theories [9].

In this context, it is important to distinguish between sustainable performance and compensatory performance. These represent two different modes of professional functioning. Each has different implications for occupational health [4].

Sustainable performance is characterized by the attainment of professional goals under conditions of relatively stable psychological equilibrium. It reflects a functional balance between environmental demands and individual resources, in which self-regulation remains flexible, psychological recovery is possible, and professional engagement does not result in chronic exhaustion [13]. Sustainable performance is associated with:

- a. the efficient, but not excessive, use of self-regulatory resources [2];
- b. congruence between internal experience and professional behavior [6];
- c. the capacity for recovery and replenishment of resources [9];
- d. emotional and cognitive stability over the medium and long term [7].

In contrast, **compensatory performance** is sustained through a disproportionate consumption of psychological resources, particularly self-regulation and emotional control. In this case, performance does not reflect a functional balance, but rather a continuous effort to maintain standards under conditions of internal imbalance, in line with resource depletion models [9]. This form of performance is characteristic of functional burnout and involves:

- a. excessive and rigid mobilization of self-regulatory mechanisms [2]
- b. persistent emotional dissonance [6]
- c. reduced recovery capacity [9]
- d. the progressive accumulation of stress and exhaustion [8].

The key difference between these two forms is not the level of performance itself, but the psychological cost required to maintain it. In this sense, two employees may achieve similar organizational results. However, one may operate in a sustainable way, while the other relies on compensatory mechanisms. This second pattern is associated with a higher risk of later deterioration [3].

From this perspective, functional burnout falls within the category of compensatory performance and highlights the limitations of organizational evaluations based exclusively on outcomes. Assessing performance without integrating internal psychological dimensions may lead to misjudgments and to the failure to identify occupational risks [13].

At the theoretical level, this reconceptualization implies the extension of performance models to include the dimension of psychological sustainability, in line with contemporary perspectives on emotional regulation and adaptation [7]. Performance can no longer be analyzed independently of the internal processes that sustain it, but must be understood as the result of a dynamic interplay between demands, resources, and adaptive mechanisms [9].

At the applied level, this approach entails the development of assessment tools that incorporate not only external indicators (productivity, efficiency, outcomes), but also indicators of internal states, such as: level of emotional exhaustion [17]; perceived control and personal resources [12]; degree of emotional dissonance [6]; capacity for psychological recovery [9].

Integrating these dimensions enables a more nuanced evaluation of professional functioning and facilitates the early identification of functional burnout [13].

The relationship between performance and psychological health could therefore be reinterpreted within a more complex framework, in which performance is not regarded as a sufficient indicator of adaptation, but as an outcome that may be sustained through either functional or compensatory processes. This distinction is essential for the development of organizational models oriented not only toward efficiency, but also toward psychological sustainability [9].

Conclusions

Functional burnout can be understood as a relevant extension of the current theoretical framework. It reflects complex psychological adaptations to modern organizational demands. Unlike clinical burnout, it is not marked by a reduction in performance. Instead, performance is maintained despite a high psychological cost. This form of burnout is harder to identify. It also carries greater long-term risks. It can delay timely intervention and normalize sustained overexertion.

From a *theoretical perspective*, the findings support the need to: revise classical burnout models; introduce the concept of compensatory performance; develop more nuanced psychological indicators.

From a *practical perspective*, organizations need to move beyond the “performance = health” paradigm and incorporate psychological dimensions into employee evaluation.

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OPTIMIZATION OF FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES IN CHILDREN WITH CEREBRAL PALSY THROUGH PHYSIOTHERAPY AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

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Cerebral palsy leads to persistent limitations in motor function and in the child's participation in daily activities. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an integrated intervention combining physiotherapy and occupational therapy in optimizing the functional abilities of children with cerebral palsy. The therapeutic program was implemented over a 12-week period and focused on improving mobility, functional performance, and autonomy. Assessment was conducted using GMFM-88, PEDI-CAT, GMFCS, and MACS. The results showed significant increases in functional scores and improvements in performance in activities of daily living, while functional classifications remained stable, indicating realistic progress within the analyzed timeframe. The findings support the effectiveness of an integrated approach and highlight the importance of implementing individualized rehabilitation programs to enhance independence and participation in children with cerebral palsy.

Keywords: *physiotherapy, cerebral palsy, occupational therapy, functional assessment, activities of daily living (ADL).*

OPTIMIZAREA FUNCȚIONALITĂȚII LA COPIII CU PARALIZIE CEREBRALĂ INFANTILĂ PRIN KINETOTERAPIE ȘI TERAPIE OCUPAȚIONALĂ

Paralizia cerebrală infantilă determină limitări persistente ale funcției motorii și ale participării copilului în activitățile zilnice. Studiul a avut ca scop evaluarea eficienței unei intervenții integrate de kinetoterapie și terapie ocupațională în optimizarea funcționalității copiilor cu PCI. Programul terapeutic a fost aplicat pe o perioadă de 12 săptămâni și a vizat îmbunătățirea mobilității, a performanței funcționale și a autonomiei. Evaluarea a fost realizată prin GMFM-88, PEDI-CAT, GMFCS și MACS. Rezultatele au evidențiat creșteri semnificative ale scorurilor funcționale și îmbunătățirea performanței în activitățile vieții zilnice, în timp ce clasificările funcționale au rămas stabile, indicând un progres realist în intervalul analizat. Concluziile susțin eficiența abordării integrate și importanța implementării programelor individualizate pentru creșterea independenței și a participării copiilor cu paralizie cerebrală infantilă.

Cuvinte cheie: *kinetoterapie, paralizie cerebrală infantilă, terapie ocupațională, evaluare, ADL.*

Introduction

Cerebral palsy (CP) represents a group of permanent disorders of the development of movement and posture that cause activity limitations, with onset in the fetal period or early childhood and a non-progressive character. These disorders are the consequence of lesions or abnormalities occurring in the immature central nervous system [5, p. 1].

The motor disorders characteristic of cerebral palsy are frequently accompanied by sensory, cognitive, communication and perceptual impairments, behavioral disorders, as well as epileptic seizures [7, p. 1152]. The lesions responsible for the occurrence of CP usually develop before the age of 2 years, and the diagnosis is confirmed after this age, once the essential maturation processes of the central nervous system are completed [5, p. 3].

The defining feature of cerebral palsy is the disturbance of the child's motor development, caused by the abnormal distribution of muscle tone and impairment of the coordination of voluntary movements [8, p. 248].

Infantile cerebral palsy represents a widely распространен pathology. According to data reported by various authors, its incidence ranges between 2 and 3.1 cases per 1,000 children. Statistical data indicate an increase in the level of childhood disability caused by cerebral palsy, with values of 1.4 per 1,000 children in 1991, 1.5 per 1,000 in 1992, and 1.65 per 1,000 in 1993 [1].

In France and England, approximately 25% of patients with cerebral palsy present severe motor impairment, being unable to walk independently, while about 30% are associated with intellectual disability [7, p. 3]. Most authors consider that the actual prevalence of cerebral palsy is higher, a phenomenon explained by the decrease in mortality among premature infants and newborns with low birth weight, categories that present an increased risk of developing infantile cerebral palsy [4, p. 23].

The prevalence of moderate and severe forms of cerebral palsy is estimated between 1.5 and 2.5 per 1,000 live births, being higher in developing countries. From an epidemiological perspective, infantile cerebral palsy accounts for approximately 24% of all causes of neurological disability in children. In addition, prevalence is estimated to be about 1.3 times higher in boys, who tend to present more severe clinical forms than girls [12, p. 43].

Physiotherapy plays an essential role in the management of cerebral palsy, including a variety of therapeutic interventions aimed at improving the physiological and functional outcomes of the child [2, p. 7]. Although widely used and recommended by members of the multidisciplinary team, the effectiveness of physiotherapy interventions may vary depending on the type, intensity, and structure of the applied programs [10, p. 87].

The main objective of physiotherapy interventions is the reduction of functional impairments and the prevention of secondary complications [3, p. 145]. Physical exercise contributes to the improvement of posture, regulation of muscle tone, and enhancement of balance, playing an important role in reducing secondary conditions associated with cerebral palsy [11, p. 364].

Exercise programs performed on the floor, which include muscle strengthening and stretching exercises, lead to significant increases in muscle strength and improvements in gait, the ability to transition from sitting to standing, as well as overall functional performance. Randomized controlled studies have also demonstrated that these programs may contribute to increased levels of participation and improved quality of life in children with cerebral palsy [5, pp. 5–6].

Longitudinal observational studies indicate that integrated rehabilitation programs, centered on functional goals established according to the ICF framework, can generate significant improvements in the mobility and participation of children with cerebral palsy, including in the long term [13, pp. 2421].

Pediatric occupational therapy plays a fundamental role in promoting the child's participation in everyday roles, such as the development of personal independence, involvement in productive activities, and participation in play and recreational activities [9, p. 2]. Limitations in participation caused by disability may lead to social marginalization, isolation, and decreased self-esteem, highlighting the need for therapeutic interventions that are adapted and focused on functionality [11, p. 365].

Occupational therapy interventions are selected based on the analysis of the child's performance in daily activities, the way disability influences this performance, and the role of the environment in facilitating or restricting participation [6, p. 7]. Modern practice in pediatric occupational therapy, aligned with the ICF framework and family-centered care principles, promotes interventions oriented toward activity and participation, rather than approaches focused exclusively on deficits [6, p. 11].

Although occupational therapy promotes evidence-based practice, the literature highlights a significant delay in the implementation of research findings into clinical practice, emphasizing the need for the continuous updating of therapeutic interventions and rehabilitation strategies.

Materials and methods

The study included six children diagnosed with bilateral spastic cerebral palsy (CP), aged between 4 and 6 years, including four boys and two girls, all presenting the spastic form of the condition. The research was conducted at the Kinetica Medical Rehabilitation Center during the period May–July 2025. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental, prospective pre–post study without a control group.

In this context, considering the complexity of functional limitations associated with children with special needs and the necessity of integrated therapeutic interventions, the present study aims to analyze the effectiveness of rehabilitation from a functional perspective by correlating physiotherapy and occupational therapy interventions, and further formulates the aim, objectives, and hypothesis of the study.

The physiotherapy program was individually planned for each child, aiming to achieve specific functional goals established in accordance with all components of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY). Based on the ICF-CY framework, the assessment tools were selected and the therapeutic objectives were defined.

The psychopedagogical approach was child-centered and oriented toward functional development, aiming to facilitate active participation in activities of daily living. The intervention integrated principles of motor learning and therapeutic education by using tasks adapted to the child's developmental level and individual abilities. At the same time, the involvement of the family environment was considered essential in supporting functional progress and autonomy.

The integrated approach of physiotherapy and occupational therapy allowed the transfer of motor achievements into meaningful functional activities, contributing to the optimization of mobility, functional performance, and the level of participation of the children included in the study, in accordance with the principles of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY).

The application of the intervention algorithm within the present study followed a structured, functional, and standardized approach, centered on the child and aligned with the framework of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY). Initially, all six children included in the study underwent an initial assessment, which aimed to determine the baseline functional level and the individual functional profile. The assessment was conducted using validated and internationally recognized instruments, namely GMFM-88 for the evaluation of gross motor function, GMFCS for the classification of the motor functional level, PEDI-CAT for the assessment of functional performance and participation, and MACS for the classification of manual abilities.

Based on the results obtained from the initial assessment, common functional objectives were formulated according to SMART criteria, aiming to improve functional mobility, performance in activities of daily living, and the level of participation. The objectives were defined in an individualized and family-centered manner, forming the foundation for the development of the rehabilitation program.

Subsequently, an integrated rehabilitation program was implemented, which included physiotherapy interventions conducted twice per week and occupational therapy sessions carried out once per week. The physiotherapy interventions primarily aimed at optimizing postural control, improving mobility and muscle strength, and enhancing gross motor function, while occupational therapy activities were focused on increasing functional independence, improving hand-eye coordination, and facilitating the child's participation in meaningful activities and activities of daily living. The two therapeutic components were applied in a complementary manner, aiming to transfer motor gains into real functional contexts.

At the end of the intervention period, the children underwent a final assessment using the same evaluation instruments as in the initial stage, which allowed the comparison of pre- and post-intervention results and the assessment of the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program. This algorithmic approach ensured a coherent, reproducible, and function-oriented intervention, facilitating the analysis of the impact of physiotherapy and occupational therapy on the overall functioning of the children included in the study.

Results

The results of the initial and final assessments are presented in Table 1. The comparative analysis of functional parameters, conducted at baseline and after 12 weeks of integrated physiotherapy and occupational therapy intervention, revealed relevant changes in gross motor function and overall functionality of the children included in the study.

The Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS) indicated that the median level remained at Level II both at the initial and final assessments, reflecting the stability of the overall functional level of the study group during the intervention period.

Regarding gross motor function, assessed using the GMFM-88, the mean score increased from 66.7 ± 2.9 to 71.1 ± 3.1 , the difference being statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). This increase indicates an improvement in gross motor abilities following the applied intervention.

The analysis of PEDI-CAT scores revealed statistically significant improvements across all evaluated domains. In the Activities of Daily Living (ADL) domain, the mean score increased from 38.8 ± 2.7 to 45.2 ± 3.0 ($P < 0.05$). The Mobility domain showed an increase from 33.2 ± 2.2 to 39.0 ± 2.6 ($P < 0.05$), while the Social/Cognitive domain increased from 43.3 ± 2.9 to 49.5 ± 3.1 ($P < 0.05$).

Regarding manual ability, assessed using the Manual Ability Classification System (MACS), the distribution of levels revealed a favorable change in the functional profile of the study group. At the initial assessment, 33.3% of the children were classified at Level II and 66.7% at Level III, whereas at the final assessment, the proportion of children classified at Level II increased to 50%, while those classified at Level III decreased to 50%.

Table 1. Interpretation and comparison of the results obtained

Instrument		Initial assessment	Final assessment	P
GMFCS		II	II	-
GMFM-88		$66,7 \pm 2,9$	$71,1 \pm 3,1$	$<0,05$
PEDI-CAT	ADL	$38,8 \pm 2,7$	$45,2 \pm 3,0$	$<0,05$
	Mobility	$33,2 \pm 2,2$	$39,0 \pm 2,6$	$<0,05$
	Social/Cognitivex	$43,3 \pm 2,9$	$49,5 \pm 3,1$	$<0,05$
MACS	2 children	Level II – 33,3%	Level II – 50%	-
	4 children	Level III – 66,7%	Level III – 50%	-

Overall, the data presented in Table 1 indicate that the intervention applied over 12 weeks was associated with statistically significant improvements in gross motor function and overall functionality, as demonstrated by change-sensitive instruments such as GMFM-88 and PEDI-CAT, while the functional classification instruments reflected stability in the functional level or a favorable trend in the redistribution of classification levels.

Discussion

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the integrated physiotherapy and occupational therapy intervention, applied over a period of 12 weeks, was associated with statistically significant improvements in gross motor function and overall functionality in the children included in the study. These improvements were evidenced by significant increases in GMFM-88 and PEDI-CAT scores, while the functional classification instruments, GMFCS and MACS, reflected functional stability or a favorable trend in the redistribution of functional levels.

The significant increase in the GMFM-88 score suggests progress in gross motor abilities, particularly with regard to postural control, transitions, and functional mobility. This result is consistent with findings reported in the literature, which indicate that structured physiotherapy programs implemented with appropriate frequency can lead to measurable short-term improvements in gross motor function, especially in children with mild to moderate functional levels.

The significant improvements observed across all PEDI-CAT domains indicate that motor progress was accompanied by relevant functional gains in daily activities, mobility, and social–cognitive engagement. The increases in scores in the Activities of Daily Living (ADL) domain suggest improved autonomy in self-care activities, while progress in the Mobility domain reflects an increased ability to perform movement and functional transfers. Furthermore, the improvements observed in the Social/Cognitive domain may be associated with more active participation in structured activities and better adaptation to the functional demands of the environment.

The stability of GMFCS throughout the intervention period was expected, given that this instrument describes the overall functional level and is less sensitive to short-term changes. In contrast, the changes observed in the distribution of MACS levels, although not subjected to statistical testing, indicate a favorable trend toward improved functional use of the hand, reflected by the increased proportion of children classified at Level II at the final assessment.

It is important to emphasize that the results of this study should be interpreted in the context of the small sample size and the absence of a control group, which limits the generalization of the conclusions. Nevertheless, the consistency of the improvements observed in change-sensitive instruments supports the clinical relevance of the applied intervention.

Overall, the obtained data suggest that an integrated physiotherapy and occupational therapy program, conducted over a 12-week period, may contribute to improvements in gross motor function and overall functionality in children with special needs, particularly in domains that can be quantified through instruments sensitive to functional changes.

Conclusions

Infantile cerebral palsy represents a complex neurological condition frequently associated with significant functional limitations that affect motor development, autonomy, and the child's participation in daily activities. Considering the non-progressive but permanent nature of the condition, early, structured, and continuous therapeutic intervention plays an essential role in reducing functional impairments and preventing secondary complications, thereby contributing to the optimization of the child's functional potential.

The results of the study confirm the effectiveness of an integrated physiotherapy and occupational therapy approach in improving gross motor function and overall functionality in children with cerebral palsy. The significant increases in GMFM-88 and PEDI-CAT scores demonstrate the positive impact of the intervention on mobility and performance in activities of daily living, while the stability of the functional classifications (GMFCS and MACS) reflects the realistic nature of the progress achieved within a 12-week intervention period. These findings support the need for the implementation of integrated rehabilitation programs tailored to the individual needs of children with cerebral palsy.

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COGNITIVE DETERMINANTS AND ADAPTATION DYNAMICS TO ACUTE STRESS IN INTENSIVE CARE UNITS: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

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The present study analyzes the psychological variables that influence the reaction of critically ill patients to the highly invasive environment of Intensive Care Units (ICU). The fundamental objective involves exploring the links between dysfunctional cognitive configurations, emotional self-regulation processes, and the symptomatic profile defined by stress, anxiety, and depression. The research findings indicate that the severity of acute stress is not strictly determined by the somatic clinical picture, but arises as a result of processing reality through rigid mental filters, particularly through catastrophizing and rumination mechanisms. Ultimately, the paper advocates for a reconfiguration of the critical care medical model, arguing that early psychological monitoring is an indispensable intervention tool for mitigating the risk of post-traumatic sequelae and for enhancing the long-term rehabilitation of vulnerable subjects.

Keywords: *cognitive configurations, acute stress, critical care medicine, cognitive-emotional coping, psychological fragility, clinical resilience.*

DETERMINANȚI COGNITIVI ȘI DINAMICA ADAPTĂRII LA STRESUL ACUT ÎN UNITĂȚILE DE TERAPIE INTENSIVĂ: O ANALIZĂ MULTIDIMENSIONALĂ

Studiul de față analizează variabilele de natură psihologică ce influențează reacția pacienților aflați în stare critică la mediul înalt invaziv al secțiilor de Terapie Intensivă (UTI). Obiectivul fundamental urmărește explorarea legăturilor dintre configurațiile cognitive disfuncționale, procesele de autoreglare emoțională și tabloul simptomatic definit prin stres, anxietate și depresie. Concluziile cercetării indică faptul că severitatea stresului acut nu este determinată strict de tabloul clinic somatic, ci survine ca urmare a procesării realității prin filtre mentale rigide, în special prin mecanismele de catastrofă și ruminare. În definitiv, lucrarea pledează pentru o reconfigurare a modelului de îngrijire medicală critică, susținând că monitorizarea psihologică precoce este un instrument de intervenție indispensabil pentru diminuarea riscului de sechele posttraumatice și pentru potențarea reabilitării pe termen lung a subiecților vulnerabili.

Cuvinte-cheie: *configurații cognitive, stres acut, medicină critică, coping cognitiv-emoțional, fragilitate psihică, reziliență clinică.*

Introduction

Admission to an Anesthesia and Intensive Care (ICU) ward represents a critical life event that triggers a significant disruption in the continuity of a patient's personal identity. Apart from the immediate physiological crisis, the ICU setting subjects the individual to persistent psychological and sensory strain, characterized by a total erosion of autonomy, a sense of depersonalization, and the unavoidable encounter with mortality [21; 26]. While modern technological breakthroughs have markedly improved clinical survival outcomes, research is now progressively focusing on the long-term functional status of survivors—a clinical reality formally identified as Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) [17; 18].

The significance of this investigation arises from the imperative to evolve beyond a strictly biomedical perspective on survival within critical care. Contemporary clinical observations reveal a profound gap between the technical efficacy of life-support interventions and the lasting psychological impairments that hinder a patient's return to social and occupational life [14, 19]. Consequently, addressing the psychological morbidity inherent to the post-ICU recovery phase has emerged as a fundamental strategic objective in the management of the critically ill.

This paper contributes a novel perspective by introducing an analytical framework focused on the dynamics of cognitive mediation. The study's core premise suggests that a patient's emotional response is not merely a direct consequence of the pathology's intensity; rather, it is modulated by maladaptive cognitive schemas. These ingrained mental frameworks can significantly bias the interpretation of reality during periods of extreme physiological and psychological stress. By exploring these cognitive variables, we aim to establish a theoretical foundation for the integration of early screening protocols and systematic psychological support. Such interventions are crucial for minimizing long-term emotional sequelae and facilitating a more effective homeostatic restoration for survivors [7, 23].

Conceptual framework: cognitive schemas and trauma filtering

Cognitive schemas function as fundamental structures for organizing reality, originating in the early stages of development and becoming reinforced through cumulative life events. These frameworks serve as internal templates that direct the identification, selection, and interpretation of external information [22; 28]. When an individual encounters a life-threatening crisis, these schemas act as ingrained survival algorithms that, under extreme conditions, frequently shift toward maladaptive patterns.

Within high-stress clinical environments - such as intensive care - these cognitive architectures are instantaneously triggered. They interface with heightened states of neurobiological arousal, fundamentally altering how traumatic events are perceived, processed, and subsequently stored in memory. This interaction facilitates a distorted filtering of the patient's immediate reality, a mechanism through which objectively neutral environmental stimuli may be erroneously assigned a threatening or hostile significance.

Triggering of early maladaptive schemas (EMS)

Based on the multifaceted framework developed by Jeffrey Young, the intensive care environment act as a powerful catalyst for specific vulnerability domains. The disconnection and rejection domain is particularly susceptible; for instance, the clinical isolation necessitated by sterile ICU protocols is often filtered through the abandonment/instability schema. This cognitive distortion can lead the patient to experience an overwhelming sensation of self-annihilation [29; 30]. Concurrently, the impaired autonomy and performance domain is exacerbated by the patient's complete reliance on life-support technology. In this context, physical restraint or immobilization is perceived as more than a simple functional limitation; it represents a profound erosion of the self-efficacy schema, causing minor physiological changes to be misinterpreted as signs of an unavoidable systemic failure [13; 27].

Furthermore, the overvigilance and inhibition domain is frequently triggered by the high-surveillance nature of the ICU. In such settings, continuous medical monitoring may be decoded as a total loss of personal agency and privacy, which in turn reinforces states of chronic hypervigilance and the suppression of emotional expression. The synergy between these various activated schemas generates a compounding effect on psychological vulnerability. This cumulative pressure fosters cognitive rigidity and significantly diminishes the patient's capacity for psychological flexibility during the recovery process.

Neurobiological mechanism of stress and the state of psychological captivity

The systemic struggle to preserve physiological equilibrium, conceptualized by Hans Selye as the General Adaptation Syndrome, manifests in atypical and extreme patterns within the intensive care environment [24]. A critical neurobiological conflict arises from the massive stimulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis in a context where the archetypal "fight-or-flight" motor response is physically impossible to execute. This leads to what can be termed an internalization of stress energy [5; 23]. Under these conditions, maladaptive cognitive schemas act as neural amplifiers, trapping the brain in a self-perpetuating alert loop that exhausts biological reserves and obstructs neuro-executive processes of cognitive re-evaluation [20].

At a neurocognitive level, the chronic elevation of cortisol levels disrupts hippocampal integrity, severely hindering the integration of memories. This disruption results in a fragmented and disjointed autobiographical reconstruction of the patient's time in the ICU. Furthermore, the persistent hyperactivation of the amygdala intensifies a pervasive threat bias. Simultaneously, the functional inhibition of the prefrontal cortex diminishes the patient's capacity for cognitive reappraisal. The synergy of these neurobiological

events maintains a state of „psychological captivity,” which can persist even after the patient has reached clinical and physiological stability.

Dynamics of cognitive-emotional modulation in the ICU environment

Regulatory strategies act as the functional extension of an individual's underlying cognitive schemas. The specific mental framework through which a patient interprets their physical and emotional distress directly dictates the intensity and complexity of the acute stress response [14]. In the demanding environment of critical care, the capacity for emotional regulation is frequently compromised by exogenous factors, such as pharmacological sedation, prolonged sensory deprivation, and the loss of circadian rhythmicity. These external constraints significantly interfere with the brain's cognitive processing efficiency, often undermining the patient's ability to employ adaptive coping mechanisms during the crisis.

Maladaptive mechanisms - drivers of psychological distress

Catastrophizing - this serves as the primary cognitive distortion in the acute phase of critical illness. It manifests as a systematic mental projection of the most dire outcomes, a process that shows a robust correlation with heightened levels of state-anxiety [20; 27]. Within this framework, objectively neutral environmental cues, such as the rhythmic sounds of monitoring equipment, are erroneously decoded as signs of imminent biological failure.

Rumination - this involves a persistent cognitive fixation on the origins and implications of the medical crisis, without a transition toward constructive problem-solving. Such repetitive thinking patterns obstruct the brain's ability to synthesize the traumatic event into a structured and manageable autobiographical narrative [10; 25].

Self-blame - often a precursor to major depressive symptoms, this strategy involves the internal attribution of the illness as a form of personal punishment. This perception not only erodes morale but also significantly undermines the patient's motivation to adhere to complex medical protocols [19].

Adaptive strategies and the foundations of resilience

Positive reappraisal - this represents the cognitive ability to assign a protective or constructive significance to the clinical environment. Patients utilizing this strategy reinterpret continuous monitoring not as an intrusive violation of privacy, but as a vital safety net. This cognitive shift has been shown to dampen neurovegetative over-activation and stabilize the physiological stress response [28].

Acceptance - this involves the conscious acknowledgement of current physical and functional constraints without allowing them to diminish the individual's sense of self-worth. Acceptance functions as a critical buffer, moderating the relationship between the clinical severity of the pathology and its overall psychological impact [7; 16].

Methodological framework for psychodiagnostic investigation

The research design employed in this investigation follows a mixed-methods paradigm, harmonizing inferential statistical rigor with a detailed phenomenological perspective [8; 11]. This strategic triangulation is specifically designed to encapsulate the intricate dynamics of the mind-body connection during acute medical crises. By integrating quantitative metrics with qualitative insights, the study strengthens its ecological validity, facilitating a more nuanced and holistic comprehension of the mechanisms through which trauma is processed within the high-pressure environment of critical care units.

Research instrumentation and ethical considerations in critical settings

Conducting psychological assessments within the intensive care environment necessitates significant methodological adjustments. While standardized and validated psychometric tools—such as the **CERQ**, **DASS-21R**, and **STAI-Y**—were utilized, their administration was carefully tailored to accommodate the acute exhaustion and fluctuating energy levels of the participants [19; 27]. Beyond quantitative metrics, a primary emphasis was placed on systematic clinical observation and semi-structured qualitative interviews. These methods proved essential for interpreting the non-verbal cues and the disjointed, fragmented memories that typically characterize the experience of acute stress [12; 23]. Throughout this process, the preservation of human dignity and the strict observance of the patient's physiological thresholds served as the overarching ethical mandates [18; 26].

Moreover, the temporal dimension of the assessment was treated as a critical variable. Recognizing that cognitive and emotional responses undergo significant shifts during the transition from medical stabilization to sedation weaning and eventual recovery, the timing of data collection was strategically synchronized with the patient's clinical trajectory.

Data synthesis and phenomenological analysis

The synthesized findings consistently indicate that a patient's unique cognitive configuration serves as a more reliable predictor of acute stress levels than isolated physiological markers. This suggests that the subjective interpretation of the medical crisis, rather than the objective severity of the pathology, is the primary driver of psychological morbidity in the ICU.

The influence of cognitive frameworks on stress magnitude

The clinical analysis underscores that individuals possessing inflexible vulnerability schemas demonstrate a significantly heightened neuro-emotional response. In this dynamic, *catastrophizing* acts as a critical intermediary, bridging the gap between latent, deep-seated cognitive structures and the onset of acute panic episodes [3; 25]. Moreover, the observation that these cognitive distortions endure even after physiological stabilization suggests a heightened susceptibility to the chronicity of trauma. This persistence serves as a primary catalyst in the pathological evolution toward post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

From a longitudinal perspective, the lack of cognitive flexibility is closely linked to diminished adaptive capacity throughout the post-ICU rehabilitation phase. This manifests through persistent somatic hypervigilance, social reintegration challenges, and various avoidance behaviors. These results highlight the imperative for early psychological interventions. Specifically, strategies should focus on *schema modification* and *cognitive restructuring* - both during the acute phase of intensive care and throughout the subsequent stages of recovery - to prevent the crystallization of psychological sequelae.

Moderating variables (socio-demographic and clinical dimensions) The data reveal that both chronological age and previous encounters with the healthcare system significantly influence the architecture of a patient's cognitive response. Younger individuals often employ rumination as a misguided strategy to regain a sense of agency or control over their situation. Conversely, older populations are more susceptible to depressive withdrawal mechanisms, characterized by a decline in proactive engagement with the recovery process [24].

Furthermore, the duration of the ICU stay serves as a critical clinical variable; a prolonged period of hospitalization is strongly associated with the gradual depletion of adaptive coping strategies. This erosion of psychological resilience underscores the vital necessity for implementing supportive interventions at the earliest possible stage of the medical journey to prevent long-term emotional decay [18; 20].

Discussion - navigating the spectrum from technological alienation to recovery

A fundamental finding of the qualitative investigation pertains to the profound sense of estrangement triggered by the high-tech ICU environment. Patients frequently perceive themselves as mere "monitored biological objects"—a depersonalizing experience that serves to reactivate latent Defectiveness/Shame schemas [6; 17]. This perception of being reduced to a data set on a screen can significantly impair the individual's sense of self-worth and agency.

Rehumanizing the clinical experience - communication and meaning-making

The strategic modulation of cognitive processes is essential for reframing the patient's experience within the critical care unit. When healthcare professionals provide clear, empathetic explanations regarding the function of various life-support systems, these technologies undergo a symbolic transformation. They are no longer viewed as external threats, but are instead integrated as protective extensions of the patient's own physiological boundaries.

Furthermore, the perception of a robust social support network—even when expressed through symbolic or non-verbal gestures—acts as a critical psychological stabilizer. During periods of existential crisis, this perceived support facilitates the preservation of a coherent sense of self and prevents the collapse into psychological fragmentation [1; 2; 4].

Conclusions and recommendations for clinical practice

The findings of this research reinforce the premise that therapeutic success within the ICU is fundamentally dependent on the patient's psychological equilibrium. Beyond the primary objective of physiological stabilization, the subjective interpretation of the critical illness experience serves as a pivotal determinant for both immediate recovery and long-term functional outcomes. The characteristic ICU environment (marked by sensory hyper-stimulation, invasive clinical protocols, and the loss of temporal markers) often acts as a catalyst for cognitive fragmentation, profound emotional distress, and the formation of maladaptive traumatic memories. Consequently, the incorporation of psychological support into standard clinical workflows is no longer an optional adjunct, but a core requirement for a truly holistic medical approach.

A substantial body of clinical evidence indicates that individuals subjected to extended ICU stays face a heightened vulnerability to post-intensive care syndrome (PICS), a condition involving cognitive deficits, affective instability, and a marked decline in overall quality of life. These observations underscore the critical necessity for implementing early, structured, and proactive psychological screening. Such interventions are essential for safeguarding cognitive coherence and emotional resilience during the acute phase of hospitalization, ultimately facilitating a more successful reintegration into social and professional life.

Institutionalizing psychological screening and clinical risk stratification

The integration of standardized protocols for the rapid assessment of cognitive vulnerability upon ICU admission is highly recommended. Identifying patients early who rely on dysfunctional coping mechanisms (such as catastrophizing, persistent rumination, or hypervigilance) empowers medical teams to customize communication strategies and therapeutic approaches. These screening instruments must be concise, clinically viable, and specifically calibrated to the unique operational constraints of the intensive care environment.

Implementing such evaluative frameworks facilitates effective risk stratification, allowing for the delivery of targeted psychological support to high-risk groups, including individuals with pre-existing anxiety disorders, extensive trauma histories, or diminished coping capacity. Early detection of these vulnerabilities is crucial for preempting the escalation of acute stress reactions, preventing psychomotor agitation, and reducing the incidence of ICU-related delirium [29; 30]. Consequently, systematic screening transitions the medical model from a reactive stance to a proactive one, ultimately alleviating the emotional and logistical burden on both the patients and the healthcare staff.

Furthermore, the inclusion of psychologists or specialized mental health professionals within the multidisciplinary ICU team is essential for optimizing the efficacy of the screening process. Their contribution extends beyond clinical assessment; they provide vital expertise in guiding ICU staff on how to manage the complex emotional landscapes and behavioral manifestations characteristic of the critically ill.

Strategies for preventing post-intensive care syndrome (PICS)

The prevention of long-term traumatic sequelae must be initiated during the acute stage of critical illness. Psychological support within the ICU should prioritize the preservation of the patient's identity continuity and the reinforcement of adaptive cognitive processing. By facilitating meaning-making through targeted reframing techniques, clinicians can assist patients in reinterpreting distressing environmental stimuli, thereby lowering the perceived level of threat and preventing emotional exhaustion.

To maintain cognitive coherence, the implementation of grounding techniques (specifically those aimed at orienting the individual to time, location, and situational context) is paramount. The utilization of ICU diaries, authored by medical personnel or family members, has emerged as a highly effective intervention for reducing memory fragmentation. These diaries offer a coherent, chronological narrative of the patient's clinical journey, effectively bridging amnesic gaps and preventing the formation of distorted or intrusive traumatic recollections after discharge.

Furthermore, optimizing sedation protocols by minimizing pharmacological suppression whenever clinically appropriate is essential for maintaining cognitive awareness and lowering the risk of delirium. Communication frameworks that prioritize clarity, consistent reassurance, and predictability are vital in restoring the patient's internal sense of agency and security.

Finally, the integration of the family unit serves as a significant protective factor against psychological decay. The presence of familiar voices and the continuity of relational ties provide an essential emotional anchor, helping to counteract the depersonalizing and alienating effects inherent to the intensive care environment.

Recommendations

Systemic implementation of psychological screening - the early detection of catastrophizing and related maladaptive cognitive frameworks is vital for preventing acute episodes of agitation and ICU-related delirium. This proactive identification allows for the delivery of timely, patient-centered psychological support.

Structured and predictable communication - delivering information in a clear, repetitive, and organized manner serves to diminish cognitive ambiguity. This transparency enhances the patient's capacity to synthesize their intensive care experience into a structured and manageable mental narrative.

Humanization of the critical care environment - prioritizing the patient's individual identity over strictly monitored physiological data is fundamental to preserving human dignity. Simple yet profound actions-such as utilizing the patient's name and providing detailed procedural explanations-serve as critical buffers for emotional safety.

Support for the multidisciplinary team - mitigating compassion fatigue among healthcare providers is a clinical necessity. Given the chronic exposure to patient suffering, implementing regular debriefings, peer-support networks, and psychological resources is essential for maintaining the staff's emotional resilience and the overall quality of care.

Operational integration of psychological expertise - formally embedding mental health professionals within ICU teams facilitates a more robust and responsive medical model, benefiting both the clinical management of patients and the emotional well-being of the staff.

Post-discharge continuity of support - developing specialized follow-up protocols for ICU survivors is crucial for minimizing the long-term burden of PICS and ensuring a more effective reintegration into their social and professional environments.

In summary, the paradigm shift toward a biopsychosocial model within intensive care units represents a vital evolution in contemporary medicine. This approach ensures that the objective of critical care transcends mere physiological survival, aiming instead for the comprehensive preservation of the patient's psychological continuity, dignity, and long-term quality of life.

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THE APPLICATION OF KINESITHERAPY COORDINATION EXERCISES IN THE REHABILITATION OF PATIENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

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Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are frequently associated with deficits in motor coordination, sensorimotor integration, and movement planning. Kinetotherapy is an essential component of complex rehabilitation, playing an important role in the functional and adaptive development of these patients. The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of a playful physical therapy coordination exercise, based on throwing a ball at a target, on improving movement accuracy and motor coordination in patients with ASD. The study was conducted on a sample of 21 patients over a period of 4 weeks. The results indicate a significant decrease in the number of attempts needed to hit the target, demonstrating the effectiveness of the physical therapy intervention.

Keywords: *kinetotherapy, autism spectrum disorders, motor coordination, sensorimotor integration, neuroplasticity, sensory disorder, behavioral patterns.*

APLICAREA EXERCITIILOR KINETOTERAPEUTICE DE COORDONARE ÎN REABILITAREA PACIENȚILOR CU TULBURĂRI DIN SPECTRUL AUTIST

Tulburările din spectrul autist (TSA) sunt frecvent asociate cu deficite de coordonare motrică, integrare senzorio-motorie și planificare a mișcării. Kinetoterapia reprezintă o componentă esențială a reabilitării complexe, având un rol important în dezvoltarea funcțională și adaptativă a acestor pacienți. Scopul prezentului studiu este de a evalua eficiența kinetoterapiei asupra îmbunătățirii preciziei mișcării și coordonării motorii la pacienți cu TSA, prin intermediul kinetoterapiei, utilizând exerciții de coordonare cu caracter ludic, bazat pe aruncarea unei mingi către o țintă. Studiul a fost realizat pe un eșantion de 21 de pacienți, timp de 4 săptămâni. Rezultatele obținute indică o scădere semnificativă a numărului de încercări necesare pentru atingerea țintei, demonstrând eficiența intervenției kinetoterapeutice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *kinetoterapie, tulburări din spectrul autist, coordonare motrică, integrare senzorio-motorie, neuroplasticitate, tulburare senzorială, modele comportamentale.*

Relevance

Autism is a fundamental disorder that consists of the inability of some individuals to relate to normal situations from the beginning of life. Autos, from Latin, means “alone.” In 1916, Swiss psychiatrist Paul Eigen Bleuler introduced this term in describing the symptoms of schizophrenia [1, 2, 5].

Autism spectrum disorders are associated with deficits in motor coordination, movement planning, and sensory integration, which significantly affect functional autonomy.

Recent studies highlight the essential role of physical therapy in stimulating motor and cognitive functions using structured and playful exercises. Coordination exercises, which involve visual-motor, proprioceptive, and vestibular integration, are recommended for increasing movement precision and forming adaptive motor strategies [1, 3, 5].

The word “autism” was first used in 1940 to establish a diagnosis, and the first description and research papers on autism were written in 1943 by Leo Kanner, an Austrian psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore [4].

Much later, in 1980, a new diagnosis called “infantile autism” was included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which was renamed “autistic disorder” in 1987. Scientific progress continued, and in 1994 several subtypes of autistic disorders were described, including Asperger syndrome and pervasive disorder without further specification (DSM-IV), which in 2013, in the fifth edi-

tion of the DSM, were combined into a single diagnosis—autism spectrum disorder. Currently, there is an increasing number of children in this category, as reflected in Table.

Table 1. Statistical data on ASD (autism spectrum disorder) in the Republic of Moldova

Year	Number of patients diagnosed with ASD
2012	144
2013	220
2014	191
2015	277
2016	317
2017	366
2018	460
2019	663
2020	640
2021	772
2023	137
2024	225

Statistical data analysis shows an increase in the number of autism cases during the COVID-19 pandemic, caused in part by the influence of the family environment on their behavior. According to the data presented in the table, it can be seen that the peak in the number of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders occurred during the pandemic. The period of isolation saw the largest increase in the number of autism cases [7, 8, 9].

Autism spectrum disorder is frequently associated with alterations in sensory processing and integration mechanisms. These affect both information from the internal environment and external stimuli, impacting the processes of modulation, organization, and interpretation of sensory input.

At a functional level, these characteristics can cause difficulties in coordinating and planning voluntary movements, reflected in imprecise or poorly organized motor execution. Repetitive behavioral patterns and increased rigidity in adapting to environmental changes may also occur [5].

Emotionally and cognitively, difficulties in recognizing and expressing one's own affective states may manifest, as well as limitations in the ability to imitate motor and gestural movements, which influences the process of learning by example and the development of socio-communicative skills.

At the same time, there may be dysfunctions in the vestibular system, affecting balance, posture, and spatial orientation, as well as disturbances in body schema representation and effective interaction with the environment.

Thus, the table below shows statistical data on the number of children with ASD between 2000 and 2022 according to the ADDM - Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network - a network for monitoring autism and other developmental disabilities [7, 8, 9].

Table 2. ADDM Network - Combining data from all sites in the ADDM network

Surveillance Year	Birth Year	Number of ADDM Sites Reporting	Combined Prevalence per 1,000 Children (Range Across ADDM Sites)	This is about 1 in X children
2022	2014	16	32.2 (9.7 - 53.1)	1 in 31
2020	2012	11	27.6 (23.1-44.9)	1 in 36
2018	2010	11	23.0 (16.5-38.9)	1 in 44

2016	2008	11	18.5 (18.0-19.1)	1 in 54
2014	2006	11	16.8 (13.1-29.3)	1 in 59
2012	2004	11	14.5 (8.2-24.6)	1 in 69
2010	2002	11	14.7 (5.7-21.9)	1 in 68
2008	2000	14	11.3 (4.8-21.2)	1 in 88
2006	1998	11	9.0 (4.2-12.1)	1 in 110
2004	1996	8	8.0 (4.6-9.8)	1 in 125
2002	1994	14	6.6 (3.3-10.6)	1 in 150
2000	1992	6	6.7 (4.5-9.9)	1 in 150

One of the first people to describe these characteristics in patients with autism spectrum disorders was Temple Grandin in her autobiographical book „The Autistic Brain.” Her work was later supplemented by A. Jean Ayres, an occupational therapist who worked with children with autism spectrum disorders. In her research, she described sensory processing disorders in detail and proposed a classification for them [1,2,3].

There are three main types of sensory processing disorders.

The first type is sensory modulation disorder, which is associated with inadequate perception of stimuli by the central nervous system and delayed or insufficient response to sensory stimuli.

The second type – sensory-motor disorders, which manifest themselves in the form of dyspraxia, posture disorders, clumsy and uncoordinated movements. Fine motor skills are often affected, leading to muscle imbalance and decreased movement precision.

The third type – sensory discrimination disorder. In this case, the patient is unable to adequately assess the properties of objects, impact force, weight, hardness, rigidity, which can lead to damage to fragile objects or difficulties in determining the physical characteristics of an object [1, 3, 4, 5].

The role of kinethotherapy in ASD disorders: Physical therapy has a significant impact on the development and functionality of children with autism spectrum disorders, targeting motor, cognitive, and sensory aspects. Physical interventions contribute to the normalization of body weight and posture, promoting the correct alignment of body segments and preventing orthopedic complications.

Through adapted exercises, there is an improvement in coordination and physical endurance, which facilitates the performance of daily activities and participation in group activities.

Kinethotherapy also stimulates neural connections, promoting brain plasticity and sensory-motor integration [5].

Another major benefit is the development of discipline and motor memory through the repetition of motor structures and learning movement sequences, which is essential for learning by example and transferring skills to everyday activities.

Kinethotherapy contributes to the development of gross and fine motor skills, strengthening both general mobility and the precision of manual movements [1, 4].

Sensory-motor and functional assessments performed in kinethotherapy allow the identification of strengths and weaknesses, guiding specific sensory recovery interventions. As a result, there is an increase in independence and quality of life due to the development of self-care skills and autonomy in daily activities.

In addition, physical therapy prepares the patient for complementary therapies, such as speech therapy and ABA programs, facilitating the progressive integration of cognitive and social exercises into a structured setting [1, 7, 9].

Methods and materials

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of physical therapy in improving movement precision and motor coordination in patients with ASD, through playful physical therapy coordination exercises based on throwing a ball at a target. The study included a considerable number of patients with ASD who were currently attending the ADIR day clinic.

Participants: The sample consisted of 21 patients with ASD included in the physical therapy rehabilitation program of the ADIR day center for people with disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. The age and severity of symptoms varied, but all participants had moderate motor difficulties. This group of patients was offered a series of specific rehabilitation methods based on physical therapy.

The kinetotherapy program. For this study, a dynamic game called “Skittles” was selected, which consists of throwing a ball with a diameter of 2.5 cm at six skittles placed 4 meters away. The following were selected:

- Variable trajectories: from above, from below, from the chest, from shoulder level.
- Number of repetitions: initially 10 with the dominant limb, then gradually reduced to 5 and 3 repetitions to optimize accuracy.
- The exercise also included the independent arrangement of the pins by the patient, to stimulate praxis and executive functions.

After mastering the exercise with the dominant limb, the activity was also performed with the non-dominant limb, to develop bilateral coordination and activate additional neuromotor circuits.

The ball is thrown using various kinematic trajectories: overhead throw; underhand throw; chest throw; shoulder throw.

This variability allows for: diversification of motor programs; adaptation of the exercise to the individual characteristics of the patient; stimulation of neuroplasticity mechanisms.

Structure and progression of the physical therapy program

Stage I – Stabilization of the motor pattern

- 10 repetitions with the dominant hand;
- emphasis on distance, posture, and movement control;
- simple, clear visual and verbal feedback.

Stage II – Increasing accuracy

- gradually reducing repetitions to 5, then to 3;
- focusing on accuracy of execution,
- optimizing the sensorimotor scheme.

Stage III – Developing praxis

- The patient arranges the pins themselves;
- Initially, the standard pattern is used;
- Later, variations in arrangement are allowed, maintaining the distance;
- Planning, anticipation, and spatial organization are stimulated.

Stage IV – Training the non-dominant limb by repeating the exercise with the non-dominant hand, strengthening bilateral coordination, and stimulating interhemispheric interaction.

Specific aspects for patients with ASD

The exercise is playful, which facilitates engagement and sustained attention, while its clear and repetitive structure provides predictability, reducing anxiety.

The activity simultaneously stimulates the visual, proprioceptive, vestibular, and tactile systems. The high level of sensory engagement contributes to behavioral and emotional regulation.

Development of motor praxis. Patients were given the opportunity to arrange the pins independently. Initially, a standard placement pattern was used, and later variations were allowed, provided that the fixed distance was maintained. This approach contributed to the development of motor planning, visual-spatial analysis, and elements of executive functions.

Bilateral training. After achieving an adequate level of performance with the dominant limb, the exercise was also performed with the non-dominant limb, contributing to the development of bilateral coordination and strengthening interhemispheric interaction.

Results. As we can see in Figure 1, in the first week, the children with ASD included in the study needed 10 repetitions to complete the task, while in the following week they needed only 6 attempts. The average reduction in the number of attempts indicates significant progress in the development of motor coordination.

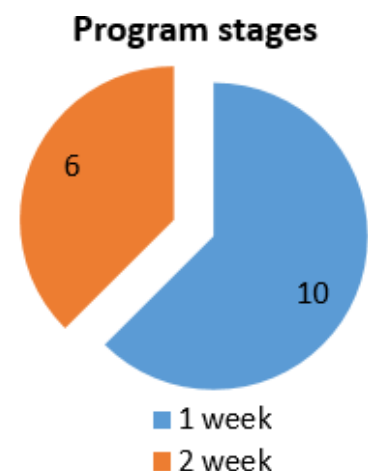


Fig. 1. Coordination performance dynamics in the first 2 weeks

In Table 3, we can see a decrease in the number of attempts to a single one, in 23.8% of the 21 people with ASD, which indicates a very good performance of the coordination capacity resulting from the physical therapy program we proposed. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the 14.3% of individuals with ASD who succeeded in 5 repetitions, which demonstrates a weaker adaptability to the prescribed effort. At the same time, 52.4% of patients succeeded in reaching the target on the first or second attempt.

Table 3. Coordination performance dynamics in the fourth week (n=21)

Number of attempts	Number of patients	Percent (%)
1	5	23,8 %
2	6	28,6 %
3	8	38,1 %
4–5	3	14,3 %
Total	21	100 %

Discussion: The physical therapy program focused on coordination exercises, developed in this study, showed positive effects on motor performance and sensory-motor response organization in people with ASD. The authors observed a gradual decrease in the number of attempts required to complete the task, indicating an improvement in motor control and accuracy in the execution of coordination movements.

The intervention engaged visual-motor integration mechanisms and required higher-level processes such as action planning, trajectory anticipation, and movement self-regulation based on feedback in individuals with ASD. Through these components, the program contributed to strengthening praxis and optimizing executive functions.

The playful dimension of the activities encouraged the active involvement of participants, reducing anxiety and increasing compliance with the intervention. At the same time, the bilateral use of limbs stimulated interhemispheric coordination and supported the adaptive processes associated with neuroplasticity.

Conclusions

1. Bowling is an effective physical therapy tool for patients with autism spectrum disorder, integrating motor, sensory, and cognitive development into a game.
2. The progressive adaptation of the task and the active involvement of the patient with ASD facilitate motor learning, functional autonomy, and an improved quality of life by strengthening coordination and precision of movement.
3. The skittles coordination exercise supports sensory-motor integration and motor precision and is recommended for inclusion in complex physical and functional rehabilitation programs.
4. By correlating the force of the throw with the distance to the pins, the exercise simultaneously addresses multiple types of sensory processing, contributing to the correction of motor and sensory disorders identified in patients.

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PARTICULARITIES OF SELF-IMAGE IN INDIVIDUALS UNDERGOING AESTHETIC INTERVENTIONS

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In the context of sociocultural pressures and the promotion of beauty standards, aesthetic interventions influence the dynamics of self-image and self-appraisal. The study investigates the particularities of self-image in individuals who underwent either plastic surgical interventions or minimally invasive procedures. The results highlight significant differences between the groups: participants who opted for minimally invasive procedures present higher levels of self-image and self-appraisal compared to those who underwent plastic surgeries. In the case of plastic interventions, discrepancies emerge between the actual self and the ideal self, particularly on the authoritarian, aggressive, and selfish dimensions, suggesting a tendency to reduce these traits at the ideal level. The conclusions indicate that the type of aesthetic intervention is differentially associated with the level of self-image, self-appraisal, and the congruence between the actual self and the ideal self.

Keywords: *self-image, self-appraisal, plastic surgeries, minimally invasive procedures, actual self, ideal self.*

PARTICULARITĂȚI ALE IMAGINII DE SINE LA PERSOANELE CU INTERVENȚII ESTETICE

În contextul presiunilor socioculturale și al promovării standardelor de frumusețe, intervențiile estetice influențează dinamica imaginii de sine și a autoaprecierii. Studiul investighează particularitățile imaginii de sine la persoanele care au recurs fie la intervenții chirurgicale plastice, fie la proceduri minim invazive. Rezultatele evidențiază diferențe semnificative între grupuri: participanții care au optat pentru proceduri minim invazive prezintă niveluri mai ridicate ale imaginii de sine și ale autoaprecierii comparativ cu cei care au efectuat intervenții chirurgicale plastice. În cazul intervențiilor plastice, apar discrepanțe între eul real și eul ideal, în special pe dimensiunile autoritară, agresivă și egoistă, sugerând o tendință de reducere a acestor trăsături la nivelul eului ideal. Concluziile indică faptul că tipul intervenției estetice este asociat diferențiat cu nivelul imaginii de sine, al autoaprecierii și cu gradul de congruență dintre eul real și eul ideal.

Cuvinte-cheie: *image de sine, autoapreciere, intervenții chirurgicale plastice, proceduri minim invazive, eul real, eul ideal.*

Introduction

Self-image represents a fundamental psychological construct that is highly sensitive to contextual and sociocultural influences in contemporary society. As an individual's personal values, social norms, and cognitive schemas evolve, continuous exposure to external evaluations and the pervasive effects of social media may lead to disturbances in self-concept, identity coherence, and authenticity of the individual's self-perception.

An analysis of statistics from several countries, including the United States, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, indicates that women constitute the majority of patients undergoing aesthetic interventions, whereas men resort to plastic surgery much less frequently. The primary motivations for these individuals include dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their own body, as well as the influence of beauty models and standards constantly promoted on social media platforms [1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8].

Zuckerman D. and Abraham A. emphasize that aesthetic surgical interventions are not exclusively performed by women or men, but also by adolescents. In recent decades, the number of adolescents undergoing such procedures has increased significantly, with the most common being rhinoplasty, abdominoplasty, otoplasty, liposuction, chin augmentation, and breast augmentation. The authors highlight the benefits of these interventions, addressing both their advantages and potential disadvantages [8].

At the same time, there is a consistent annual increase in the number of individuals seeking these procedures. Ideally, the primary motivation should be the correction of a real, existing physical imperfection. However, due to the excessive promotion of these interventions and their perception as a “solution” for enhancing self-image and achieving self-acceptance, the distinction between procedures that are genuinely necessary and those performed for social or emotional reasons is often blurred, potentially impacting the individual’s overall well-being.

When an individual undergoes aesthetic interventions, multiple dimensions of self-image are involved. Some individuals choose these procedures due to low self-appraisal or self-esteem, or because they strive to attain a personally constructed ideal. People are often preoccupied with their appearance, seeking to impress others and achieve the “best version” of themselves. In pursuit of this ideal, they may lose sight of their authentic identity, which is the foundation of personal satisfaction and self-acceptance. In everyday situations, a simple glance in the mirror may highlight perceived imperfections, especially for individuals who are continuously oriented toward self-modification, and these perceived flaws often motivate recourse to surgical or minimally invasive aesthetic procedures.

Research indicates that these interventions can have positive effects on self-image, contributing to the optimization of body image and enhancing overall quality of life. Following certain procedures, patients report improved emotional well-being, greater appreciation of their own body, and more affectionate self-perception. For instance, women who have undergone mastectomy due to breast cancer and subsequently received breast reconstruction reported significantly higher satisfaction with their body image compared to preoperative levels [6].

The literature in plastic surgery also highlights several challenges faced by individuals opting for these interventions [1, 2, 4, 5, 6]. Prior to surgery, many patients experience reduced self-esteem, difficulties in accepting their body image, and various psychological conditions or disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or a sense of identity loss. Following the procedures, individuals’ attitudes and perceptions of their bodies often change significantly: they become more confident, admire their bodies, and demonstrate greater openness to social interactions, even if they had previously avoided contact with others due to dissatisfaction with their physical appearance.

Various studies highlight multiple factors influencing the decision to undergo aesthetic interventions, with social media being a major contributor. In the 21st century, digital applications have undergone significant transformations, becoming more advanced and accessible for individuals seeking to modify certain aspects of their bodies. When viewing these images, individuals tend to focus on their own perceived flaws, often engaging in social comparison. Evidence regarding the impact of social media on the decision to pursue aesthetic procedures varies; however, most surgeons agree that both social media and marketing strategies can increase patient volume. The study conducted by Sorice C. and colleagues demonstrated that Facebook has the greatest influence on patients, followed by YouTube and Instagram [7]. Moreover, societal pressure to conform to specific beauty standards can substantially reduce self-image and self-acceptance. Certain standards are unrealistic and may have negative effects on mental health and overall well-being.

Another factor contributing to the decision to undergo aesthetic interventions is the ongoing advancement of medical technology. Innovations allow for procedures to be performed with precision, using safe and biocompatible materials, digital simulations enabling patients to visualize results prior to the intervention, and rapid recovery times post-procedure, all of which enhance patient confidence and increase willingness to undergo these interventions.

Consequently, the decision to modify one’s body should be deliberate, carefully considered, and authentically desired by the individual, to prevent choices driven by low self-esteem or by attempts to correct non-existent defects.

Regarding self-image, a key indicator of a healthy self-concept is authenticity. Maintaining authenticity is challenging in a society dominated by beauty standards and social judgment. Nevertheless, individuals who preserve their authenticity are valued, and discovering one’s own identity beyond socially imposed norms becomes essential. While external influences are strong, each individual possesses unique qualities that contribute to their distinct beauty.

Research methodology

The aim of the present study is to investigate the particularities of self-image in individuals who have undergone aesthetic interventions.

The sample consisted of 40 participants, of whom 20 had undergone plastic surgeries and 20 had received minimally invasive aesthetic procedures. The participants are clients of specialized clinics in the Republic of Moldova. All subjects were informed about the purpose of the study, the manner in which the collected data would be used, and the strict confidentiality of their personal information. The sample included 90% women and 10% men.

Figure 1 illustrates the procedures to which the clinic participants have resorted.



Fig. 1. Percentage distribution of types of plastic surgery

According to Figure 1, the majority of clinic patients underwent more than one procedure simultaneously (25%), while 20% opted for mastopexy and blepharoplasty. Furthermore, it can be observed that the least frequently performed procedure was breast augmentation (5%).

In Figure 2, the procedures performed concurrently on individual subjects are analyzed.

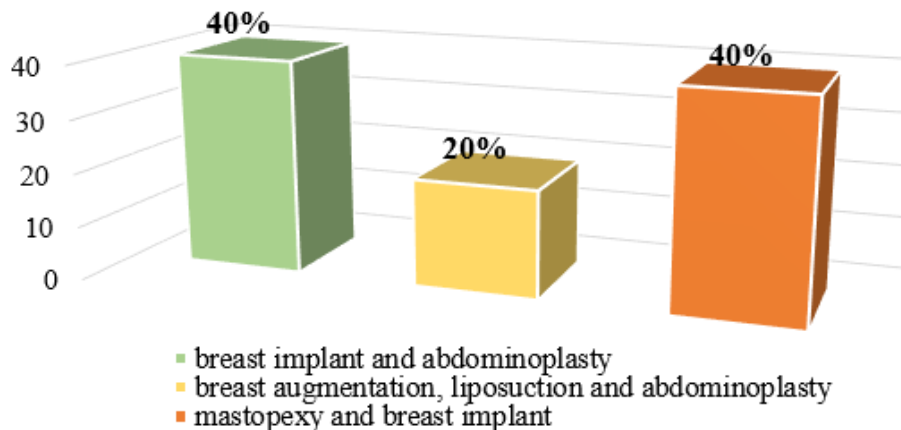


Fig. 2. Distribution by the number of plastic surgeries performed

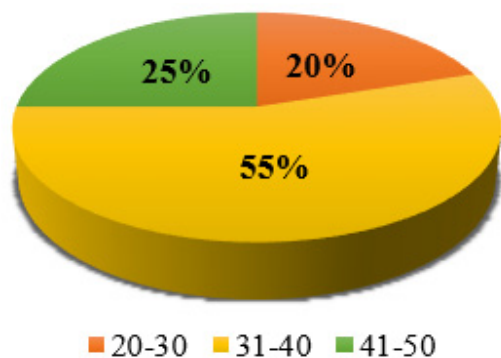


Fig. 3. Age distribution of individuals who underwent plastic surgeries

Analyzing the participants who underwent more than one procedure simultaneously, according to Figure 2, 40% had two procedures performed at the same time: breast implant and abdominoplasty, or mastopexy and breast implant. Meanwhile, 20% underwent three procedures simultaneously: breast augmentation, liposuction, and abdominoplasty.

In Figure 3, the study participants are distributed according to age. From Figure 3, it can be observed that the individuals who underwent plastic surgeries are between 20 and 50 years old, with 55% of them aged between 31 and 40.

In order to achieve the proposed aim, the following hypotheses were developed:

1. There are differences in self-appraisal between individuals who have undergone plastic surgeries and those who have undergone minimally invasive aesthetic procedures.

2. There are differences in the perception of the actual self and the ideal self between individuals who have undergone plastic surgeries and minimally invasive aesthetic procedures.

To test the hypothesis of the proposed scientific study, a descriptive research design was implemented. In order to determine the particularities of self-image among individuals who have undergone aesthetic interventions, the following psychodiagnostic methods were applied: Berger's Self-Acceptance Scale, the test "How Strong Is Your Self-Image" by N. Mitrofan, and "Diagnosis of Interpersonal Relations" by T. Leary, G. Leforge, R. Sazek.

Results and Discussion

According to the empirical approach, the study participants were administered the test "How Strong Is Your Self-Image" by N. Mitrofan. The results are illustrated in Figure 4.

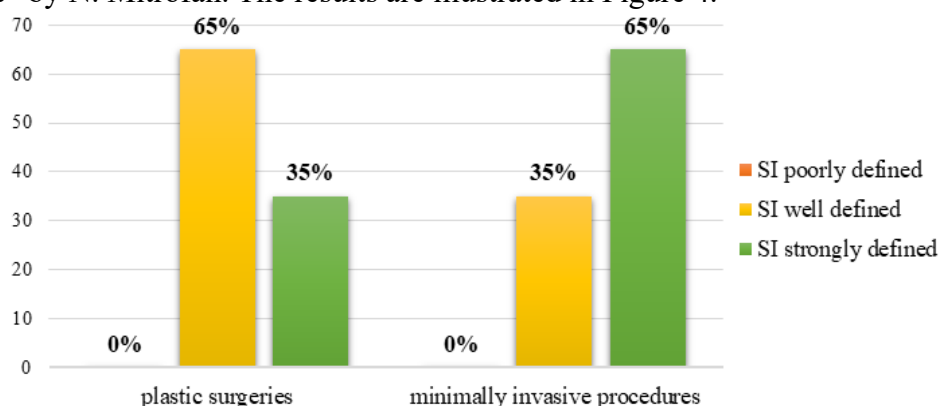


Fig. 4. Self-image level among individuals who underwent plastic surgeries and minimally invasive procedures

Analyzing Figure 4, it was determined that 65% of individuals who underwent plastic surgeries have a well-defined self-image, whereas 65% of individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures have a strongly defined self-image. This suggests that individuals who opt for minimally invasive aesthetic interventions tend to have a stronger self-image compared to those who undergo plastic surgeries. When a person decides to make a change through a surgical procedure, time takes on a particular significance, as recovery following such an intervention can last several months.

Subsequently, we aimed to determine whether there are differences in the level of self-image between individuals who underwent plastic surgeries and those who opted for minimally invasive procedures. To assess the statistical significance of these data, an independent samples t-test was applied. Table 1 is presented below.

Table 1. Comparison of self-image according to the type of intervention performed

	Plastic surgeries	Minimally invasive procedures	t	df	p
Self-image	m=112,75	m=131,95	4,330	38	0,000

Analysis of the data in Table 1 reveals a significant difference in self-image levels between individuals who underwent plastic surgeries ($m = 112.75$) and those who underwent minimally invasive procedures ($m = 131.95$), $t = 4.330$, $df = 38$, $p < 0.001$. These findings suggest that individuals who underwent minimally invasive aesthetic interventions exhibit higher levels of self-image compared to subjects who opted for plastic surgeries.

A study conducted in Italy highlighted the importance of the preoperative period, indicating that postoperative body satisfaction is influenced by the severity of body dissatisfaction experienced prior to the procedure: the higher the severity of dissatisfaction, the lower the postoperative satisfaction.

Improvement in discomfort related to body image is not determined by the specific type of intervention, but rather by the intensity of dissatisfaction with one's own image. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of the postoperative period, noting that individuals with body image disturbances may continue to experience dissatisfaction with their appearance even 12 months after the intervention [4].

To determine the level of self-appraisal in individuals who have undergone aesthetic interventions, Berger's Self-Acceptance Scale was applied. The results obtained from the participants are illustrated in Figure 5.

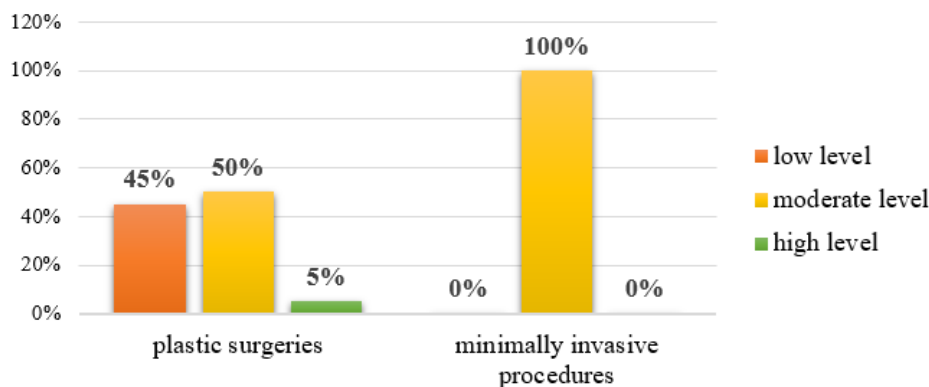


Fig. 5. Level of self-appraisal in individuals who underwent aesthetic interventions

From Figure 5, it can be observed that all 20 participants who underwent minimally invasive procedures have a medium level of self-appraisal, suggesting that these individuals generally accept themselves, although they may sometimes encounter difficulties in managing their own thoughts, states, and emotions. A medium level of self-appraisal indicates a balanced and realistic perception of oneself as well as of one's own value.

A noticeable difference is that among individuals who underwent plastic surgeries, 5% exhibit a high level of self-appraisal, meaning that these individuals have confidence in their abilities, feel valuable, accept both praise and criticism, and are aware of both the positive and negative aspects of themselves. Nevertheless, 45% of participants who underwent plastic surgeries display a low level of self-appraisal, which may have influenced their decision to undergo such interventions.

Subsequently, we aimed to examine potential discrepancies in the level of self-appraisal between individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures and those who underwent plastic surgeries. To determine statistical significance, an independent samples t-test was applied. Table 2 is presented below.

Table 2. Comparison of self-appraisal according to the type of intervention

	Plastic surgeries	Minimally invasive surgery	t	df	p
Self-appraisal	m=22,35	m=27,20	2,791	38	0,008

The analysis of the results obtained using an independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in self-appraisal between individuals who underwent plastic surgeries ($m = 22.35$) and those who underwent minimally invasive procedures ($m = 27.20$), $t = 2.791$, $df = 38$, $p = 0.008$. These findings indicate that individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures exhibit higher levels of self-appraisal compared to those who opted for plastic surgeries.

A study conducted at Temple University, USA, reported that between 5% and 15% of individuals who undergo plastic surgeries have low self-image levels and suffer from body dysmorphic disorder. The study also notes that only a small proportion of individuals who undergo such interventions experience a significant improvement in symptoms. These findings support the results of our research, in which 45% of participants who underwent plastic surgeries exhibited a low level of self-image [5].

Subsequently, to identify specific characteristics of self-image, the results obtained from participants according to "Diagnosis of Interpersonal Relations" (the Leary test scales) are presented below.

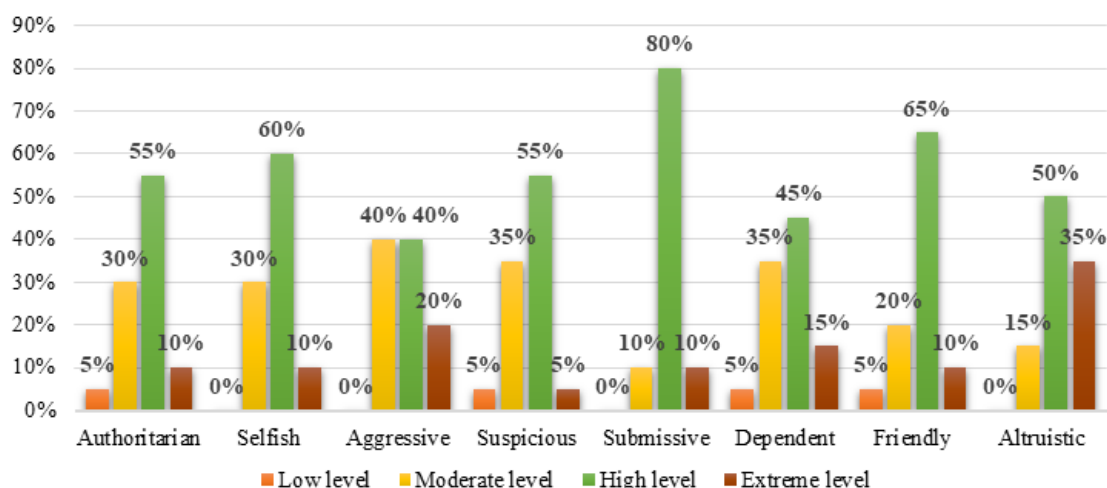


Fig. 6. Perception of the actual self in individuals who underwent minimally invasive aesthetic procedures

Extreme values obtained by individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures were recorded on the following scales: authoritarian (10%), selfish (10%), aggressive (20%), suspicious (5%), submissive (10%), dependent (15%), friendly (10%), and altruistic (35%). High values were observed on the scales: authoritarian (55%), selfish (60%), aggressive (40%), suspicious (55%), submissive (80%), dependent (45%), friendly (65%), and altruistic (50%). Additionally, these individuals recorded minimum values, up to 5%, on the scales: authoritarian (5%), suspicious (5%), dependent (5%), and friendly (5%). Analysis of the data presented in Figure 6 shows that no participant who underwent minimally invasive procedures obtained a low level on the selfish, aggressive, submissive, or altruistic scales.

The data obtained from individuals who underwent plastic surgeries regarding self-perception, according to the Leary test scales, are illustrated in Figure 7 below.

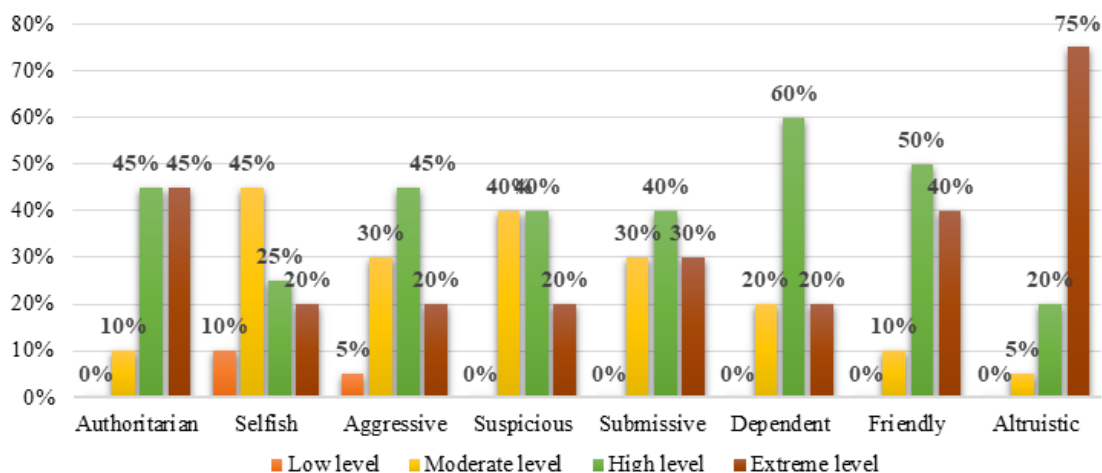


Fig. 7. Perception of the actual self in individuals who underwent plastic surgeries

Analysis of the percentage scores in Figure 7 reveals that the majority of individuals who underwent plastic surgeries obtained high values on the following scales: dependent (60%) and friendly (50%). A considerable number of participants obtained moderate levels on the scales: selfish (45%), aggressive (30%), suspicious (40%), and submissive (30%). Very low scores were recorded on the selfish (10%) and aggressive (5%) scales at the low level. An extreme level was observed on the altruistic scale (75%). No participants obtained low scores on the authoritarian, suspicious, submissive, dependent, friendly, or altruistic scales.

Subsequently, to examine significant differences in the perception of the actual self between individuals who underwent plastic surgeries and those who underwent minimally invasive procedures, an independent

samples t-test was applied. The mean results of self-perception according to the type of aesthetic intervention are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of self-perception according to the type of intervention

Leary test scales	Plastic surgeries	Minimally invasive procedures	Test t
Authoritarian	11,80	9,55	$t = -2,689$, $p = ,011$
Selfish	8,85	10,15	$t = 1,428$, p insignificant
Aggressive	9,50	9,50	$t = ,000$, p insignificant
Suspicious	10,10	8,70	$t = -1,502$, p insignificant
Submissive	10,85	10,10	$t = -,931$, p insignificant
Dependent	10,95	8,95	$t = -2,244$, $p = ,031$
Friendly	11,70	9,85	$t = -2,108$, $p = ,042$
Altruistic	13,50	11,65	$t = -2,753$, $p = ,009$

According to the data presented in the table above, inverse proportional differences are identified on the following scales: authoritarian (plastic surgeries $m = 11.80$, minimally invasive procedures $m = 9.55$, $t = -2.689$, $p = 0.011$), we can deduce that individuals with plastic surgeries perceive themselves as more authoritarian than those with minimally invasive procedures; dependent (plastic surgeries $m = 10.95$, minimally invasive procedures $m = 8.95$, $t = -2.244$, $p = 0.031$): individuals with plastic surgeries are more dependent than those with minimally invasive procedures; friendly (plastic surgeries $m = 11.70$, minimally invasive procedures $m = 9.85$, $t = -2.108$, $p = 0.042$): individuals with plastic surgeries perceive themselves as more friendly and sociable than those with minimally invasive procedures; altruistic (plastic surgeries $m = 13.50$, minimally invasive procedures $m = 11.65$, $t = -2.753$, $p = 0.009$): participants with plastic surgeries perceive themselves as more responsible toward others than those with minimally invasive procedures.

According to the data presented in Table 3, no differences were observed on the selfish, aggressive, suspicious, and submissive scales.

In order to identify certain characteristics of ideal self-perception, the results obtained by participants according to the Leary test scales are presented below.

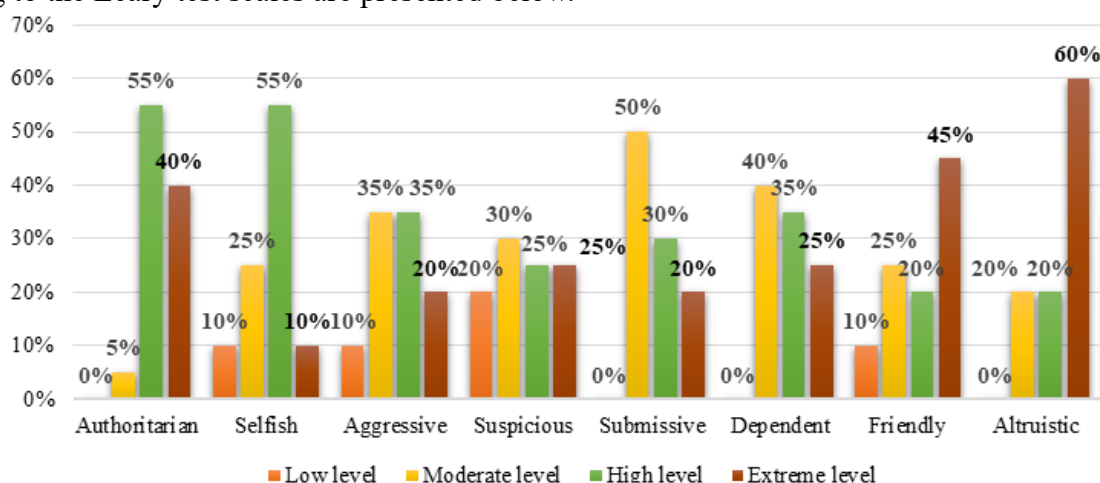


Fig. 8. Perception of the ideal self in individuals who underwent plastic surgeries

The results demonstrate that the majority of individuals who underwent plastic surgeries show high levels on the following scales: authoritarian (55%) and selfish (55%). An extreme level is observed for most participants on the altruistic scale (60%). Moderate percentage values, up to 20%, are identified on the scales: authoritarian (5%) and altruistic (20%). From the presented data, it can be observed that no in-

dividual who underwent plastic surgeries obtained a low level on the authoritarian, submissive, dependent, or altruistic scales. Half of the participants scored 10% on the selfish, aggressive, and friendly scales, and 20% on the suspicious scale.

We continue by presenting the data obtained from individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures regarding their perception of the ideal self.

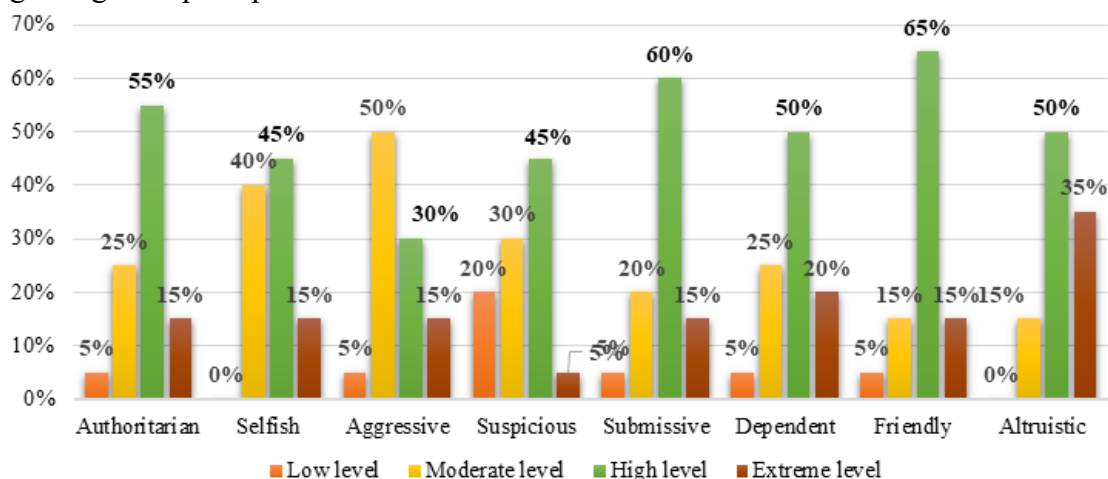


Fig. 9. Perception of the ideal self in individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures

The results demonstrate that the majority of individuals with minimally invasive procedures show high levels on the following scales: authoritarian (55%), submissive (60%), dependent (50%), friendly (65%), and altruistic (50%). An extreme level was reached on the altruistic scale (35%), and also extreme levels of 15% on the authoritarian, selfish, aggressive, submissive, and friendly scales, and 20% on the dependent scale. Only 5% of participants reached the extreme level on the suspicious scale. Low levels, only 5%, were identified on the authoritarian, aggressive, submissive, dependent, and friendly scales. From the presented data, it can be observed that no individual with minimally invasive procedures obtained a low level on the selfish or altruistic scales.

To examine whether significant differences exist in the perception of the ideal self according to the type of aesthetic intervention, an independent samples t-test was applied.

Table 4. Perception of the ideal self according to the type of intervention

Leary test scales	Plastic surgeries	Minimally invasive procedures	Test t
Authoritarian	m=11,95	m=9,60	t=-2,739,p=0,009
Selfish	m=9,25	m=9,35	t=,102, p insignificant
Aggressive	m=9,00	m=8,10	t=-,747, p insignificant
Suspicious	m=9,40	m=8,75	t=-,693, p insignificant
Submissive	m=9,35	m=9,60	t=-,693 p insignificant
Dependent	m=9,55	m=9,65	t=,237 p insignificant
Friendly	m=12,10	m=11,80	t=-,315 p insignificant
Altruistic	m=10,70	m=10,45	t=-,237 p insignificant

The results allow us to identify significant inverse proportional differences only on the *authoritarian* scale, as follows: plastic surgeries $m = 11.95$, minimally invasive procedures $m = 9.60$, $t = -2.739$, $df = 38$, $p = 0.009$. Thus, we can state that individuals who underwent plastic surgeries have a more authoritarian perception of their ideal self compared to those who underwent minimally invasive aesthetic procedures. Those who underwent plastic surgeries perceive their ideal self as more dictatorial, teaching everyone, constantly imposing their own opinion, and exhibiting a dominant and authoritarian character.

To identify differences between the real self and the ideal self in individuals with minimally invasive procedures, an independent samples t-test was applied.

Table 5. Perception of the real self and the ideal self in individuals who underwent minimally invasive procedures

Leary test scales	Real self	Ideal self	Test t
Authoritarian	m=10,15	m=9,35	t=1,013, p insignificant
Selfish	m=9,55	m=9,60	t=-,057, p insignificant
Aggressive	m=9,50	m=8,75	t=,923, p insignificant
Suspicious	m=8,70	m=8,10	t=,656, p insignificant
Submissive	m=10,10	m=9,60	t=,564 p insignificant
Dependent	m=8,95	m=9,65	t=-,813 p insignificant
Friendly	m=9,85	m=10,45	t=-,639, p insignificant
Altruistic	m=11,65	m=11,80	t=-,202, p insignificant

Following the application of the statistical test, we found that there are no significant differences between the real self and the ideal self in individuals who underwent minimally invasive aesthetic procedures. This may be due to the fact that individuals who opted for minimally invasive procedures have a more well-defined self-image and a moderate level of self-esteem.

To examine whether significant differences exist between the real self and the ideal self in individuals who underwent plastic surgeries, an independent samples t-test was applied.

Table 6. Perception of the real self and the ideal self in individuals who underwent plastic surgeries

Leary test scales	Real self	Ideal self	Test t
Authoritarian	m=22,35	m=9,25	t=9,502, p=,000
Selfish	m=112,75	m=11,95	t=25,871, p=,000
Aggressive	m=11,80	m=9,40	t=2,583, p=,014
Suspicious	m=8,85	m=9,00	t=-,123, p insignificant
Submissive	m=9,50	m=9,35	t=,147, p insignificant
Dependent	m=10,10	m=9,55	t=,524, p insignificant
Friendly	m=10,85	m=10,70	t=,146, p insignificant
Altruistic	m=10,95	m=12,10	t=-1,146, p insignificant

Following the application of the independent samples t-test, significant differences were found on the following scales: authoritarian (real self m = 22.35, ideal self m = 9.25, t = 9.502, p = .000), selfish (real self m = 112.75, ideal self m = 11.95, t = 25.871, p = .000), and aggressive (real self m = 11.80, ideal self m = 9.40, t = 2.583, p = .014).

Thus, it can be observed that individuals who underwent plastic surgeries perceive their real self as more authoritarian, aggressive, and selfish, with a predominating desire for these traits to be reduced, the ideal self representing the absence or diminution of these qualities.

Summarizing the results obtained for the real self and the ideal self in individuals with plastic surgeries and minimally invasive procedures, we can conclude that in individuals with minimally invasive procedures, no discrepancies exist between the real self and the ideal self, which may explain why they opt for minimal interventions. In contrast, individuals who underwent plastic surgeries tend to desire to be less aggressive, authoritarian, and selfish, which may drive their choices to undergo drastic changes through surgery and to modify their self-image.

In **conclusion**, the analysis of the study data indicates that most participants present a well-defined or

strongly defined level of self-image. However, significant differences emerge between individuals who underwent plastic surgeries and those who opted for minimally invasive procedures, with the former group exhibiting a lower level of self-image. Similarly, self-esteem assessment reveals that participants who chose minimally invasive procedures demonstrate higher levels of self-appreciation compared to those who underwent plastic surgeries.

Regarding self-perception, individuals who underwent plastic surgeries perceive themselves as more authoritarian, dependent, and anxious than those who opted for minimally invasive interventions. Moreover, the analysis of the ideal self highlights significant differences between the two groups: individuals with plastic surgeries tend to envision an ideal self that is more authoritarian, dictatorial, and dominant, showing a tendency to impose their opinions and guide others' behavior. In contrast, participants who opted for minimally invasive procedures show no discrepancies between their real and ideal self, whereas those with plastic surgeries tend to imagine an ideal self that is less selfish, less authoritarian, and less aggressive, reflecting a conscious desire to reduce these traits in their personality.

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DEVELOPING A CONFLICTOLOGICAL CULTURE IN ADOLESCENTS: RESULTS OF A FORMATIVE EXPERIMENT

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This article addresses the issue of developing a culture of conflict resolution among older adolescents. The relevance of the study stems from the specific nature of the identity crisis and the lack of self-regulation skills among adolescents aged 16–18. The paper presents a theoretical rationale for a training program that integrates principles of cultural-historical psychology with humanistic and cognitive-behavioral approaches. During a formative experiment ($n=12$), an interactive program aimed at developing communicative and behavioral flexibility was tested. Its effectiveness was confirmed using methods of mathematical statistics (Wilcoxon's T-test). The results indicate a significant increase in the overall level of conflict resolution culture, a decrease in personal conflict, and a transformation of primary behavioral strategies: a shift away from avoidance toward cooperation and compromise. The author concludes that group training is highly effective as a means of correcting social interactions among adolescents.

Keywords: *conflictological culture; conflict behavior strategies; personal conflictness; late adolescence; socio-psychological training.*

FORMAREA UNEI CULTURI CONFLICTOLOGICE LA ADOLESCENȚI: REZULTATELE UNUI EXPERIMENT FORMATIV

Articolul este dedicat problemei formării unei culturi conflictologice la adolescenții de vârstă mai mare. Actualitatea cercetării este determinată de specificul crizei de identitate și de deficitul de abilități de autoreglare la adolescenții cu vârste cuprinse între 16 și 18 ani. Lucrarea prezintă fundamentarea teoretică a programului de formare, care integrează postulatele psihologiei cultural-istorice, ale abordărilor umaniste și cognitiv-comportamentale. În cadrul experimentului formativ ($n=12$) a fost testat un program interactiv, orientat spre dezvoltarea flexibilității comunicative și comportamentale. Eficacitatea a fost confirmată prin metode de statistică matematică (criteriul T al lui Wilcoxon). Rezultatele indică o creștere semnificativă a nivelului general al culturii conflictologice, o scădere a conflictualității personale și o transformare a strategiilor principale de comportament: renunțarea la evitarea conflictului în favoarea cooperării și a compromisului. Autorul a concluzionat că trainingul de grup este un mijloc foarte eficient de corectare a interacțiunilor sociale ale adolescenților.

Cuvinte cheie: *cultura conflictologică; strategii de comportament în situații de conflict; predispoziția personală către conflict; adolescența târzie; formare socio-psihologică.*

Introduction

At the present stage of psychological science, particular attention is being paid not only to the theoretical understanding of psychological phenomena, but also to the development of effective applied methods designed to address the pressing challenges of practical psychology. An analysis of the scientific literature indicates the widespread use of training and educational programmes aimed at helping adolescents develop skills in constructive interpersonal interaction, awareness of personal boundaries, regulation of emotional states, and the development of a culture of conflict resolution [8].

The problem of interpersonal conflicts becomes particularly relevant during adolescence, due to the specific nature of this stage of ontogenesis. This period is characterised by intensive identity formation, emotional instability, and the expansion and increasing complexity of the system of social interactions. Insufficiently developed self-regulation skills, limited understanding of the mechanisms underlying conflict, and high sensitivity to social evaluation lead to destructive forms of response, including aggression, avoidance, and the suppression of one's own needs.

The psychological characteristics of adolescence necessitate the use of methods tailored to the specific

needs of this age group, including an emphasis on group dynamics, the influence of peers, emotional engagement, and a practical focus in the sessions. In this context, the development of a culture of conflict resolution as an integral part of personal development takes on particular significance [1, 5].

Group work is regarded as the most effective way of achieving the set objectives in small groups led by a psychologist. As communication with peers is of great importance during adolescence, we have opted for a group-based approach [2]. During group work, it is easier for adolescents to receive feedback from their peers, which is particularly valuable for the development of self-esteem, awareness of their own reactions and behaviour in interpersonal situations [7]. Interaction within the group creates conditions for self-disclosure, a better understanding of oneself and others, as well as the development of self-confidence and self-presentation skills [3].

Thanks to its distinctive features, training, as a method of psychological intervention, creates an environment of non-judgemental acceptance and empathy, and fosters genuine interactions. This proves to be a vital complement given the sensitivity of adolescents to judgement and their social vulnerability. The identity crisis, linked to a sense of the integrity of one's boundaries and social stability, is given the opportunity to find one's own position and support in the formation of a positive identity and the strengthening of a sense of self-worth, which are realised through the training [5]. For adolescents, this is important because difficulties can be viewed not as problems, but as opportunities for growth, contributing to an awareness of one's own resources and the development of emotional and cognitive flexibility. The training work enables participants not only to recognise and accept their own experiences, but also to develop resilience to frustration [4]. Thus, training focused on developing a culture of conflict resolution helps to foster these qualities through the development of emotional awareness, communication skills and responsibility for one's own behaviour.

A significant proportion of training courses and programmes aimed at fostering a culture of conflict resolution focus on teaching conflict resolution techniques, developing empathy and assertiveness skills, and increasing personal accountability for one's own choices. In this regard, a key aspect is understanding conflict not only in terms of its destructive nature, but also as a resource for personal growth and the development of interpersonal relationships. In the context of this study, a culture of conflict resolution is understood as an integrative form of personal development comprising cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that facilitate the constructive perception, analysis and resolution of conflict situations.

Methodological basis

The methodological basis of the training programme developed is provided by the principles of cultural-historical psychology (L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontiev, A.G. Asmolov, and others), according to which personal development takes place through collaborative activity and is mediated by social experience. Within the training, the group acts as a collective entity, creating a „zone of proximal development” for each participant. A conflict situation, simulated in a safe environment, thus becomes the „cultural medium” that enables the adolescent to internalise (translate into an internal framework) the external social norms of constructive dialogue.

Theoretical approaches to the study of conflict (N.V. Grishina, A.Ya. Antsupov, B.I. Khasan, K. Thomas, et al.) allow us to view conflict as an inevitable element of interpersonal interaction, possessing both destructive and developmental potential.

The humanistic approach (C. Rogers, V. Frankl, E. Erikson, and others) emphasises the importance of non-judgemental acceptance, empathy, and creating conditions conducive to personal growth. In turn, the cognitive-behavioural approach (A. Bandura, A. Beck) focuses on changing irrational cognitive attitudes and developing constructive behavioural strategies. The cognitive-behavioural approach focuses on preparing adolescents psychologically for various unforeseen circumstances, enabling them to master new forms/strategies of behaviour in conflict situations, overcome difficulties in expressing their own opinions, reduce the level of negative reactions, and improve communication skills [6].

The integration of these approaches allows us to view training as an effective tool for fostering a culture of conflict resolution among adolescents.

Research Design and Methods

The aim of this formative experiment was to develop and test a training programme designed to foster a culture of conflict resolution among older adolescents.

The research hypothesis was based on the assumption that targeted intervention within a training programme focused on developing communication skills and emotional regulation contributes to an increase in the level of conflict resolution culture.

The programme was piloted at the Mihai Grecu Lyceum in Chișinău. Twelve adolescents aged 16–18 with low and moderate levels of conflict management culture took part in the study. Particular attention was paid to participants with significant difficulties in interpersonal interaction.

The programme comprised 12 sessions, each lasting 120 minutes, and was delivered over a two-month period. Each session followed a structured format, comprising a warm-up, reflection, main activity and conclusion.

A key feature of the training programme we have developed is its high degree of interactivity, which is reflected in the use of a variety of forms and methods of active engagement with participants. During the programme, the following interactive methods were employed: group discussions, role-playing, case studies, small-group work and elements of the case method.

The programme we have developed comprises several modules, each of which is designed to address specific objectives. These modules are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure and main objectives of the training programme “Developing a culture of conflict resolution in late adolescence”

	Module title and objectives	Key objectives
1	Introductory module (Session 1) Objective: to introduce participants to one another, create a conducive environment for the group to get to know each other and work together, outline the training topic, and build team cohesion	- Introducing the group; - Establishing group rules; - Motivating participants; - Familiarising participants with key concepts, ideas and topics
2	Main module (sessions 2–9) Objective: to change irrational beliefs, develop interpersonal communication skills, broaden knowledge and express feelings, develop communication skills in various emotional states, foster a culture of communication, and build conflict resolution skills. 1. The nature of conflict and its subjective understanding 2. Thinking. Irrational beliefs 3. Thinking. Working with cognitive distortions. 4. Thinking. Keeping a diary 5–7. Communication skills 8. Conflicts. Ways of resolving them 9. Conflicts. Ways of resolving them	- Conflict and its subjective understanding - The role of thinking in understanding conflict, its causes and methods of resolution - Irrational thinking and how to deal with it. Keeping a diary - Expanding vocabulary, discussing emotionally charged situations in the emotional sphere; - Developing the ability to understand and express feelings; - Mastering the „I-statement” technique; - Developing an understanding of non-verbal communication; - Removing communication barriers; - Practising persuasive speaking skills; - Building mutual understanding between communication partners; - Setting personal boundaries; - Practising conflict management strategies; - Developing assertive behaviour skills; - Practical exercises to practise skills; - Integrating acquired skills

3	Final module (1 session) Objective: to summarise the work and consolidate the information covered	- Summing up; - Consolidating what has been learnt; - Conducting a follow-up psychological assessment; - Participants providing feedback on the training process and content; - Closing remarks

Research findings

Analysis of the results revealed an increase in the overall level of conflict management culture among adolescents following their participation in the programme. The results of the assessment of conflict management culture before and after the experiment in the experimental group are presented below in Figure 1. Analysing the results presented in Figure 1, we can observe an increase in the overall level of conflict management culture among adolescents who took part in the formative experiment. A significant increase in scores can also be observed on scales such as „Behavioural culture” and „Communicative culture”.

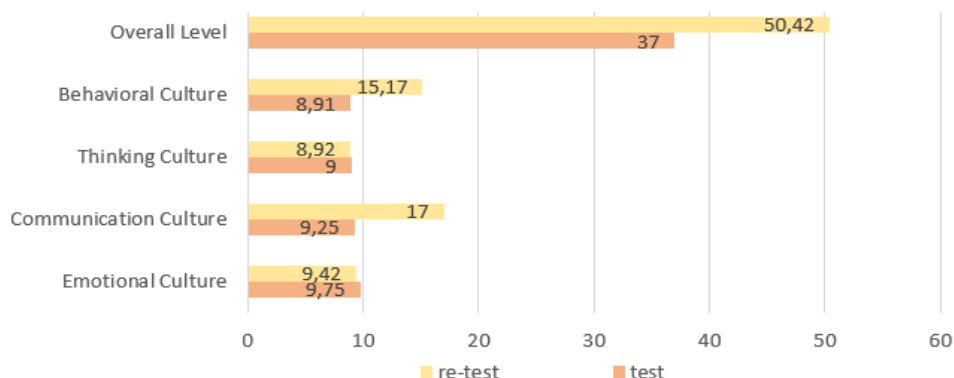


Fig. 1. Average scores on the „Level of Development of an Individual's Conflict Culture” scale before and after the experiment (experimental group)

A statistical analysis conducted using Wilcoxon's T-test for paired samples confirmed the trends we observed. According to the results obtained, there are significant differences between the results of the initial and follow-up assessments of the Overall Level of Conflict Culture ($z = -3.59$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that the overall level of the property under study increased following participation in the formative experiment.

Furthermore, significant differences were identified on the „Behavioural Culture” scale ($z = -3.29$, $p = 0.001$), indicating an increase in its level following the formative experiment. There are also significant differences on the „Communicative Culture” scale ($z = -3.69$, $p = 0.000$), which also indicates the effectiveness of the formative experiment programme.

The absence of statistically significant changes on the „Culture of Emotions” and „Culture of Thinking” scales may be due to ontogenetic characteristics. Cognitive and emotional personality structures are more rigid and require prolonged exposure. Whereas „Communicative” and „Behavioural” culture are operational skills that are more readily amenable to correction during short-term training (12 sessions). Below, we present the results of the assessment of adolescents' levels of interpersonal conflict before and after the formative experiment (Fig. 2).

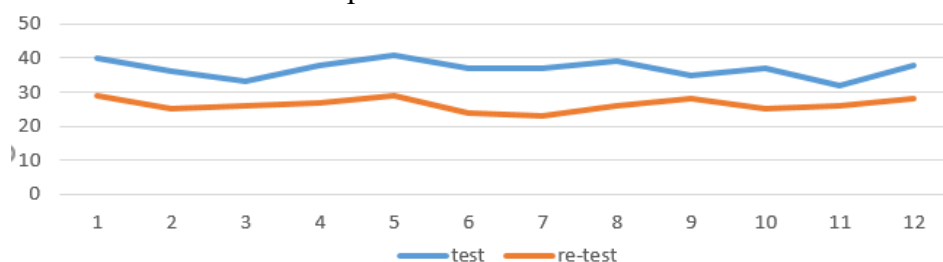


Fig. 2. Results of the „Level of Personal Conflict” assessment before and after the experiment in the experimental group

The graph clearly shows a difference in the level of conflict among adolescents before and after the experiment; following the training, the adolescents' level of conflict appears to have decreased, which is also confirmed by statistical calculations using the Wilcoxon T-test, indicating that there are significant differences in the level of the characteristic under study ($z=-2.99$, $p=0.003$), namely a decrease in the level of conflict after the experiment.

In our study, we also examined an aspect of conflict management culture—namely, behavioural styles in conflict situations – and hypothesised that participation in a training programme designed to develop conflict management culture would contribute to a change in adolescents' behavioural styles during conflict. An analysis of the diagnostic results for the experimental group before and after the formative experiment confirms our hypothesis. The results of the study on conflict behaviour strategies in the experimental group before and after participation in the training programme are presented graphically in Figure 3. According to the test results, after participating in the experiment, adolescents were less likely to choose avoidance as a style, whilst they were more likely to resort to accommodation, cooperation and compromise.

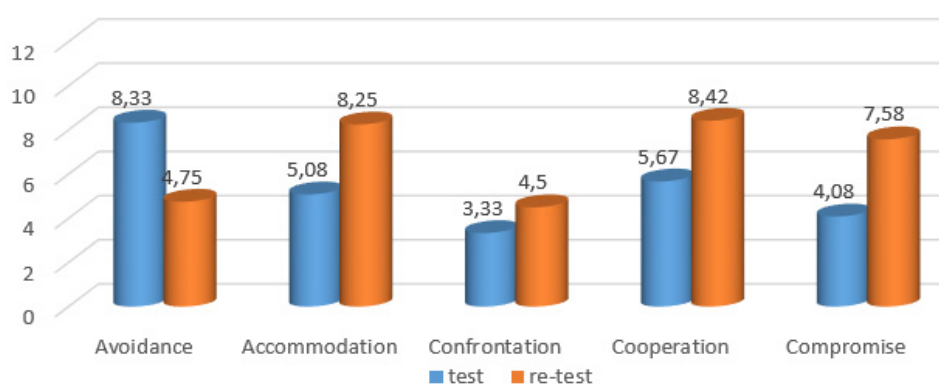


Fig. 3. Results of the Thomas-Kilmann method for identifying dominant behaviour in conflict situations before and after the experiment in the experimental group

The results on these scales increased significantly among adolescents after completing the formative experiment; thus, it can be noted that the tendency to avoid conflict was shifted towards strategies such as accommodation, cooperation and compromise. Statistical analysis also shows that the trends we observed are significant. According to the calculations, there are significant differences on the „Avoidance” scale in the experimental group before and after the experiment – $z = -3.27$, $p = 0.001$ – indicating that, following the formative experiment, adolescents are less likely to avoid conflict and instead try to choose other strategies. Differences were also found to be significant on the „Accommodation” scale ($z = -2.89$, $p = 0.004$), the „Cooperation” scale ($z = -2.90$, $p = 0.004$) and the „Compromise” scale ($z = -2.69$, $p = 0.014$). In the context of this study, higher scores on the „Adaptation” scale are interpreted not as a passive stance, but as the development of a prosocial orientation and the ability to consciously maintain meaningful relationships in situations where the subject of the dispute is subjectively less important than the emotional bond. Thus, the training enabled the adolescents not to fear conflicts, but to engage in them by choosing a response appropriate to the situation.

Discussion of the results

The results of the formative experiment suggest that the training programme has a positive impact on the development of a conflict management culture among older adolescents. The statistically significant changes identified in the overall level of conflict management culture, as well as in the behavioural and communicative components, indicate that group training is an effective means of developing constructive strategies for interaction in conflict situations.

It is important to note that the greatest changes occurred specifically in the behavioural and communicative components. This may be due to the specific nature of the methods used, which are geared towards the active involvement of participants in simulated interaction scenarios (role-playing, group discussions, case studies).

Such forms of work contribute not only to the acquisition of new behavioural models, but also to their direct testing in a safe environment, which increases the likelihood of transferring these skills to real-life situations.

The reduction in conflict levels among adolescents following the training may be linked to the development of emotional regulation skills and greater awareness of their own reactions. In a group setting, participants have the opportunity not only to observe different ways of reacting, but also to reflect on their own behavioural patterns, which helps to reduce impulsivity and increase awareness of behaviour.

Of particular interest is the observed change in conflict behaviour strategies. A reduction in the tendency to avoid conflict and an increase in the use of strategies such as cooperation, compromise and accommodation may indicate the development of a more flexible and adaptive repertoire of behavioural responses. This is likely linked to adolescents' re-evaluation of the very nature of conflict: from perceiving it as a threat to understanding it as a situation requiring choice and responsibility for one's own behaviour.

From the perspective of the cultural-historical approach, the findings can be interpreted as evidence of the effectiveness of collaborative activities in the development of higher mental functions. Group work creates a zone of proximal development within which adolescents, drawing on their interactions with peers and the facilitator, learn new ways of understanding and resolving conflicts.

From the perspective of the cognitive-behavioural approach, the identified changes may be attributed to the transformation of irrational beliefs associated with conflict (for example, „conflict is always bad”, „if I do not give in, I will be rejected”). Awareness of and partial correction of these attitudes contributes to a change in emotional reactions and, consequently, behavioural strategies.

At the same time, the absence of significant changes on the scales related to the culture of thought and the culture of feelings requires further consideration. It may be assumed that these components are more stable and deeply rooted constructs, the formation of which requires a longer-term intervention or other forms of psychological work focused on the reflective and value-semantic aspects of the personality. It is also possible that the methods used were focused to a greater extent on the behavioural level, whilst affecting the cognitive-reflective and emotional-existential levels to a lesser extent.

It should also be borne in mind that adolescence is characterised by a high degree of sensitivity to the opinions of significant others, which makes group-based work particularly effective. Feedback from peers, the opportunity to compare oneself with other participants, and the experience of being accepted within the group can all be significant factors contributing to personal change.

Another important aspect is the creation of a safe psychological space in which adolescents can openly express their feelings, try out new behavioural patterns and receive support. It is precisely this combination of a structured process and emotional safety that appears to be the key to the effectiveness of the training programme.

At the same time, a number of limitations of the study should be noted. These include the small sample size, the absence of a control group with an alternative intervention, and the lack of a follow-up assessment to evaluate the sustainability of the changes observed. In this regard, promising avenues for further research include expanding the sample, incorporating longitudinal analysis, and developing programmes aimed at deeper levels of conflict resolution culture.

The findings of the study thus confirm that a training programme based on the integration of various psychological approaches helps adolescents develop a more constructive attitude towards conflict, improve their communication skills and reduce the incidence of destructive behaviour.

Conclusions

The study of the theoretical foundations and the piloting of the training programme allow us to draw the following conclusions:

1. The specific characteristics of late adolescence (identity crisis, the high importance of peer groups, emotional lability) require a move away from directive teaching methods. Group training, based on the principles of interactivity and subject-subject interaction, is the most appropriate form for developing a culture of conflict resolution, providing a safe space for social experimentation.

2. A statistically confirmed reduction in the level of personal conflict and a move away from „avoidance” strategies indicate qualitative changes in the structure of the adolescent’s personality. The shift towards strategies of „cooperation” and „compromise” indicates an increase in social maturity and an understanding of conflict as a resource for developing relationships, rather than a threat to self-esteem.

3. The observed stability of the „culture of thought” and the „culture of emotion”, alongside a significant increase in the „communicative” and „behavioural” components, suggests that psychological structures undergo transformation at different rates.

4. Operational communication skills are acquired more quickly, whilst value-semantic and deep emotional attitudes require longer-term psychological and pedagogical support. The developed programme can be integrated into the educational process of upper secondary schools and colleges as a tool for harmonising the interpersonal environment. The development of a conflict-resolution culture during this period lays the foundation for the successful professional and personal socialisation of future specialists.

A prospect for further research could be the study of the sustainability of the changes observed over the long term (longitudinal study), as well as the search for specific methods of influencing the cognitive and affective components of an individual’s conflict-resolution culture. Prospects for further research may also involve expanding the sample and developing methods to influence the deeper components of conflict studies culture.

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PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS AND SELF-REGULATION STYLES IN THE MANIFESTATION OF ORTHOREXIC TENDENCIES IN YOUNG PEOPLE

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Orthorexia is an emerging psychological construct characterized by a rigid preoccupation with consuming foods perceived as “pure” or “healthy.” Although not formally recognized in the DSM-5-TR or the ICD-11, growing research suggests a distinct behavioral pattern associated with maladaptive perfectionism, cognitive rigidity, and excessive self-control. This article examines orthorexic tendencies in young people from the perspective of personality dimensions and self-regulation styles. It highlights how the interaction between relatively stable traits, such as conscientiousness and neuroticism, and dysfunctional self-regulatory mechanisms may increase vulnerability to the development and maintenance of orthorexic behaviors. The study advances an integrative conceptual model intended to guide future empirical research and inform prevention and psychological intervention programs focused on adaptive self-regulation and psychological well-being among young individuals.

Keywords: *orthorexic tendencies, personality dimensions, self-regulation styles, perfectionism, cognitive rigidity, psychological vulnerability.*

DIMENSIUNILE PERSONALITĂȚII ȘI STILURILE DE AUTOREGLARE ÎN MANIFESTAREA TENDINȚELOR ORTOREXICE LA TINERI

Ortorexia este un construct psihologic emergent, caracterizat prin preocuparea rigidă pentru consumul alimentelor percepute ca „pure” și „sănătoase”. Deși nu este recunoscută oficial în DSM-5-TR sau ICD-11, cercetările recente indică un pattern comportamental distinct, asociat cu perfecționism dezadaptativ, rigiditate cognitivă și autocontrol excesiv. Articolul analizează tendințele ortorexice la tineri din perspectiva dimensiunilor personalității și a stilurilor de autoreglare. Se evidențiază faptul că interacțiunea dintre trăsături relativ stabile, precum conștiinciozitatea și nevrotismul, și mecanismele autoreglatorii disfuncționale poate crește vulnerabilitatea la dezvoltarea și menținerea comportamentelor ortorexice. Studiul propune un model conceptual integrativ, util pentru fundamentarea cercetărilor viitoare și pentru dezvoltarea programelor de prevenție și intervenție orientate spre autoreglare adaptativă și promovarea stării de bine în rândul tinerilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *tendințe ortorexice, dimensiuni ale personalității, stiluri de autoreglare, perfecționism, rigiditate cognitivă, vulnerabilitate psihologică.*

Introduction

Contemporary socio-cultural transformations, marked by the globalization of lifestyles, media hyperexposure, and the definition of health as an identity value, have generated not only a diversification of eating behaviors, but also a redefinition of the individual's relationship with their own body and with food. In this context, nutrition no longer represents merely a biological necessity, but becomes an instrument of self-representation, control, and social validation. Against this axiological and cultural background, orthorexia emerges as an emerging psychological construct that reflects the highlighting of the boundary between adaptive concern for health and the pathological rigidification of eating behavior.

Although orthorexia is not recognized as a distinct diagnosis in international classification systems (DSM-5-TR; ICD-11), scientific literature highlights the existence of a relatively stable behavioral pattern characterized by obsessive concern with food purity, restrictive avoidance of products considered „impure”, and progressive impairment of social and emotional functioning. The controversies regarding its nosological status – whether it represents a variant of eating disorders, an expression of obsessive-compulsive disorders, or a manifestation of accentuated personality traits – indicate the necessity of initiating integrative research and/or approaches [1].

In the Republic of Moldova, the growing interest in healthy lifestyles, amplified by social networks, migration, and the culture of academic and professional performance, may favor the internalization of rigid dietary standards, especially among young people. Although local research explicitly dedicated to orthorexia is limited, data regarding dietary restriction, perfectionism, and excessive control suggest the existence of relevant vulnerability factors.

Within this framework, investigating orthorexia from the perspective of personality dimensions and self-regulation styles becomes essential. The interaction between stable traits (such as heightened conscientiousness, neuroticism, or perfectionism) and rigid or hypercontrolled self-regulatory mechanisms may constitute an explanatory core for the development and maintenance of orthorexic tendencies. Such an approach allows going beyond an exclusively symptomatological perspective and opens directions for scientifically grounded conceptualization, prevention, and psychological intervention.

Conceptual delimitations regarding the concept of orthorexia

The term „*orthorexia*” was introduced in 1997 by physician Steven Bratman to describe the transformation of concern for healthy eating into a rigid, excessive, and potentially dysfunctional behavior. Etymologically, the term derives from the Greek *orthos* („right,” „correct”) and *orexis* („appetite”), suggesting the idea of a „correct appetite”.

Unlike anorexia nervosa, where the emphasis is predominantly placed on body weight control and quantitative restriction of food intake, orthorexia focuses on the perceived quality of food and its purity. The obsession does not concern the quantity consumed, but rather the conformity of food with a strict set of self-imposed rules regarding health, naturalness, or minimal processing [5, p. 12].

A distinctive element of orthorexic behaviors is that they are perceived as congruent with the individual’s personal values. This congruence reduces the likelihood of awareness of the problematic nature of the conduct and contributes to the maintenance and consolidation of restrictive patterns. From this perspective, orthorexia can be conceptualized as a multidimensional pattern involving the interaction between cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social components:

- *At the cognitive level*, persistent and intrusive concerns related to the selection, preparation, and combination of foods are highlighted.
- *From an emotional perspective*, violation of dietary rules is often associated with intense anxiety, guilt, or heightened self-criticism.
- *At the behavioral level*, it manifests through severe dietary restrictions, rigid rituals, and avoidance of foods considered “impure.”
- *At the social level*, these behaviors may lead to isolation, relational difficulties, and limitation of participation in activities involving food in social contexts.

Orthorexia is thus defined as an obsessive concern with food perceived as „correct”, „pure”, or „healthy”, which, in its severe forms, may affect physical health, psychological balance, and the individual’s social functioning [5, p. 11-17].

In analyzing the relationship between orthorexia and personality structure, several psychological constructs are relevant. Personality represents the set of relatively stable traits that provide coherence and predictability to human behavior, including cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions. Self-regulation refers to the individual’s capacity to monitor and adjust cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes in order to achieve goals or adapt to environmental demands. Deficits or distortions in self-regulatory processes may contribute to the rigidification of eating behaviors. Perfectionism, characterized by excessively high standards and severe self-criticism, is frequently associated with restrictive tendencies and the need for strict dietary control. In the context of orthorexia, it may manifest through the pursuit of an „ideal” diet, without compromises or deviations. Cognitive rigidity, in turn, refers to the difficulty of modifying thinking schemes or behavioral strategies when context requires it. It is expressed through inflexible rules, low tolerance for ambiguity, and resistance to change, supporting the maintenance of obsessive-restrictive behaviors characteristic of orthorexia [1, 3].

Psychological dimensions of orthorexia

Orthorexia can be analyzed from a multidimensional perspective that integrates cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social components. This approach allows understanding the phenomenon not merely as a concern for healthy eating, but as a complex structure of interrelated psychological mechanisms.

A. Cognitive dimension. The cognitive dimension occupies a central place in the conceptualization of orthorexia. Although the term was introduced by Steven Bratman, understanding the cognitive mechanisms involved can be achieved by reference to theoretical models developed in cognitive and cognitive-behavioral psychology. From the perspective of rational-emotive-behavioral therapy and cognitive-behavioral approaches promoted by D. David, dysfunctional behaviors are supported by irrational cognitions and rigid beliefs. In the case of orthorexia, the cognitive dimension includes:

- *Absolutist beliefs* („must” type needs), such as „*We must consume exclusively pure foods, otherwise the consequences are severe*”.

- *Low frustration tolerance* – the difficulty of accepting deviations from the diet perceived as ideal.

- *Global negative self-evaluation* – the tendency to condition personal worth on strict adherence to dietary rules, whose violation leads to severe self-criticism and self-devaluation.

From the perspective of cognitive mechanisms, orthorexia involves distortions at the level of information processing and mental representations:

- *Perceptual selectivity* – predominant focus on food quality, origin, and processing, to the detriment of other life domains.

- *Polarized mental representations* – rigid classification of foods into dichotomous categories („pure” vs. „impure”, „clean” vs. „toxic”).

- *Excessive planning* – disproportionate allocation of cognitive resources to meal organization, reducing flexibility and availability for other activities.

Recent research highlights that the cognitive dimension of orthorexia is characterized by:

- dichotomous thinking („all-or-nothing” pattern);

- illusion of absolute control, whereby the individual attributes to diet the capacity to guarantee health or existential safety;

- confirmation bias, manifested through preferential selection of information validating beliefs about the dangerousness of certain foods.

Thus, orthorexia does not represent a simple orientation toward health, but a rigid, self-validating, and self-referential cognitive system [4, p. 103-105; 11, p. 78].

B. Emotional dimension. The emotional dimension of orthorexia can be analyzed through the process model of emotion regulation proposed by James J. Gross. Although Gross did not directly theorize orthorexia, his model provides a relevant explanatory framework for understanding how eating becomes a strategy for managing affects. Recent studies indicate that individuals with orthorexic tendencies use rigid dietary control as a compensatory mechanism for managing anxiety, uncertainty, or other negative emotions. The main mechanisms involved are:

- *Deficits in emotional regulation* – difficulty in identifying, accepting, and modulating emotions.

- *Inefficient use of cognitive reappraisal* – reduced capacity to flexibly reinterpret stressful situations, leading to externalization of control in the dietary domain.

- *Expressive suppression* – inhibition of emotional expression and substitution with a sense of self-control or moral superiority derived from adherence to diet.

From a functional perspective, orthorexic symptomatology may play the role of an „emotional regulator.” Strict dietary control provides temporary anxiety reduction and a sense of stability, but reinforces dependence on food-related rituals. Research also suggests an association between severity of orthorexic symptoms and higher levels of alexithymia (difficulty identifying and describing emotions). In such cases, affective discomfort is „translated” into dietary rules, and emotional regulation becomes conditioned by adherence to self-imposed norms. Consequently, the emotional dimension of orthorexia is defined by the use of food as a primary strategy for affect management, increasing vulnerability to stress and rigidifying behavior [5, p. 15; 6, p. 275–278].

C. Behavioral dimension. From a behavioral perspective, orthorexia can be explained through learning mechanisms.

In classical conditioning (John B. Watson), initially neutral foods may become aversive stimuli through repeated association with alarmist messages about health risks. Thus:

- fear of foods perceived as „processed” or „toxic” is learned;
- stimulus generalization occurs, extending avoidance reactions to broad food categories.

Within operant conditioning (B.F. Skinner), orthorexic behaviors are maintained through reinforcement mechanisms:

- *Positive reinforcement*: social praise, online validation, sense of control or moral superiority.
- *Negative reinforcement*: reduction of anxiety associated with fear of illness.
- *Intermittent reinforcement*, making the behavior resistant to extinction.

At an observable level, the behavioral cycle includes excessive monitoring of labels and ingredients, systematic avoidance of certain foods, and temporary anxiety reduction, reinforcing the pattern. Over time, progressive restriction may lead to nutritional imbalances, weight loss, and impairment of daily functioning [7, p. 92–94].

D. Social dimension. The social dimension of orthorexia reflects the impact of eating conduct on interpersonal relationships and social integration. Main manifestations include:

- *Social isolation* – avoidance of events involving food due to inability to control ingredients.
- *Sense of moral superiority* – the diet is invested with ethical meaning, becoming an indicator of personal worth.
- *Self-punishment and social withdrawal* when self-imposed rules are violated.

Unlike anorexia or bulimia, where emphasis falls on quantity and body weight, orthorexia focuses exclusively on food quality:

- *obsession with quality* – the diet becomes so restrictive that it eliminates entire food groups considered “dangerous” (fats, sugar, preservatives, GMOs);
- *time devoted* – planning, purchasing, and preparing meals occupy much of the day, interfering with professional or educational activities;
- *physical consequences* – although the goal is health, severe restrictions may lead to malnutrition, significant weight loss, and hormonal imbalances [3; 7, p. 92–94].

Currently, orthorexia remains an intensely debated subject, often associated with social pressure exerted through social media and the intense promotion of „clean” lifestyles, which may contribute to consolidating orthorexic beliefs by amplifying external validation of restrictive behaviors. Socially, withdrawal from food-related contexts (social events, dining out), deterioration of interpersonal relationships, and progressive isolation are observed.

Overall, the analysis of the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions suggests that orthorexia does not represent an isolated phenomenon, but rather the expression of a complex interaction between personality structure and self-regulatory mechanisms (see Figure 1).

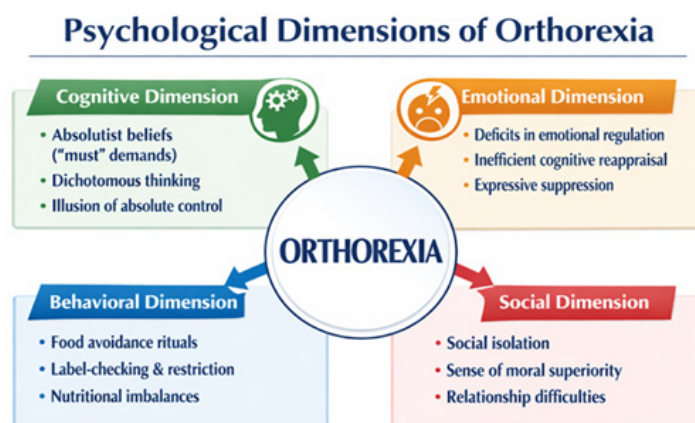


Figure 1. Psychological Dimensions of Orthorexia

In this context, the exploration of the main theories of personality and behavioral control becomes essential for understanding the individual vulnerabilities that may facilitate the development and maintenance of orthorexic behaviors.

For an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms underlying these manifestations, it is necessary to refer to the main theories of personality and self-regulation, which provide an explanatory framework regarding the structural vulnerabilities involved in the development of orthorexic behaviors.

A. The Five-Factor Model of Personality. A consistent theoretical framework is provided by the Five-Factor Model of Personality, developed by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae. This model postulates the existence of five fundamental dimensions of personality.

In the context of orthorexic eating behaviors, the specialized literature indicates a significant association with high levels of conscientiousness (manifested through excessive self-discipline and rigid rule orientation) and neuroticism (correlated with anxiety regarding health and food contamination). Thus, from the perspective of the Five-Factor Theory of Personality (McCrae & Costa, 2008), orthorexic behaviors may be correlated with high levels of rigidified conscientiousness and increased neuroticism. At the same time, self-regulation theory (Carver & Scheier, 1998) explains the tendency toward dietary hypercontrol through the excessive internalization of personal standards.

Complementarily, the multidimensional theory of perfectionism formulated by Paul Hewitt and Gordon Flett highlights the role of self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism in the development of excessively restrictive dietary standards. The internalization of socially promoted ideals may lead to the establishment of rigid criteria regarding the “purity” of food, transforming eating behavior into an indicator of personal worth.

Moreover, obsessive-compulsive traits, such as cognitive rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, and an intensified need for control, represent predisposing factors for the development of restrictive eating patterns. Thus, personality may constitute a vulnerability ground upon which orthorexic behaviors are structured. Maladaptive perfectionism represents one of the central variables, being associated with excessively high internal standards and severe self-criticism. At the same time, obsessive-compulsive traits—characterized by orderliness, rigidity, and an intensified need for control—may amplify vulnerability to the development of an orthorexic pattern. Within this framework, orthorexia may be interpreted as the behavioral expression of a personality structure oriented toward control, order, and error avoidance [3, 9].

B. Theories of Self-Regulation and Behavioral Control. Self-regulation represents the process through which the individual monitors and adjusts behaviors in relation to internal standards. From a dynamic perspective, orthorexic behaviors can be analyzed through the lens of the self-regulation theory proposed by Charles Carver and Michael Scheier. According to this cybernetic model, behavior is guided by a system of continuous feedback between internal standards, performance monitoring, and action adjustment. When standards become excessively rigid and behavioral monitoring is hyperactivated, self-regulation may acquire a maladaptive character.

In the case of orthorexia, dietary standards are internalized in the form of inflexible rules, and the constant monitoring of food intake leads to overcontrol and anticipatory anxiety. Thus, the mechanism of self-regulation, normally adaptive, becomes a source of rigidity and behavioral restriction. From the perspective of self-regulation theory, orthorexic behaviors can be interpreted as the result of a distorted feedback system, in which evaluation criteria are exaggerated and moralized. Emotional regulation becomes mediated by adherence to dietary norms, generating a behavioral dependence on diet control [2, p. 402–405].

C. Self-Determination Theory. Self-Determination Theory, formulated by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, provides an additional analytical framework by distinguishing between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. In the context of orthorexia, motivation may be predominantly controlled, determined by external pressures or by the rigid internalization of social norms regarding health and the ideal body. The lack of satisfaction of fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—may intensify compensatory behaviors centered on dietary control [11].

D. The Process Model of Emotion Regulation. The process model of emotion regulation developed by James Gross allows the conceptualization of orthorexia as a strategy for managing negative emotions.

Dietary restriction may function as a mechanism for reducing anxiety, offering the illusion of control and psychological stability [6].

E. The Integrative Theoretical Model (Integrative Dimensional Model). The integrative theoretical model describes orthorexia nervosa as an eating behavior disorder situated at the intersection between classical eating pathologies and disorders within the obsessive-compulsive spectrum. This model was recently proposed by Octavian Vasiliu (2023). From an integrative perspective, orthorexic eating behaviors can be understood within the vulnerability–stress model, according to which personality predispositions interact with socio-cultural factors and self-regulatory mechanisms.

The model proposes the following perspectives on orthorexia:

- *Dimensional classification* – orthorexia is included within a framework that accommodates both standard diagnoses (anorexia, bulimia) and emerging entities.
- *Symptomatological core* – the presence of obsessive thoughts related to „healthy” meals and lack of flexibility regarding daily dietary composition.
- *Motivational dynamics* – unlike anorexia, where the primary motivation is weight loss, in orthorexia the central focus is the avoidance of illness and the maintenance of dietary purity, even if the final result may be malnutrition.
- *Integrative consequences* – excessive preoccupation leads to significant clinical impairments, both medical and psychosocial (social isolation, intense fears related to food).

This theoretical model serves as a tool for stimulating clinical and epidemiological research, offering a conceptual structure for conditions that are not yet fully recognized in diagnostic manuals, such as DSM-5.

The integration of personality dimensions and self-regulation styles allows the formulation of a coherent explanatory model: traits such as perfectionism, cognitive rigidity, and neuroticism interact with a hypercontrolled self-regulatory style, generating qualitatively restrictive eating behaviors. Socio-cultural pressure and the idealization of health act as triggering factors, while the maintenance of the behavior is supported by the temporary reduction of anxiety through adherence to self-imposed rules.

Thus, orthorexia may be conceptualized not only as an emerging eating disorder, but as the manifestation of a complex dynamic between personality structure and dysfunctional self-regulatory mechanisms. Therefore, orthorexia cannot be reduced to a simple dietary preference, but represents the result of a complex configuration of structural factors (personality dimensions) and dynamic factors (self-regulatory mechanisms), mediated by the contemporary socio-cultural context [3].

The scientific literature of the last two decades highlights a growing interest in the investigation of orthorexia, both from the perspective of conceptual delimitation and the identification of psychological correlations and predisposing factors. Although this clinical entity is not officially included in diagnostic systems (DSM-5-TR, ICD-11), numerous empirical studies support the existence of a distinct behavioral pattern characterized by dietary rigidity, perfectionism, and obsessive concern with the „purity” of food [7].

Research conducted by Poyraz and colleagues (2015) revealed significant correlations between orthorexic tendencies and obsessive-compulsive traits, suggesting that the cognitive mechanisms involved include rigidity, hypercontrol, and dichotomous thinking.

In the same direction, studies by Barrada and Roncero (Italy, 2018) demonstrated consistent relationships between orthorexia and maladaptive perfectionism, particularly the dimension oriented toward excessively high personal standards [8].

Analyses conducted by Strahler and colleagues (2018) indicate the presence of moderate associations between orthorexia, anxiety, and depressive symptomatology, suggesting that excessive concern with „correct” eating may function as a compensatory mechanism in managing emotional distress. Furthermore, Novara and colleagues (2021) identified overlaps between orthorexia and classical eating disorders, highlighting diagnostic delimitation difficulties.

According to the conceptualization proposed by Bratman (2017), orthorexia can be understood as an evolutionary phenomenon structured in two distinct yet interdependent phases. In the initial phase, the individual voluntarily adopts a healthy dietary style, motivated by the legitimate desire to improve health and quality of life. At this stage, eating behaviors are functional and adaptive. Subsequently, however, in

the context of preexisting psychological vulnerabilities (perfectionism, cognitive rigidity, heightened need for control), concern with food progressively intensifies and acquires an obsessive character. The healthy diet transforms into a rigid system of self-imposed rules, and their violation generates guilt, anxiety, and severe self-criticism. Thus, eating behavior becomes central to the organization of daily life, affecting social, emotional, and occupational functioning. This process-oriented perspective allows for a clear distinction between normative interest in health and pathological manifestations of orthorexia, where behavioral flexibility is replaced by cognitive rigidity and internal constraint [8].

By analyzing these studies, etiological and risk factors in the manifestation of orthorexia can be identified. The etiology of orthorexia is multifactorial and includes psychological, social, and cultural factors:

1. *Psychological factors:*

- perfectionistic personality traits;
- cognitive rigidity;
- increased need for control;
- obsessive-compulsive tendencies;
- anxiety vulnerability.

2. *Socio-cultural factors:*

- social pressure regarding a “healthy” lifestyle;
- idealization of the body and health in mass media;
- influence of social networks and nutrition influencers;
- proliferation of restrictive diets promoted as universal solutions.

3. *Contextual factors:*

- previous experiences related to illness;
- trauma or stressful events;
- professions centered on body image (athletes, models, fitness instructors).

In contemporary societies, where health is valued not only as a biological state but also as a moral and identity indicator, orthorexia may also be interpreted as the expression of a cultural pathology of control performance. Contrary to the initial intention of optimizing health status, orthorexia may generate significant negative effects: physical consequences, psychological consequences, and social consequences:

1. *Physical consequences:*

- malnutrition;
- vitamin and mineral deficiencies (especially vitamin B12, iron, calcium);
- demineralization of the skeletal system;
- gastrointestinal disorders;
- cardiovascular problems associated with nutritional imbalances;
- excessive weight loss.

2. *Psychological consequences:*

- increased anxiety;
- social isolation;
- risk of comorbidity with depressive or obsessive-compulsive disorders.

3. *Social consequences:*

- deterioration of interpersonal relationships;
- family conflicts;
- difficulties in professional integration [7].

Conclusions

The integrative analysis of the specialized literature and available empirical data supports the conceptualization of orthorexia as a transdisciplinary construct situated at the intersection of eating behaviors, cognitive processes, and personal self-regulatory mechanisms. Although it is not included as a distinct diagnosis in international nosographic systems, orthorexia represents a relevant phenomenon from a psychological perspective due to its implications for individual and social functioning.

Its specificity lies in the rigid focus on the perceived quality of food and in the transformation of eating behavior into an instrument of identity self-regulation. Unlike anorexia nervosa, where the emphasis is predominantly placed on quantitative restriction and body weight control, in orthorexia centrality is given to purity, nutritional value, and the conformity of food with internalized personal standards. This orientation may lead to progressive restrictions, nutritional imbalances, and deterioration of overall health status, despite the declared intention of optimizing lifestyle [10].

From a cognitive perspective, the phenomenon is associated with rigidity in information processing, perfectionism, and an intensified need for control, as well as with the structuring of dichotomous evaluative schemes regarding food. The internalization of dietary norms as absolute personal values gives the behavior an individualized character, which reduces openness to critical reevaluation and contributes to the maintenance of maladaptive patterns. The emotional dimension is marked by anxiety and guilt associated with deviations from self-imposed rules, while the social dimension may include withdrawal, integration difficulties, and relational tensions generated by the rigidity of dietary standards [4].

Overall, orthorexia can be understood as the expression of the interaction between cognitive, motivational, and socio-cultural factors within a contemporary context that values ideals of health, purity, and self-control. The boundary between adaptive eating behavior and rigid-excessive conduct thus becomes gradually blurred, imposing the need for an interdisciplinary approach aimed at clarifying the conceptual status of the phenomenon, identifying the self-regulatory mechanisms involved, and developing preventive strategies intended to promote a balanced relationship with food and lifestyle.

Future Research Directions

Given the multidimensional character of orthorexia, future research should aim to clarify its nosological status and rigorously differentiate it from other eating disorders and disorders within the obsessive-compulsive spectrum. Longitudinal studies are necessary to investigate the role of personality traits - such as maladaptive perfectionism, neuroticism, and cognitive rigidity - in predicting the development of orthorexic behaviors.

Additionally, exploring self-regulation mechanisms and emotional regulation strategies may contribute to understanding the initial adaptive function and its transformation into a maladaptive pattern. Analyzing the influence of socio-cultural pressure and exposure to digital content promoting restrictive dietary ideals represents another relevant direction, especially among young populations.

Last but not least, the development and validation of psychometric instruments sensitive to differentiating between healthy concern for nutrition and its pathological manifestation, as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness of specific psychotherapeutic interventions, constitute essential priorities for consolidating the empirical foundation of the field.

Overall, the integrative investigation of structural factors (personality dimensions) and dynamic factors (self-regulatory mechanisms), in interaction with socio-cultural variables, may contribute to outlining a coherent explanatory model of orthorexia and to substantiating appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTATION AMONG PEOPLE WITH LOCOMOTOR DISABILITIES

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Adaptation and inclusion of individuals with special needs represent a constant challenge in contemporary society, being closely related to the level of self-esteem and the capacity for psychosocial adaptation. Therefore, the present research aims to analyze these dimensions, as well as the relationship between them, among individuals with locomotor disabilities in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, the research results indicate the presence of average and high levels of self-esteem, alongside relatively good psychosocial adaptation. Furthermore, it was found that professionally employed individuals demonstrate a greater capacity for psychological and emotional adaptation, highlighting the importance of labor market inclusion and social support in the integration process. A significant correlation between self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation was also identified among individuals with locomotor disabilities, confirming the proposed hypothesis. Thus, active participation in professional life significantly contributes to strengthening self-esteem, increasing personal autonomy, and improving the quality of life of individuals with locomotor disabilities.

Keywords: *self-esteem, psychosocial adaptation, psychological adaptability, emotional adaptability, motor disabilities.*

RELATIA DINTRE STIMA DE SINE ȘI ADAPTAREA PSIHOSOCIALĂ LA PERSOANELE CU DIZABILITĂȚI LOCOMOTORII

Adaptarea și incluziunea persoanelor cu nevoi speciale reprezintă o provocare constantă în societatea contemporană, fiind strâns legate de nivelul stimei de sine și de capacitatea de adaptare psihosocială. Studiul de față își propune să analizeze aceste dimensiuni, precum și relația dintre ele, în rândul persoanelor cu dizabilități locomotorii din Republica Moldova. Rezultatele cercetării indică existența unor niveluri medii și ridicate ale stimei de sine, alături de o adaptare psihosocială relativ bună. De asemenea, s-a constatat că persoanele încadrate profesional manifestă o capacitate mai mare de adaptare psihologică și emoțională, ceea ce subliniază importanța incluziunii pe piața muncii și a sprijinului social în procesul de integrare. S-a constatat și o corelație semnificativă dintre stima de sine și adaptarea psihosocială la persoanele cu dizabilități locomotorii, ce confirmă ipoteza propusă. Astfel, participarea activă în viața profesională contribuie semnificativ la consolidarea stimei de sine, la creșterea autonomiei personale și la îmbunătățirea calității vieții persoanelor cu dizabilități locomotorii.

Cuvinte-cheie: *stima de sine, adaptare psihosocială, adaptabilitate psihologică, adaptabilitate emoțională, dizabilități locomotorii.*

Introduction

In the contemporary context, self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation of individuals with motor disabilities represent a highly relevant issue. Considering that self-esteem is described as a “discreet” phenomenon, difficult to observe directly, its manifestations often go unnoticed. Consequently, individuals with motor disabilities may experience significant fluctuations in self-esteem, which negatively influence their social interactions and can generate heightened feelings of isolation. Thus, managing motor disability becomes more complex, creating additional obstacles in the process of psychosocial adaptation.

Disability affects not only the physical functioning of the individual but also has a significant impact on self-esteem as well as psychological and emotional adaptability, particularly reflected in the quality of interpersonal relationships. In this context, the process of integration into the educational system, the

labor market, and social life becomes more challenging. From this perspective, self-esteem constitutes an essential factor in psychosocial adaptation, determining how individuals with motor disabilities assume social and professional roles. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the levels of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation, as well as the relationship between these variables among individuals with motor disabilities.

Conceptual Aspects of Self-Esteem and Psychosocial Adaptation

Self-Esteem it represents the evaluative and affective dimension of self-image, reflecting how an individual appraises their own value and competence in relation to personal standards and the social environment [2, 7]. In the psychological sense, it expresses the relationship between the perception of personal success and the level of aspirations, being determined by the congruence between the real self and the ideal self. From a contemporary perspective, self-esteem is conceptualized as a two-dimensional construct that includes self-worth and the perception of personal competence, constituting an essential factor for psychological balance and social adaptation [6].

Self-concept according to Lelord, F., and André, C., is “the opinion we have about ourselves,” which does not have a specific objective basis rooted in “our qualities and flaws,” because what matters is our subjective perception of “possessing those qualities and flaws” [6, pp. 15]. These subjective opinions later become the solid foundation of an individual’s personality. In this context, Andreas asserts that the self-concept is formed from personal experiences, which remain stored in memory and become a kind of “nourishment for the personality” [1, pp. 26-27]. Thus, it is not only having an opinion about ourselves that shapes the self-concept, but also the way we react to life events, which are retained in memory.

Social Adaptation it represents the process through which an individual integrates into the system of social relationships, adjusting their behaviors and personal resources to the demands of the environment. According to Paladi, this constitutes a stage of socialization and has a relative and multidimensional character, reflecting the person’s capacity to function effectively in various areas of social life.

Psychosocial adaptation It involves a continuous interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment. In this process, psychological and emotional adaptation become indispensable components of effective social integration, while maintaining a psycho-emotional balance represents the individual’s response to the constant adjustment to environmental demands.

Recent research [4, 10] confirms that psychosocial adaptation is significantly influenced by personality factors such as emotional stability, self-regulation, and resilience. Current studies indicate that these traits directly contribute to social participation, mental health, and quality of life for individuals in vulnerable contexts, including situations of disability. Additionally, adaptation is described as a staged process oriented toward functional integration, involving initial emotional reactions, cognitive restructuring, and the development of adaptive behavioral strategies [9].

Consequently, psychosocial adaptation is no longer viewed exclusively as a reaction to the environment, but as a complex self-regulatory process that contributes to the formation of social identity, the strengthening of self-esteem, and effective community integration. Several authors-Paladi, Drugus, and Știrbu-identify psychological adaptability and emotional adaptability as key components of psychosocial adaptation. Based on these considerations, we employed two questionnaires designed to measure these components.

In individuals with disabilities, psychosocial adaptation is conceptualized as a dynamic process of interaction between the individual and the social environment [3]. According to the World Health Organization [8], disability represents an impairment that limits activities and social participation, being influenced not only by health status but also by contextual factors. In this regard, the biopsychosocial model explains disability as the result of the interaction between biological, psychological, and social dimensions, going beyond strictly medical approaches [3].

Disability has an impact not only physically but also psychologically, being frequently associated with social marginalization [2]. Similarly, social stigmatization and labeling can lead to anxiety and a reduction in self-esteem, and the label of disability can come to dominate an individual’s identity [5].

According to various authors, adaptation to disability involves an evolutionary process of psychological adjustment through stages such as the initial impact, defensive mechanisms, and eventual acceptance. Psychosocial integration is influenced both by social barriers and stereotypes and by the manner in which the individual constructs their self-image in relation to the environment [5]. Thus, psychosocial adaptation entails the integration of disability into one's personal and social identity [3].

In the case of individuals with disabilities, psychosocial adaptation involves a gradual process in which the person progresses through distinct stages of adjustment, such as confrontation, acceptance, and integration of the disability. This process is significantly influenced by the level of social inclusion, the support provided by the family, and society's attitudes toward disability, as the psychosocial adaptation of individuals with motor disabilities depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships and their involvement in social life.

Methodological Aspects

Research Aim is to determine the levels of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation, as well as the relationship between these variables among individuals with motor disabilities in the Republic of Moldova.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant correlation between self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation in individuals with motor disabilities.
2. There are significant differences in the expression of self-esteem, psychological adaptability, and emotional adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities depending on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce.

Participants

This study involved 51 individuals with motor disabilities from the Republic of Moldova, aged between 21 and 56 years. Participants were selected randomly, and their participation was voluntary. Before the study, they were informed about the study's purpose, how the results would be used, and were assured of the confidentiality of their personal data.

Methods

In the present study, three scales were used: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Chestionarul adaptabilității psihologice Н. П. Фетискин was used to measure participants' psychological adaptability [9, pp. 57]; Chestionarul Autoaprecierii adaptabilității emoționale Н. П. Фетискин [9, pp. 58] was used to measure participants' self-assessment of emotional adaptability.

Statistical and Mathematical Methods: Bravais-Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) and Student's t -test.

Results and discussion

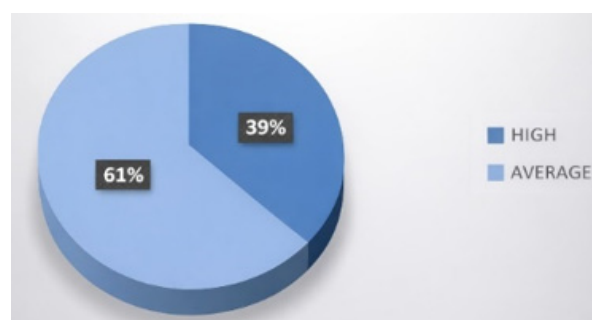


Fig. 1. Graphical Representation of Self-Esteem among individuals with Motor Disabilities

In the present study, the levels of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation were analyzed in the experimental group of 51 individuals with motor disabilities from the Republic of Moldova. According to the data on self-esteem levels, the results indicate that the majority of participants (61%) have a average level of self-esteem, which suggests a balanced perception of their own value and good adaptation to the social environment. Interestingly, none of the participants exhibited a low level of self-esteem. Therefore, individuals with motor disabilities are able to maintain an optimal level of self-esteem while successfully achieving psychosocial adaptation. Additionally, 39% of the participants demonstrated high self-esteem (see Fig. 1).

Next, our aim is to identify the level of psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities. Following data analysis, the results obtained are presented (see Fig. 2):

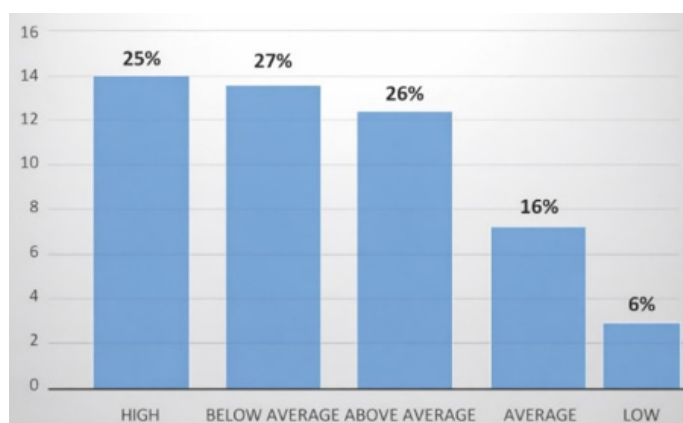


Fig. 2. Graphical Representation of Psychological Adaptability among Individuals with Motor Disabilities

by discomfort in the face of change, yet they are able to cope with challenges. Finally, 6% of the participants exhibit low psychological adaptability, finding it difficult to adjust to new situations, often avoiding them or showing resistance.

Regarding emotional adaptability, the following results were identified (see Fig. 3):

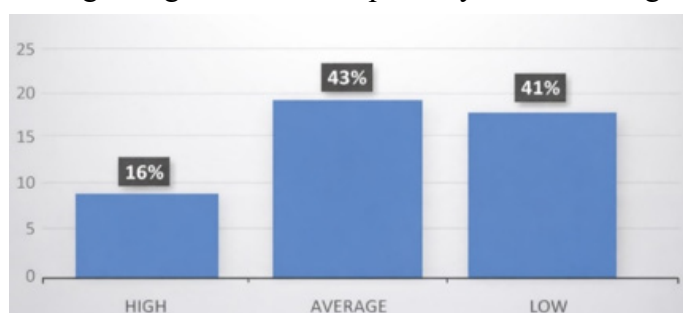


Fig. 3. Graphical Representation of Emotional Adaptability among Individuals with Motor Disabilities

experience difficulties in decision-making, making them vulnerable to change and more likely to avoid confronting it. Consequently, problems arise in their interpersonal relationships, which are often dysfunctional and accompanied by anxiety, stress, and significant emotional pressure. In this context, these individuals face challenges in psychosocial adaptation, as they frequently prefer social isolation.

What encourages is the fact that, no individuals with motor disabilities demonstrated very low emotional adaptability. This suggests that, despite the emotional challenges they encounter, they retain at least a basic capacity for emotional adjustment. Nevertheless, they need support from both family and community to provide a safe space that fosters emotional development and strengthens their emotional intelligence.

Another objective of this study is to determine whether there are differences in the expression of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce.

Regarding the expression of self-esteem, the following results were obtained (see Fig. 4).

The percentage data do not indicate significant differences. Both individuals who are involved and those who are not involved in the workforce exhibit an average level of self-esteem (71% and 65%). Similarly, a high level of self-esteem is also observed, with relatively close percentages: 29% among employed individuals and 35% among those not employed. In this context, it can be assumed that many individuals with motor disabilities likely receive consistent support and assistance from both family and society,

The results indicate that the majority of individuals with motor disabilities exhibit above-average psychological adaptability (26%) and high levels (25%), which suggests that these individuals are generally able to manage their emotions in unexpected situations, remain calm, and find effective solutions. They are optimistic and confident in their ability to face challenges. However, 27% of individuals with motor disabilities display below-average adaptability, which manifests as difficulty adjusting to new rules and conditions in stressful situations, challenges in finding solutions, or a tendency to avoid confronting problems directly, relying heavily on the opinions of others. Sixteen percent of participants demonstrate an average level of psychological adaptability, characterized

The majority of individuals with motor disabilities exhibit high (16%) or average (43%) levels of emotional adaptability, indicating an optimal capacity for emotional regulation. Those with high levels are able to manage stressful situations effectively, as they have developed emotional intelligence over time through various coping and self-regulation techniques. However, 41% of individuals with motor disabilities demonstrate low emotional adaptability. These individuals are unable to manage their emotions effectively in stressful situations, often reacting excessively and aggressively to sudden challenges in their lives. They

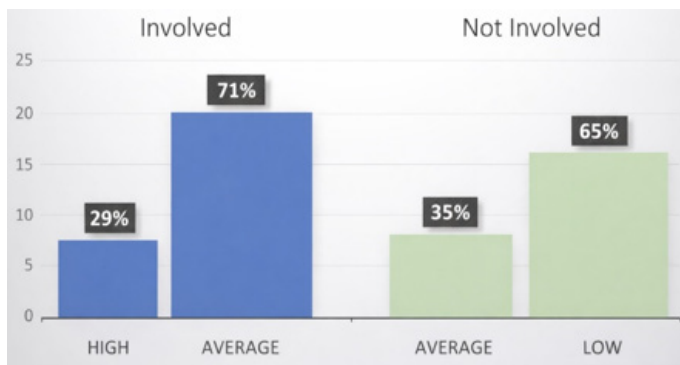


Fig. 4. Graphical Representation of Self-Esteem Among Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

which contributes to maintaining self-esteem at an optimal functional level. According to Lelord, F., and André, C., self-love is described as “emotional nourishment” that fosters harmonious self-esteem [6, pp. 13]. Therefore, interpersonal relationships and the presence of an inclusive environment act as protective factors and facilitate the psychosocial adaptation of individuals with motor disabilities.

Regarding the expression of psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce, the results are as follows (see Fig. 5):

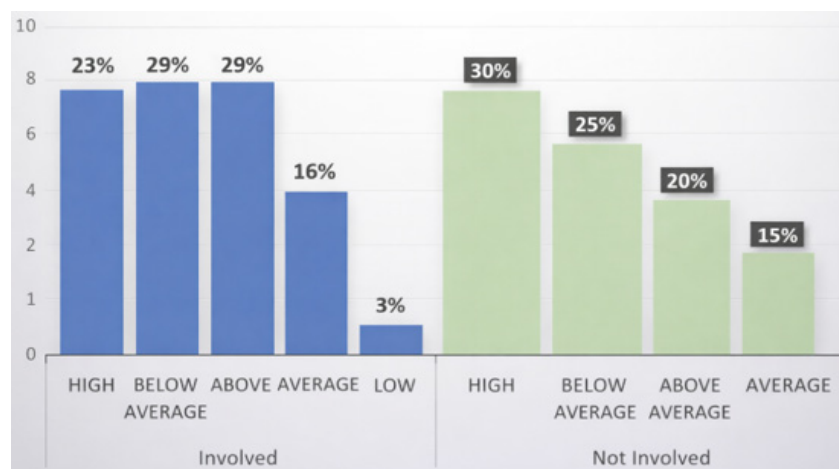


Fig. 5. Graphical Representation of Psychological Adaptability Among Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

The majority of individuals with motor disabilities who are involved in the workforce exhibit above-average (29%) or high (23%) levels of psychological adaptability. They possess internal resources to manage their emotions in crisis situations, have confidence in their abilities, and demonstrate flexible thinking, learning from mistakes—factors that facilitate their adaptation in the workplace. In contrast, individuals not involved in the workforce show a low level of psychological adaptability (10%), while 25% display below-average levels. In total, 35% of individuals with motor disabilities face difficulties when confronted with unpredictable situations, exhibiting rigid thinking characterized by avoidance behaviors and resistance to confronting problems. These individuals require encouragement and support from those around them, as they are more psychologically vulnerable, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation. Individuals with motor disabilities who exhibit an average level of psychological adaptability are present in both groups, with slight percentage differences (16% among those involved in the workforce and 15% among those not involved). They learn to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, even if they initially experience feelings of uncertainty and psychological discomfort in crisis situations. Individuals with motor disabilities who are not involved in the workforce require assistance, support, and guidance from both family and society to develop the psychological adaptability necessary for facilitating the process of psychosocial adaptation. In this context, the inclusion of individuals with motor disabilities in society will promote the formation of social identity and the assumption of social roles, which in turn will enhance psychological resilience in facing the daily challenges encountered by individuals with motor disabilities.

Next, we analyze how emotional adaptability is expressed among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce (see Fig. 6).

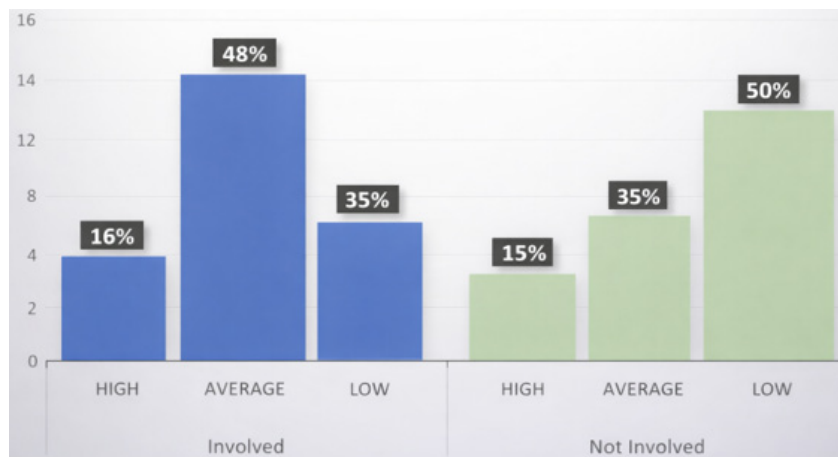


Fig. 6. Graphical Representation of Emotional Adaptability of Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

The results indicate that individuals with motor disabilities who are involved in the workforce exhibit higher levels of emotional adaptability compared to those who are not involved. Specifically, a larger proportion of individuals not involved in the workforce (50%) demonstrate low emotional adaptability compared to those who are employed (35%). These individuals experience significant difficulties in managing their emotions and are highly sensitive to stressors. It is therefore beneficial for them to participate in social activities that enhance their capacity to interact with others, learn to socialize with different people, and be included in society without experiencing marginalization or stigmatization.

To test the hypothesis that there are significant differences in the expression of self-esteem, psychological adaptability, and emotional adaptability based on the involvement or non-involvement of individuals with motor disabilities, the Student's t-test was applied. The results obtained are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Results of the Student's t-Test on Differences in the Expression of Self-Esteem, Psychological Adaptability, and Emotional Adaptability among Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

Variable	Group	m	SD	t	df	p
Self-Esteem	involved	30,03	5,480	1,104	49	0,275
	not involved	28,25	5,857			
Psychological adaptability	involved	5,77	2,125	0,524	49	0,005
	not involved	5,05	2,212			
Emotional adaptability	involved	9,19	4,942	-0,742	49	0,447
	not involved	10,35	5,724			

The results indicate significant differences in the variable of psychological adaptability, while no differences were found for the variables of self-esteem and emotional adaptability. The statistical data partially confirm our hypothesis. To determine the correlation between self-esteem and the two components of psychosocial adaptation, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The results are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Relationship between self-esteem, psychological adaptability and emotional adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities

	Self-esteem <i>Pearson correlation coefficient / Significance threshold</i>
Psychological adaptability	$r = 0,466$; $p = 0,001$
Emotional adaptability	$r = 0,642$; $p = 0,001$

A significant positive, directly proportional correlation was found between self-esteem and psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities ($r = 0.466$, $p = 0.001$). Additionally, a significant positive correlation was identified between self-esteem and emotional adaptability ($r = 0.642$, $p = 0.001$) in the same population. This indicates that higher levels of self-esteem are associated with higher levels of both psychological and emotional adaptability. These results confirm the second hypothesis, namely that a significant correlation exists between these variables.

Conclusions

1. Self-esteem among individuals with motor disabilities is expressed at an average to high level, indicating a healthy and optimal degree of self-love, self-concept, and self-confidence, despite the presence of a motor disability.

2. No individuals with motor disabilities exhibited low self-esteem, which indicates the presence of protective factors (such as family and society) and effective adaptive mechanisms.

3. Significant differences exist in the expression of psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce, whereas no differences were found in the expression of self-esteem or emotional adaptability in relation to workforce participation.

4. Significant correlations exist between self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation, both in the psychological adaptability and emotional adaptability components. These results confirm the proposed hypothesis.

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BEHAVIORS OF PEOPLE WITH GAMBLING ADDICTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

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This article presents the relationship between gambling behaviors and self-confidence, social courage, and initiating social contacts. For the praxeological dimension of the research, the following psychometric instruments were used: The Self-Confidence Test, developed by Romek V.G. and the Problem Gambling Severity Index, authors Ferris J. & Wynne H. The experimental group consists of 134 respondents who were selected to be part of the research due to the addictive relationship they have with gambling. We note that the statistical analysis of the results indicates significant relationships between the analyzed aspects, namely: gambling behaviors and self-confidence, social courage, initiating social contacts. Thus, the research results contribute to the concretization of the sequences long debated in the specialized literature regarding the fact that behavioral addictions are influenced by psychological aspects such as the self-confidence of the addicted individual.

Keywords: *self-confidence, social courage, initiating social contacts, addictions, gambling, gender in gambling addiction.*

COMPORTAMENTELE PERSOANELOR CU ADICȚII DE JOCURI DE NOROC DIN PERSPECTIVA ÎNCRÊDERII ÎN SINE

În cadrul acestui articol este prezentată relația dintre comportamentele de joc de noroc și încrederea în sine, curajul social, precum și inițierea contactelor sociale. Pentru dimensiunea praxiologică a cercetării au fost utilizate următoarele instrumente psihometrice: Testul încrederii în sine, elaborat de Romek V.G. și Indexul de severitate a jocurilor de noroc problematice, autori Ferris J. & Wynne H. Grupul experimental este constituit din 134 de respondenți care au fost selectați pentru a participa la cercetare datorită relației de dependență pe care o au cu jocurile de noroc. Menționăm că analiza statistică a rezultatelor indică relații semnificative dintre aspectele analizate și anume: comportamentele de joc de noroc și încrederea în sine, curajul social, inițierea contactelor sociale. Astfel, rezultatele cercetării contribuie la concretizarea secvențelor îndelung dezbătute în literatura de specialitate cu privire la faptul că adicțiile comportamentale sunt influențate de aspecte psihologice precum încrederea în sine a individului dependent.

Cuvinte-cheie: *încredere în sine, curajul social, inițierea contactelor sociale, adicții, jocuri de noroc, genul în adicția de joc.*

Introduction

The specialized literature has highlighted the fact that both substance and behavioral addictions have a multifactorial impact on an individual from a neurobiological, social, psychological and economic point of view. Thus, consumption behavior, which is most often interpreted by society as illogical from a rational point of view, highlights an altered neuroplasticity and a profound dysregulation of the brain's reward system. Addictions represent a pressing public health problem that affects not only the person involved, but the entire community [5, p. 159]. To correctly understand the complexity of the phenomenon, it is very important to understand the subtle distinction found in the terminology: dependence or addiction. In the general sense, we can speak of a physiological dependence when we refer to the state of adaptation of the body to a substance, and subsequently, following the interruption of this substance or its reduction, symptoms such as those known as physical withdrawal (vomiting, tachycardia, etc.) appear, but also psychological withdrawal (anxiety, irritability, etc.) [2, p. 57-63].

Starting from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), which represents a globally accepted standard for psychiatric diagnosis, what was historically called „addiction” is primarily

referred to as „substance use disorder” (SUD), and the term „dependence” refers specifically to physiological dependence [13, p. 4635-4645]. Physiological dependence can occur without considering addictive behavior, this can be seen when we talk about medical treatments prescribed by specialized professionals. An individual may receive a drug from the opioid class as a treatment following a medical procedure or if they are suffering from physical pain. This individual may develop a physical dependence on that drug, which is a support for them to cope with the pain. The body will later experience withdrawal symptoms when the medication is discontinued or the dose is changed. In this case, the patient is not “addicted” in the pathological or addictive sense. In this case, the body’s natural physical adaptation response is highlighted and at the same time, physiological reactions can be observed when interacting with certain substances [6, p. 25]. Addiction, as a central element, includes brain changes in terms of reward systems, motivation and long-term memory. We cannot talk about addiction without talking about its components: tolerance, craving, loss of control, withdrawal [5, p. 159] and continued use despite negative consequences [6, p. 25]. From a psychological point of view, we can speak of a two-way feedback loop that occurs as a result of addictive behavior. In addition to negative emotional manifestations and the withdrawal felt, consumption behavior (both of substances and behaviors) can aggravate pre-existing mental illnesses, but also certain disorders, emotional problems or pathologies, which can fuel consumption behavior. Behavioral addictions alter sociocognitive functions, empathy and/or recognition of emotions, actively contributing to the persistence of certain disorders [17, p. 473-487] to the same extent, people with antisocial personality disorder [12, p. 178-187] present impulsivity, non-compliance with norms and lack of empathy, often being associated with pathological gambling.

Concept and Argument

Behavioral addictions and pathological gambling

Addictions are generally associated with substances, the most well-known and common being: tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive substances [8]. However, behavioral addictions are beginning to be recognized in the specialized literature, an important first step in this direction was the introduction of gambling disorder into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), officially becoming the first behavioral addiction [11]. At the level of official title, the title of “behavioral addictions” is still not officially recognized by DSM-V [1], even if it has started to be used more and more often following the emerging evidence regarding the similarities between substance use and behavioral ones [8]. It can be observed that both in the case of behavioral and substance addictions, the person persists in the behavior even if he experiences a series of severe negative consequences [9]. There are also a number of differences, in the case of behavioral addictions that make diagnostic consensus difficult [10] such as the absence of ingesting a substance [14] and the differentiation between addiction and compulsive behavior in the case of certain behaviors such as: food, sports or shopping [8].

Gambling disorder, known as pathological gambling or gambling addiction, is characterized by a persistent and recurrent pattern of increased intensity of gambling behavior even if negative and significant consequences occur on the main life stages of a person [4]. This condition is more than a lack of will and desire for quick enrichment, it involves a complex interaction of psychological, neurobiological and social factors, being present a pattern of excessive allocation of short-term rewards whose consequences can be observed in the long term [7]. The DSM-V stipulates a series of diagnostic criteria based on a persistent and recurrent pattern of problem gambling behavior manifested by the presence of four (or more) of the following symptoms in a 12-month period:

1. “The need to gamble increasing amounts of money to achieve the same pleasure or euphoria;
2. The individual becomes restless and irritated when trying to stop or reduce the pathological play;
3. The individual has made numerous efforts to stop, control, reduce, or reduce the pathological gambling, but without success;
4. The individual is intensely preoccupied with gambling (eg, has thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, plans new opportunities to gamble, thinks about how to get money to gamble with);
5. Playing is often a way to relieve a negative mood (eg when feeling unhappy, hopeless, guilty, anxious, depressed);

6. After losing money gambling, he often returns in the following days to get his revenge (“hunt” his own losses);
7. Lying to hide the degree of involvement in gambling;
8. Jeopardized or lost an important relationship, a job, or an educational or career opportunity because of gambling;
9. He relies on others to give him the money he needs to get out of desperate financial situations caused by gambling” [1, p. 585-586].

Gambling behavior and self-confidence

Self-confidence plays a significant role in gambling addiction, being present both in the initiation of the behavior and in its long-term maintenance [15]. At the basis of the maintenance of gambling behavior is often an excessive confidence in one’s own forces or in the ability to influence random outcomes, manifested by overestimation [16]; at the opposite pole, one can also find low self-confidence regarding how to manage gambling behavior and its impact on a person’s life. As the gambling behavior evolves [3], the person realizes that although there is a desire to stop, he can no longer reduce the frequency of the game, thus he realizes that he has lost control over his own forces, these repeated failures affect the self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem of the players.

Materials and Methods

In the framework of the research, the answers given by 134 respondents with varying degrees of gambling addiction were analyzed. These respondents were co-opted from several psychology offices and associations.

Table 1. Distribution of subjects according to the gender criterion

The gender criterion	Participant	Percent
Women	57	42,5
Men	77	57,5
Total	134	100%

It can be seen from the results included in table 1 that the respondents are distributed almost equally according to the gender criterion. Thus, a percentage of 57.5% of the respondents are men, and 42.5% of the entire experimental group are women.

In the following we will present the sequence of the research carried out to verify the hypothesis according to which we assumed that there is a relationship between the level of self-confidence and the level of severity of gambling addiction. We will begin with the study of the level of self-confidence for which the *Self-Confidence Test developed by Romek V.G.* was administered. then we will present the data for the *Problem Gambling Severity Index* by Ferris J. & Wynne H.

The self-confidence test (Romek V. G.) determines the level of confidence in one’s own strength, the ability to have social courage and the ability to maintain interpersonal relationships. Regarding the age limit, the test is recommended from the age of 14 onwards. With a number of 30 items, it presents 3 answer options arranged on 3 columns. In fact, these items help outline the first image of the person’s willingness to trust in their own strength and present the respondents’ ability to maintain adequate interpersonal relationships. When answering the test items, a choice is made for one of the variants of statements offered. It is requested that the statements in column B be selected less frequently (not more frequently than once every 3-4 questions). Scores are assigned according to the test key, summed for each subscale, and raw values are then converted to standard values. The levels for self-confidence, social courage and social initiation are defined as follows: Indexes 1–4: low level; Indexes 5–7: medium level; Hints 8–10: High level.

As we pointed out, the research used the *Problem Gambling Severity Index*, authors Ferris J. & Wynne H. This instrument was specially constructed to measure the intensity of problem gambling in relation to the general population and is composed of 9 items, of which 4 specifically assess gambling behavior. By summing up the scores, 4 categories of players are obtained depending on the score obtained: 0 is a player with-

out problems; 1-2 describe a low-risk gambler (gambling behavior may be incipient or occur occasionally without major impact on various areas of a person's life). This category includes people who use gaming behavior for self-regulation following a possible trauma. A score of 3-7 describes a moderate-risk player (behavior has been present for a period of time, it is possible for family or people nearby to notice that there are things wrong with the person). Gambling behavior can be felt in the mental state of the person, assuming a high level of stress, sleep problems, anxiety-type symptoms. Also, people can have debts, but not at a level that exceeds their financial ability to pay them; The cumulated score of 8 describes a problem player, that is, the gambling behavior interferes deeply with the person's life and with every level of development. In this context, the person may suffer from: depressive states, anxious states, sleep problems, suicidal thoughts, health problems, inability to concentrate, memory problems, lack of hope, feelings of hopelessness, problems with family or family of origin etc.

Results and Discussions

In this part we will present the descriptive statistical data regarding the results obtained from the statistical processing. Table 2 shows the data for the gambling index and the components: self-confidence, social courage and initiation of social contacts.

Table 2. Distributions of the Gambling Severity Index and self-confidence

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Std. Error		Std. Error
Problem Gambling Severity Index	2,216	1,394	0,365	0,209	-1,781	0,416
Self confidence	16,761	2,543	0,311	0,209	-0,053	0,416
Social Courage	20,440	4,720	-0,110	0,209	-0,993	0,416
Initiating Social Contacts	17,466	4,324	-0,287	0,209	-1,117	0,416

Thus, for the *Problem Gambling Severity Index* we observe a mean of 2.216 with a standard deviation of 1.394. The skewness and skewness indicators although in some cases exceed the limits of a normally distributed distribution, the applied statistical procedures are sufficiently robust and the skewness and skewness indicators do not exceed the limits by much. The levels for self-confidence, social courage and initiation of social contacts identified with the *Self-Confidence Test (V.G. Romek)* are graphically illustrated in Figures 1-3.

The levels of self-confidence are shown in figure 1. The results demonstrate that the majority of respondents, namely 128 participants, had low self-confidence. Thus, participants who scored at this level are characterized as lacking self-confidence and we can describe them as shy with high levels of anxiety who need professional help. It can also be observed that only 6 study participants obtained an average self-confidence score. It should be emphasized that no respondent obtained a high score, which indicates that none of the respondents has a high level of self-confidence.

Figure 2 shows the results for the factor - social courage.

From figure 2 we can see that 69 respondents, which represents 51.5% of the total participants, report a low level of social courage. A percentage of 37.3% of the total number of respondents (representing a number of 50 participants) obtained an average score regarding the analyzed factor. Moreover, only 15 respondents, representing 11.2% of the total subjects interviewed, obtained high scores regarding the Social Courage factor.

The third component concerns the factor of initiating social contacts (figure 3).

From figure 3, the levels of the factor - initiation of social contacts, it can be observed that 69 respondents, which represents 51.5% of the total participants, report a low level of the given factor. A percentage of 46.3% of the respondents representing a number of 62 participants obtained an average score regarding the analyzed factor and only a number of 3 respondents, representing 2.2% of the total experimental subjects, obtained high scores regarding the factor - initiation of social contacts.

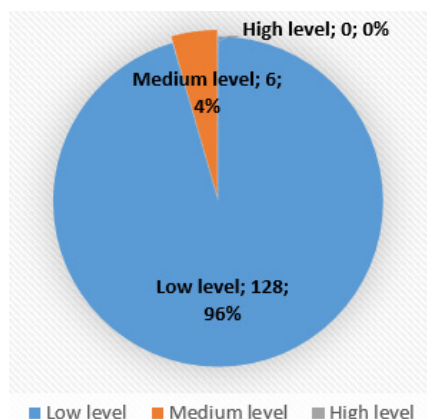


Figure 1. Levels of the factor - self-confidence

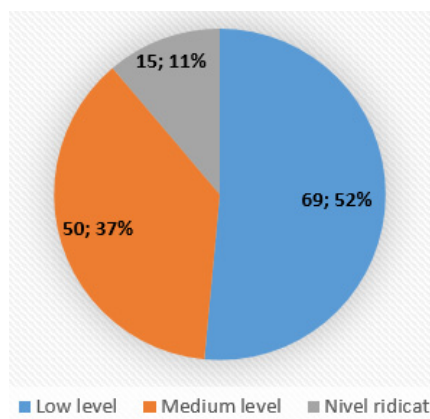


Figure 2. Levels of the factor – social courage

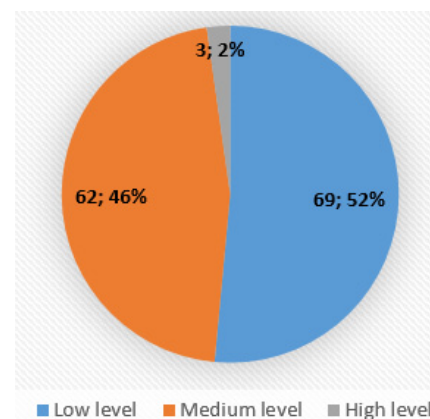


Figure 3. Levels of the factor – initiation of social contacts

According to the research approach, we present the correlation coefficient indices regarding the identification of the relationship between the gambling severity index and self-confidence, social courage and the initiation of social contacts. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Correlations between gambling severity index and self-confidence

Factor	Problematic gambling severity index	
	Correlation coefficient (r)	Significance threshold (p)
Self confidence	0.431**	0.001
Social Courage	- 0.545**	0.001
Initiating Social Contacts	- 0.640**	0.001

According to the results obtained for the correlations between the gambling severity index and self-confidence we can see that there are significant relationships between the analyzed variables. Thus, the self-confidence factor correlates significantly ($p=0.001$), respectively the correlation coefficient is also strong ($r=0.431$). We can state that the more self-confident respondents are, the higher they score on the Gambling Severity Index.

The next factor analyzed within the self-confidence test is the social courage factor which strongly correlates inversely significantly ($r= - 0.545$, $p=0.001$) with the gambling severity index. This relationship shows us that people addicted to gambling have a low level of social courage.

The last factor analyzed within the same test (Self-confidence Test) is the factor - initiation of social contacts. According to the results obtained from the statistical analysis, we identify the inverse correlation, highly statistically significant ($p=0.001$) with a strong correlation coefficient ($r=-0.640$) between the gambling severity index and social courage. More concretely, we identify a difficulty of people addicted to gambling in initiating social contacts.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the research results confirm the complexity of the relationship between the severity of problem gambling and the dimensions of self-confidence, highlighting a specific psychological profile for people with behavioral addictive behavior. According to the specialized literature, gambling addiction cannot be reduced to a simple problem of willpower or an irrational pursuit of gain, but must be understood as a disorder with profound neurobiological, cognitive, emotional and social implications. The obtained data indicate the existence of highly statistically significant correlations between the gambling severity index and the analyzed variables, outlining a relevant explanatory model for understanding the mechanisms of maintaining addictive behavior.

On the one hand, the positive association between the global level of self-confidence and the severity of gambling index can be interpreted through the lens of the phenomenon of overestimation of one's abilities and the illusion of control over a random system. Individuals high on this dimension tend to overestimate their ability to influence game outcomes, which favors the persistence of behavior despite negative consequences. On the other hand, the significant negative correlations between game severity and social courage, respectively the initiation of social contacts, suggest a progressive deterioration of socio-relational functioning. Thus, as the addictive behavior intensifies, there is social withdrawal, difficulties in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships and diminishing social adaptation skills.

The gender differences identified, with a higher prevalence of severity among men, reinforce previous observations in the literature and emphasize the need for differentiated interventions. Overall, the results support the hypothesis of a significant relationship between self-confidence and gambling severity, highlighting the importance of nuanced assessment of the psychological constructs involved. The practical implications aim at the development of prevention and intervention programs that address both cognitive distortions related to control and self-efficacy, as well as the deficit of social skills, thus contributing to an integrative and effective approach to this public health issue.

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PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF TEACHERS IN SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS BASED ON TIMS SCALE

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The professional identity of teachers is a central area of interest for contemporary educational research, because the way in which teachers perceive themselves and their social role directly influences pedagogical practices, educational relationships and learning outcomes. In the context of current social, cultural and educational transformations, the analysis of formation and development of professional identity becomes essential for understanding the dynamics of teaching profession. The teacher's identity is the result of interaction between individual, psychosocial and cultural factors, which shape professional perceptions, values and motivations. However, quantitative comparative studies on this subject remain relatively limited, respectively, this research aims to analyze the particularities of teachers' professional identity in the Republic of Moldova. The study valorizes empirical data obtained by applying the TIMS scale (The Teacher Identity Measurement Scale), providing an analytical perspective on the way in which teachers construct and define their professional identity.

Keywords: *professional identity, social identity, teacher, education, critical thinking, creativity, social competences, sociocultural context.*

IDENTITATEA PROFESIONALĂ A CADRELOR DIDACTICE ÎN CONTEXT SOCIOCULTURAL: ANALIZĂ EMPIRICĂ BAZATĂ PE SCALA TIMS

Identitatea profesională a cadrelor didactice reprezintă un domeniu central de interes pentru cercetarea educațională contemporană, deoarece modul în care profesorii se percep pe sine și rolul lor social influențează direct practicile pedagogice, relațiile educaționale și rezultatele procesului de învățare. În contextul transformărilor sociale, culturale și educaționale actuale, analiza modului de formare și dezvoltare a identității profesionale devine esențială pentru înțelegerea dinamicii profesiei didactice. Identitatea profesorului este rezultatul interacțiunii dintre factori individuali, psihosociali și culturali, care modelează percepțiile, valorile și motivațiile profesionale. Totuși, studiile comparative cantitative privind acest subiect rămân relativ limitate, respectiv, cercetarea dată își propune să analizeze particularitățile identității profesionale ale cadrelor didactice din Republica Moldova. Studiul valorifică date empirice obținute prin aplicarea scalei TIMS (The Teacher Identity Measurement Scale), oferind o perspectivă analitică asupra modului în care profesorii își construiesc și definesc identitatea profesională.

Cuvinte-cheie: *identitate profesională, identitate socială, profesor, educație, gândire critică, creativitate, competențe sociale, context sociocultural.*

Introduction

A topic of real interest for today's specialists is the professional identity of teachers and the cultural context in which it is formed. Considering that there are fewer existing studies that refer to comparative quantitative research on these topics, a study was initiated that addresses the given topic. Thus, using a quantitative cross-sectional design, contents were highlighted regarding the dependence of teachers' professional identity on cultural factors [8]. The countries that participated in this study were: Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Hungary and Poland. Moreover, the selection of these countries is based on geographical proximity, history and common socio-cultural context. We consider it relevant to present some data collected from research subjects from the Republic of Moldova with reference to the patterns of professional identity of teachers in the flow of changes.

Concept and Argument

This paper refers to the teacher's professional identity, namely we will analyze, from the very beginning, the psychological perspective of the notion of identity which is defined as a characteristic of persons, real or represented objects, events, statements, etc. considered as substitutable for each other, and the notion of social identity is – part of the representation that the individual makes about himself/herself (personal identity) and which is linked to the roles and social statuses of the groups or categories to which he/she belongs [3, p. 554]. This notion refers to both the cognitive and emotional aspects related to these affiliations. It has its origin, from an intellectual point of view, in two schools of thought. The first is philosophical and psychological in nature, and the second, psychoanalytic in nature. G. H. Mead argues that social interactions generate individuality. The individual is formed as a being by integrating on the one hand the social roles and values of his/her group and, on the other hand, reacting to them. E.H. Erikson introduces the notion of identity, understood as a synthesis of the various identifications made in childhood: with parents, of course, but also with the social roles they transmit. Identity is a process of constructing meaning through which people seek to position themselves in certain ways in various environments, in the conceptions of authors Akkerman and Meijer [apud 7, p. 453]. The social identity of an individual can be compared to a prism whose facets are temporarily activated one by one, depending on the type of situation encountered [3, p. 557].

From a psychosocial perspective, D. Cristea highlights that the social identity of a person is the result of interactive processes that operate in the area of interference between the individual and the social. Consequently, on the one hand there are the person's psycho-individual structures (Ego, Self, self-image and self-awareness, etc.), and on the other hand the structures of social field in which the person is formed and objectified through action (values, norms, statutory models and social roles). Thus, identity appears as a psychosocial construct, through which the person inserts himself/herself into his/her relational system, having a structuring function for their profile [1, p. 250].

The concept of social identity has not generated many theories that have the ambition to predict behavior. In fact, many of the studies that appeal to this concept are descriptive and propose an *a posteriori* interpretation of their results. H. Tajfel's theory of social identity is perhaps the most complete attempt to develop a coherent predictive set of the links between social affiliations, intrapsychic factors, behavioral reactions and social change processes [3, p. 558]. On the other hand, the complexity of the relationships system through which a person's social identity is configured has led to the formulation of theories regarding its genesis, development and manifestation. The most important theories regarding this issue are those of the authors: Erikson, R.D. Laing, J. Marcia, Waterman [1, p. 250]. D. Cristea, referring to the main dimensions of social identity, from a relational perspective, highlights among them sexual identity, ideological identity, moral identity, role identity and vocational identity. This last type of identity is the result of fundamental options, which aim at choosing a profession. Vocational identity crystallizes following processes of self-exploration and exploration of the environment, following which the child and then the adolescent, the young adult become aware of their own acquired skills, interests, values, abilities and competences, on the one hand, and the range of activities, professions, work styles, training opportunities and moral and material motivations offered by the social environment, on the other hand. Professional identity is obtained following a relatively long process, during which self-evaluations, vocational experiments, internalization of values and professional models, as well as groping of social offers to which the subject believes they can have access take place [1, p. 256].

Professional identity is defined by Kramer, Hoffman, Tickle as teachers' sense of belonging to and identification with the teaching profession. There is a reciprocal effect between self-identity and professional identity, affecting each other. Thus, Kozminsky and Kluer argue that any change in one of the identities generates an impact on the other. The perception of professional identity affects the sense of self-efficacy, professional judgment and decisions [apud 6, p. 11].

Since professional identity is part of teachers' self-awareness, it includes their values, motivation, norms, goals and moral considerations. Over the past 20 years, research (Chaaban et al., 2021; Schutz et al., 2018; Zhang and Wang, 2022) on teachers' professional identity has shown that it influences teachers' professional development, practices, and attitudes [apud 7, p. 453].

N. Dvir and A. Shaz-Opppenheimer delineate four interrelated aspects of professional identity: 1. how the profession and its essence are perceived by society; 2. how professionals perceive the profession they practice; 3. how the professional perceives himself/herself as a specialist, what he/she considers to be important in his/her work and professional life, based on his/her experience and background; 4. how the professional is perceived by others: clients, colleagues, peers, and the public [apud 2].

From the same perspective, authors C. Rodgers and K. Scott highlighted four basic characteristics of professional identity: 1. professional identity is contextual - it is built under the impact of social, cultural, historical and political contexts; 2. professional identity assumes specific forms in specific contexts - it develops through interpersonal relationships; 3. professional identity is dynamic - it is built and changes depending on contexts, situations and relationships; 4. professional identity has a coherent character, which is formed under the impact of everyday events [9].

In this context, the authors argue that professional identity is obtained in close connection with the way of assimilating certain values and social models; however, the process has a dynamic and sometimes contradictory character, not always being an attempt to achieve congruence between personal characteristics and those of the respective profession, a congruence that would become a source of well-being, satisfaction, stability and personal achievements. Social, psychosocial or circumstantial factors can also orient the professional option in another direction, different from that of achieving the aforementioned congruence. However, whatever the situation, the process by which a person's professional identity is achieved takes place in several stages, amply described in the specialized literature by the authors Super, Ginsberg et.al. [1, p. 256].

The notion of professional identity of the teacher refers to two interrelated aspects. *The first* refers to the way in which a school teacher perceives himself/herself as a teacher and is related to the psychological aspect - the school teacher's identification with his/her work, the way in which he/she perceives his/her traits, skills, professional values and the interaction with students, colleagues, principals and other people he/she meets in his/her activity; *the second* refers to the way in which the school teacher is perceived by others as a teacher: by students, colleagues, parents and society in general, it is related to the professional aspect - his/her professional image and social appreciation as a professional [apud 2].

Accordingly, in the following we will refer to the peculiarities of teacher's identity from the perspective of teachers' and future teachers' views - students who study in the *Education Sciences* specialty.

Methodology

The Teacher Identity Measurement Scale (TIMS) is based on a questionnaire and includes factors that highlight determining characteristics of the teacher's identity. The scale contains five sections: 1. General information about the questionnaire; 2. Information about the experimental subjects; 3. The reasons that led the subject to become a teacher; 4. Information about the extent to which the teachers agree with the opinions regarding the activity carried out. 5. Information regarding the way the experimental subjects were grouped, relationships with management, etc.

Thus, in the version placed on docs.google, the first section includes information about how to complete the questionnaire, in the second section the interviewed subjects filled in information about themselves, but which respects personal data, general information about the experimental group (professional status; marital status; age; background; level of education (last graduated); teaching experience; quality: teacher or student/trainee), and in sections 3-5 the items that reflect the views of experimental subjects with reference to the concept of education are presented, presenting the results for items such as *Think about the reasons that led you to become a teacher; To what extent do you agree with the following opinions?; Place your answer on a scale from 1=totally disagree, to 5=totally agree for the items: The well-being of the group is more important than individual rewards; Group success is more important than individual success; It is very important to be accepted by the members of your professional group, etc.*

Results and Discussion

Following, we will describe the results obtained for only a few items of *the Teacher Identity Measure-*

ment Scale (TIMS). In fact, the full content of scale offers the opportunity to explore in depth the specifics and contexts of professional identity construction.

The research results obtained for the second section of questionnaire illustrate the fact that the research involved an experimental group consisting of 288 teachers and future teachers (students) from the Republic of Moldova, aged between 18 and 65 years, of which only 284 provided answers for all the questionnaire items, which were used in the research, 4 answers being excluded.

According to the results obtained for *the professional status* of experimental subjects, we identified that 62.0% (176 people) of the subjects are teachers, 36.6% (104 people) have the status of future teachers – being students in the specialty of education sciences, and 1.8% (5 people) have both qualities. At the same time, 57.0% of the interviewed subjects indicated that they are married, 40.5% are single, and 2.5% are engaged.

The experimental group was divided according to the *gender* criterion, thus we identified that 92.6% of the subjects are female, and 7.4% are male. So, regarding the gender aspect, the indicated data attest, once again, the excessive feminization of personnel in the educational system. Existing studies show that there are significant imbalances between the sexes in terms of personnel at different educational levels [5, p. 17]. At the same time, 33.5% of the subjects from the mentioned group are from urban areas, and 66.5% are from rural areas. The level of education, the last graduated, is as follows: 7.4% middle school, 26.8% high school; 28.2% licentiate (bachelor's) degree; 26.1% master's degree, 3.9% college, 1.4% PhD studies et al. The teachers indicated that they have different teaching experience, from 1 year to 42 years, being predominantly middle school teachers, high school teachers, primary school teachers.

Next, we will describe some items from the third section of scale. Thus, the results for item *Think about the reasons that led you to become a teacher* referred to the specific answer options, for example *Because I am interested in education* (it was possible to choose only one option), the answers being placed on a scale from 1=totally disagree, to 7=totally agree. The results obtained demonstrate that 47.9% (136 people) of the teachers interviewed claim that they completely agree with the fact that interest in education was the reason that led them to become teachers, quantifying this item at level 7; 23.6% at level 6; 15.1% at level 5; 8.8% at level 4; 2.5% at level 3; 0.4% at level 2; and only 1.8% of the teachers interviewed indicated that they completely disagree with this aspect. Thus, we observe that most teachers/future teachers, which constitutes 86.6% of the entire experimental group, quantified the answers for this item at levels 5-7, stating that interest in education was the reason that led them to become teachers.

We consider important the data presented with reference to another reason that led teachers to become teachers - the pleasure of being a teacher (item *Think about the reasons that led you to become a teacher: Because I like being a teacher*). Thus, the results demonstrate that 50.0% (142 people) of the teachers interviewed claim that they completely agree with the fact that the pleasure of being a teacher was the reason that led them to become teachers, quantifying this item at level 7; 20.1% at level 6; 19.7% at level 5; 5.3% at level 4; 1.4% at level 3; 0.7% at level 2; 2.8% of the total number of teachers indicated that they completely disagree with the fact that the pleasure of being a teacher motivated them to select this profession. Similar to the case described previously, we conclude that for a large number of teachers/future teachers, the pleasure of being a teacher was the reason that led them to become specialists in this field.

The study also referred to the views of experimental subjects regarding the search for opportunities to work in education (item *Think about the reasons that led you to become a teacher: I actively sought opportunities to work in education*), (according to the scale 1= totally disagree, and 5 =totally agree). Of the total number of subjects interviewed, 32.4% (92 people) of the teachers, quantify this item at level 5 (total agreement) mentioning that they actively sought opportunities to work in education; 30.6% (87 people) of the teachers, quantify this item at level 4; 22.2% of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 3; 7.7% of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 2 and only 7.0% (20 people) of the teachers quantify this item at level 1 of the scale, stating that they did not actively seek opportunities to work in education. We emphasize that only 14.7% of the subjects, from the entire experimental group, obtained the quality of teacher without having actively sought opportunities to work in education.

Another item of the questionnaire refers to the views of experimental subjects with reference to the

extent to which they can get involved in helping students value learning (the item *Think about the reasons that led you to become a teacher: How much can you do to help your students value learning?*), (similar to the previous case, according to the scale 1=totally disagree, and 5=totally agree). Thus, the results obtained show that 32.4% (92 people) of the teachers quantify this item on level 5, stating that they can do a lot to help their students value learning; 49.3% (140 people) of the teachers quantify this item on level 4; 15.5% of the total number of teachers quantify this item on level 3; 1.4% of the total number of teachers quantify this item on levels 2 and 1 of the scale, respectively, considering that they cannot do much to help their students value learning. It is worth noting that most of the experimental group quantified this item on levels 4 and 5, meaning that teachers are willing to make great efforts to help students value learning.

In this context, we will also present the selective description of items in the fourth section of the teacher identity measurement scale. In order to identify the professional identity models of teachers, their opinions were valued with reference to the item *To what extent do you agree with the following opinions?* Thus, the information about the extent (from 1 to 5) to which teachers agree with opinions referring to the activity carried out outlined the visions for the items: - I believe that my most important task is to teach students to have a critical attitude towards society. - I believe that my main task is to teach students social skills. - I believe that my main task is to introduce students to different cultures and religions. - I believe that my most important task is to transfer the values and norms of society to students. - In addition to my teaching duties, I also have a broader educational task. - I believe that my most important task is to determine students to take others into account. - I believe that if students want to achieve more later, I need to teach them more now. - I believe that if students learn more at school, they will have less chance of being unemployed later. - I believe that students should learn well at school so that they can be successful socially. - I believe that a good education for students is the key to social success. - In the classroom, order and discipline are important to me. - In my class, students should be quiet and attentive. - In my class, students must listen to me. - In my class, it is important that students behave well. - It is my duty to demand commitment from students. - I believe it is important to take into account the wishes of my students. - In my class, I believe it is important for children to have a say. - I believe it is normal for students to criticize me as a teacher.

Next, we will analyze in detail the results of some of the items above, from the 4th section of the teacher identity measurement scale.

Figure 1 presents the views of the experimental subjects regarding the item *I believe that my most important task is to teach students to have a critical attitude towards society*.

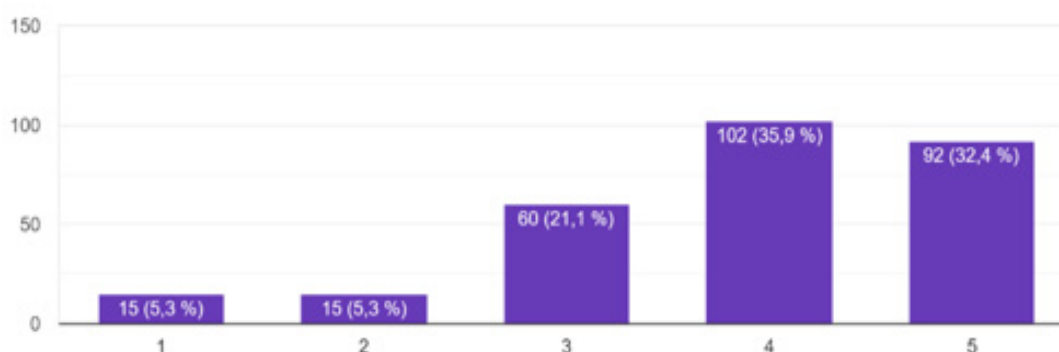


Fig. 1. Views of Experimental Subjects on Importance of Teachers' Task of Teaching Students to Have a Critical Attitude Towards Society

The results indicate that 32.4% of teachers quantify this item at level 5 (total agreement), meaning they believe that their most important task is to teach students to have a critical attitude towards society, but a larger number of teachers - 35.9% - quantify this item at level 4; 21.1% of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 3; 5.3% of the total number of teachers interviewed quantify this item at levels 2 and 1 of the scale, meaning that they do not completely agree that their most important task is to teach students to have a critical attitude towards society (figure 1). We thus identify that the data highlight a

mostly positive trend among teachers regarding the role of education in shaping students' critical attitudes towards society. The significant proportions of respondents who selected levels 4 (35.9%) and 5 (32.4%) indicate that most teachers consider this dimension to be important or very important in their educational work. However, the existence of a percentage of 21.1% of respondents who express a neutral position, as well as the 10.6% who express a low level of agreement (levels 1 and 2), suggests a certain diversity of perspectives on educational priorities. These results indicate the need to deepen pedagogical reflection and develop training strategies that strengthen the role of education in stimulating critical thinking and responsible participation of students in society.

The results obtained for the item *I believe that my main task is to teach students social skills are also important*. In this case, 46.5% of teachers quantify this item at level 5 (total agreement); 36.6% quantify this item at level 4; 12.7% of teachers quantify this item at level 3; 2.5% at level 2, and 1.8% of the total number of teachers quantify the given item at level 1 - disagreeing with the fact that their main task is to teach students social skills. Here we emphasize that there is a large number of experimental subjects (83.1% of the total number of people interviewed) who claim that their main task is to teach students social skills, which is encouraging. In fact, in this case, the results highlight a strong support from teachers for the role of education in developing students' social skills. As we have highlighted, the high percentage of respondents who indicated level 5 (46.5%) and level 4 (36.6%) demonstrates that most teachers consider the training of social skills as an essential component of their pedagogical activity. In total, 83.1% of the participants show a high degree of agreement with the analyzed statement, which reflects a clear orientation of educational practices towards the development of students' relationship skills, cooperation and social integration. At the same time, the low percentages of those who expressed a neutral position (12.7%) or a disagreement (4.3%) indicate that, although there are certain differences in perception, these do not affect the general positive trend. Thus, the results confirm the importance given by teachers to the training of social skills, considered a fundamental element in preparing students for active and responsible integration into society.

Figure 2 presents the views of experimental subjects with reference to the extent to which they can adjust the lessons to the appropriate individual level for each student. The results are indicated according to the scale 1=to a small extent, and 5=to a large extent.

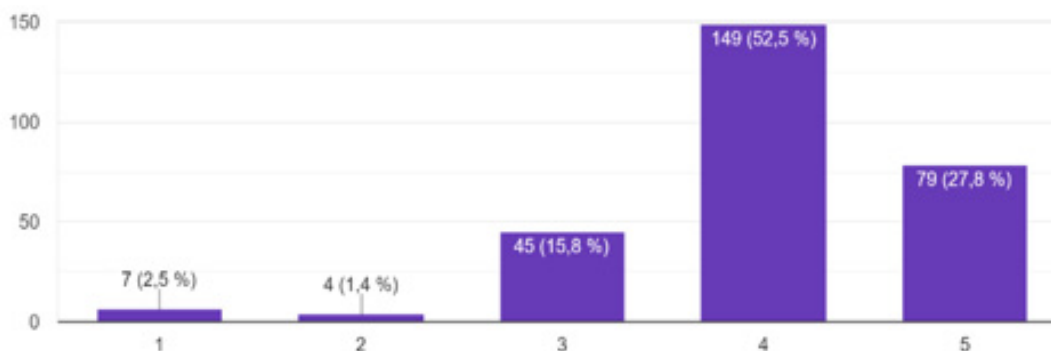


Fig. 2. Views of Experimental Subjects Regarding Extent to Which They Can Adjust Lessons to Appropriate Individual Level for Each Student

We identify that the teachers' opinions are, in this case, varied. From figure 2 it results that only 27.8% (79 people) of the teachers, quantify this item on level 5, mentioning that to a large extent they can adjust the lessons to the appropriate individual level for each student; most subjects - 52.5% (149 people) quantify this item on level 4; 15.8% (45 people) of the total number of teachers quantify this item on level 3; 1.4% (4 people) quantify this item on level 2; 2.5% (7 people) of the total number of teachers quantify this item on level 1 of the scale, respectively considering that to a very small extent they can adjust the lessons to the appropriate individual level for each student.

In summary, we note that the data indicate a predominantly positive perception of teachers regarding their ability to adapt the teaching process to the individual needs of students. Most respondents rated this aspect at high levels of the scale, with 52.5% indicating level 4 and 27.8% level 5, which suggests that a

significant proportion of teachers believe that they are able to, to a large or very large extent, adjust lessons according to the particularities of each student. At the same time, the existence of a percentage of 15.8% of respondents who adopt a moderate position, as well as a small number of teachers who perceive this possibility as limited (3.9% at levels 1 and 2), indicates that the individualized adaptation of teaching can be influenced by various factors, such as available resources, time or class size. Therefore, the results highlight both the willingness of teachers to personalize the educational act and the need to strengthen the conditions and pedagogical strategies that facilitate differentiated and student-centered learning.

Figure 3 presents the views of the experimental subjects regarding the extent to which they can help students think critically (1=to a small extent, and 5=to a large extent).

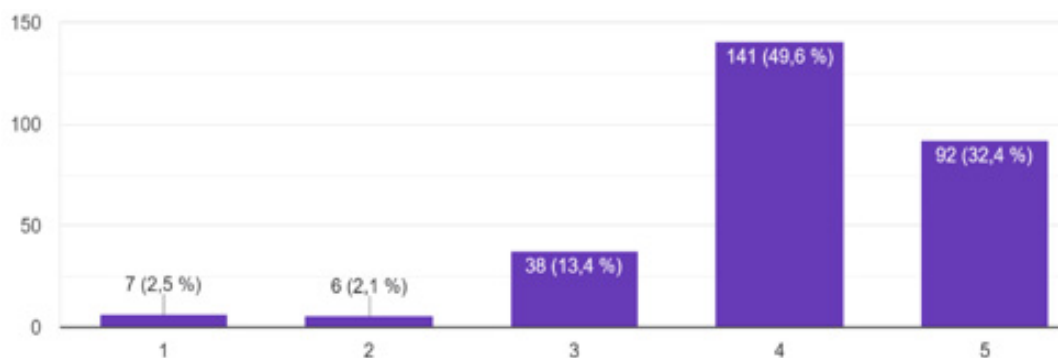


Fig. 3. Views of Experimental Subjects Regarding Extent to Which They Can Help Students Think Critically

According to the results (figure 3), 32.4% (92 people) of the entire sample, quantify this item at level 5, stating that to a large extent they can help students think critically; a larger number of subjects – 49.6% (141 people) quantify this item at level 4; 13.4% (38 people) of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 3; 2.1% (6 people) quantify this item at level 2; 2.5% (7 people) of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 1 of the scale that presents the extent to which they can help students think critically. In this context, we note that the results highlight a predominantly positive perception of teachers regarding their ability to stimulate students' critical thinking. Most respondents rated this aspect at high levels of the scale, level 4 and level 5, which shows that a considerable proportion of teachers believe that they succeed, to a large or very large extent, in helping students develop critical thinking competences. At the same time, the percentage of 13.4% of respondents who opted for level 3 indicates the existence of a moderate position regarding the effectiveness of this approach, while the low percentages of those who chose levels 1 and 2 (4.6%) suggest that only a small number of teachers perceive significant difficulties in stimulating critical thinking. Thus, the data confirm the importance given to the development of critical thinking in the educational process and highlight the need to strengthen pedagogical strategies that support the formation of this essential competence for the active and responsible participation of students in contemporary society.

The perceptions of experimental subjects regarding the extent to which they can stimulate students' creativity (1=to a small extent, and 5=to a large extent) are presented in Figure 4.

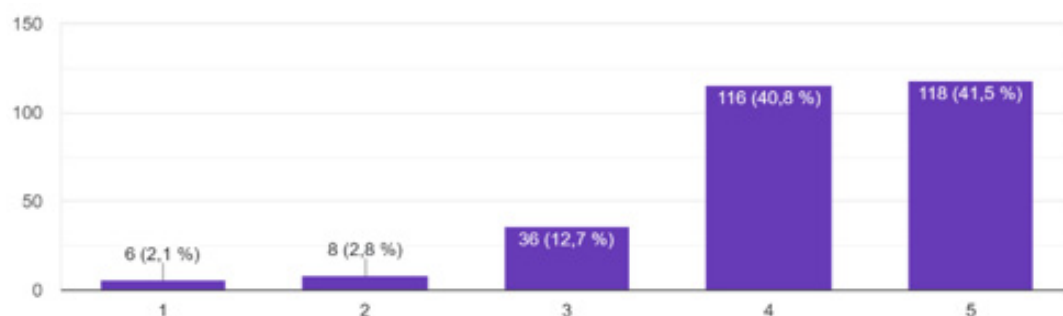


Fig. 4. Opinions of Experimental Subjects Regarding Extent to Which They Can Stimulate Students' Creativity

We note that the data in Figure 4 indicate a large number of experimental subjects who quantify this item at level 5 (41.5%) and at level 4 (40.8%), stating that they can stimulate students' creativity to a large extent. Then, in consecutive order, 12.7% quantify this item at level 3; 2.8% (8 people) of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 2; and only 2.1% (6 people) quantify this item at level 1 – considering that they can stimulate students' creativity to a small extent. Summing up, we identify that the results highlight a predominantly favorable perception of teachers regarding their ability to stimulate students' creativity within the educational process. The high percentages of respondents who rated this aspect at the higher levels of scale — at level 5 and at level 4 — indicate that most teachers believe that they succeed, to a large or very large extent, in encouraging the manifestation and development of creativity among students. Also, the percentage of 12.7% of those who opted for level 3 suggests the existence of a moderate perception of this approach, while the low percentages corresponding to levels 2 and 1 (4.9% cumulative) indicate that only a small number of teachers perceive difficulties in stimulating students' creativity. These results emphasize the importance given to the development of creativity in the teaching-learning process and highlight the need to maintain and diversify teaching strategies that favor free expression, innovative thinking and active involvement of students in educational activities. In this context, we mention that these results are very important also because in the research conducted in 2022 on the subject of *Value Orientations and Psychosocial Adaptation of Adolescents* (PhD thesis in Psychology) [4] by administering the *Value Orientations Test - M. Rokeach* to adolescents, we obtained the hierarchies of terminal and instrumental value orientations in which the *creation* value was placed 17th out of 18 in the hierarchy of terminal values, which means that it remains in the category of non-priority values.

We also consider the perceptions of experimental subjects important with reference to the extent to which they can establish routines so that activities can proceed harmoniously, without problems (1=to a small extent, and 5=to a large extent). The results for the given item are presented in Figure 5.

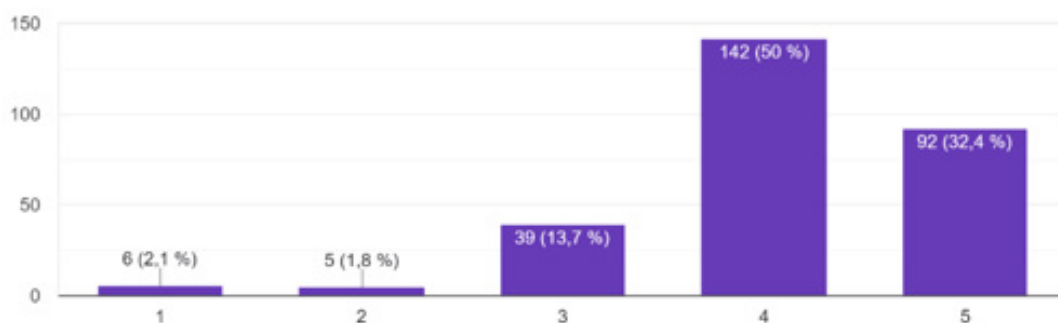


Fig. 5. Opinions of Experimental Subjects Regarding Extent to Which They Can Establish Routines So That Activities Can Proceed Harmoniously, Without Problems

Analyzing the results obtained for the item *How well can you establish routines so that activities can proceed harmoniously, without problems?* we identify that 92 interviewed subjects, which represents 32.4% of the entire group - quantify this item on level 5; then 142 subjects, which represents 50.0% of the entire group, being also the most numerous group - quantify this item on level 4. For the following levels there are fewer people who quantify, in consecutive order, this item on level 3 (13.7%); on level 2 (1.8%) and on level 1 - only 2.1% (6 people). We emphasize here that in the perceptions of a larger number of teachers, namely half of the sample, this item is placed at level 4 indicating that they cannot *very well* establish routines so that activities can be carried out harmoniously, without problems. In other words, the analysis of results highlights the fact that the majority of teachers consider that they have relatively solid competences in establishing the routines necessary for the harmonious conduct of educational activities. The high share of respondents who evaluated this aspect at levels 4 (50.0%) and 5 (32.4%) suggests that teachers generally perceive themselves as capable of efficiently organizing the teaching environment so that the teaching-learning process can be carried out in an orderly and predictable manner. However, the fact that half of the participants opted for level 4, and not for the maximum level of the scale, indicates the existence of a certain reserve in the assessment of their own abilities to manage educational routines. At the same time, the low percentages corresponding to the lower levels of the scale confirm that major difficulties in this area are relatively

rare. Therefore, the results suggest the need to strengthen classroom management practices and organizational strategies, so that teachers can ensure, to an even greater extent, a stable and efficient educational climate.

For the item *I believe that my most important task is to transfer the values and norms of society to students* - the results are as follows: 48.9% of teachers quantify this item at level 5 (to a large extent); 32.0% quantify this item at level 4; 12.7% - at level 3; in consecutive order 3.9% of the number of teachers interviewed quantify this item at level 2 and only 2.5% of the total number of teachers interviewed quantify this item at level 1 of the scale. Accordingly, these data indicate that teachers/future teachers consider their most important task to be teaching students to transfer the values and norms of society to students.

Figure 6 presents the opinions of experimental subjects regarding the extent to which students should learn well at school in order to be socially successful (1=to a small extent, and 5=to a large extent).

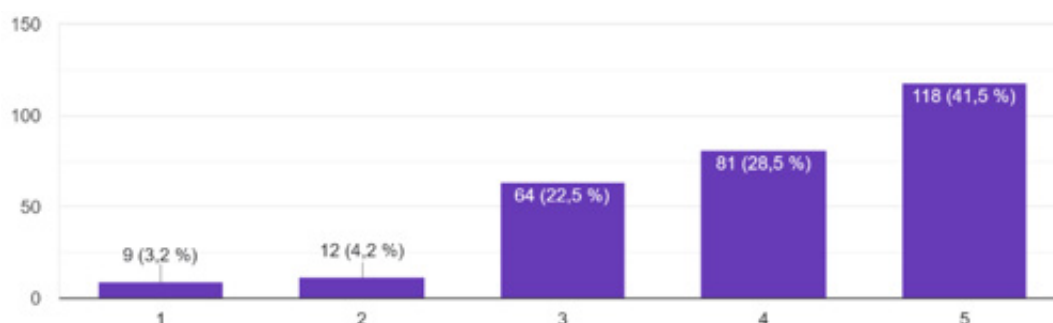


Fig. 6. Perceptions of Experimental Subjects Regarding Extent to Which Students Should Learn Well at School in Order to Be Socially Successful

The results presented graphically in Figure 6 demonstrate that there is a large number of subjects who believe that students should learn well at school in order to be socially successful. Thus, we identify that 118 interviewed subjects, which represents 41.5% of the entire group - quantify this item at level 5. At the same time, 81 subjects, which represents 28.5% of the entire group, quantify this item at level 4, then, in consecutive order, we have that 64 subjects, which represents 22.5% of the total number of teachers surveyed - quantify this item at level 3; 12 (4.2%) at level 2 and at level 1 - only 9 subjects, which represents 3.2%. The high proportion of respondents who rated this aspect at the maximum level of scale, as well as the significant share of those who opted for level 4, indicate that the majority of participants attribute a key role to school education in preparing students for integration and affirmation in society. At the same time, the existence of a segment of respondents who chose level 3 (22.5%) suggests that some teachers adopt a more balanced perspective, probably also recognizing the influence of other factors in achieving social success. The low percentages corresponding to lower levels confirm that only a small number of participants do not consider school learning to be a major determinant of social success. In this context, the analyzed data underline the importance that teachers attach to the role of education in developing the competences and resources necessary for active and effective participation in social life.

The perceptions of experimental subjects regarding the extent to which they believe that a good education for students is the key to social success are presented in Figure 7. For interpretation, the data are indicated according to which 1 means - to a small extent, and 5 means to a large extent.

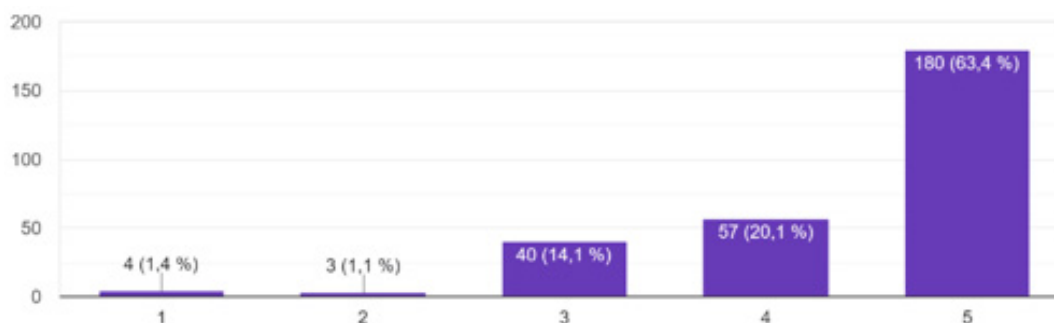


Fig. 7. Perceptions of Experimental Subjects Regarding Extent to Which They Believe That a Good Education for Students Is Key to Social Success

From figure 7, we observe that for the item *I believe that a good education for students is the key to social success* – most teachers/future teachers opted for level 5. More specifically, the results are as follows: 63.4% of teachers quantify this item at level 5 (to a large extent); in consecutive order 20.1% quantify this item at level 4; 14.1% of the total number of teachers quantify this item at level 3; 1.1% of the subjects quantify this item at level 2 and 1.4% of the total number of teachers interviewed quantify this item at level 1 of the scale. The analysis of presented results highlights a strong conviction among teachers regarding the determining role of education in achieving students' social success. The very high percentage of respondents who selected level 5 indicates that most teachers largely believe that a quality education is the foundation for success in social life. This perspective is also reinforced by the percentage of those who opted for level 4, which reinforces the idea of a widely shared perception of the decisive importance of education. At the same time, the moderate or low percentages recorded at levels 3, 2 and 1 suggest the existence of more reserved opinions, but these do not change the general trend of data. Moreover, the results reflect an optimistic view of the role of education, with teachers perceiving it as an essential tool for the personal development and successful social integration of students.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the research results highlight a complex and dynamic image of the professional identity of teachers, built at the intersection of personal motivations, educational values and the socio-cultural context in which they carry out their activity. The analysis of data collected through the Teacher Identity Measurement Scale (TIMS) indicates that the majority of participants display a positive orientation towards the teaching profession, with interest in education and the pleasure of being a teacher being essential reasons for choosing this career. At the same time, the results suggest that teachers perceive themselves as educational actors actively involved in the formation of students not only from a cognitive point of view, but also socially, morally and culturally.

The high proportion of respondents who consider important the development of critical thinking, the stimulation of creativity, the formation of social skills and the transmission of societal values confirms the complex nature of the teacher's role in contemporary society. Teachers also have a relatively favorable perception of their own ability to adapt the teaching process to the needs of students, to efficiently organize educational activities and to create a climate conducive to learning. At the same time, the results highlight the widespread belief that quality education is a determining factor in the social success of students, which reflects teachers' confidence in the transformative role of education. Moreover, the data obtained suggest that teachers' professional identity is structured around a set of solid educational values and a significant commitment to the formative process. These findings highlight the importance of supporting teachers' continuous professional development and of strengthening institutional and cultural contexts that favor the affirmation of a coherent and reflective professional identity.

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PERFORMANCE MOTIVATION AS A PREDICTIVE FACTOR OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

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The article presents the relationship between performance motivation and students' academic engagement, analyzing to what extent motivational factors can explain differences in students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement in university activities. The results of the correlational analysis highlighted positive and significant relationships between the dimensions of academic engagement and the components of performance motivation, especially success certainty, desire to learn, internality, cognitive flexibility, and compensatory effort. Behavioral engagement was mainly associated with internality, desire to learn, and success certainty, cognitive engagement with success certainty, desire to learn, cognitive flexibility, and internality, and emotional engagement with compensatory effort, success certainty, and desire to learn. Regression analysis indicated that performance motivation explains approximately 28% of the variation in academic engagement, with the total motivational index being a significant positive predictor of academic engagement. The results highlight the central role of motivational factors in supporting students' academic engagement and their adaptation to the university environment.

Keywords: *performance motivation, behavioral academic engagement, cognitive academic engagement, emotional academic engagement.*

MOTIVAȚIA PERFORMANȚEI CA FACTOR PREDICTIV AL IMPLICĂRII ACADEMICE A STUDENȚILOR

Articolul prezintă relația dintre motivația performanței și implicarea academică a studenților, analizând în ce măsură factorii motivaționali pot explica diferențele în implicarea comportamentală, cognitivă și emoțională a studenților în activitățile universitare. Rezultatele analizei corelaționale au evidențiat relații pozitive și semnificative între dimensiunile implicării academice și componentele motivației performanței, în special certitudinea succesului, dorința de a învăța, internalitatea, flexibilitatea cognitivă și efortul compensatoriu. Implicarea comportamentală a fost asociată în principal cu internalitatea, dorința de a învăța și certitudinea succesului, implicarea cognitivă cu certitudinea succesului, dorința de a învăța, flexibilitatea cognitivă și internalitatea, iar implicarea emoțională cu efortul compensatoriu, certitudinea succesului și dorința de a învăța. Analiza de regresie a indicat că motivația performanței explică aproximativ 28% din variația implicării academice, indicele motivațional total fiind un predictor pozitiv semnificativ al implicării academice. Rezultatele evidențiază rolul central al factorilor motivaționali în susținerea implicării academice a studenților și adaptarea acestora la mediul universitar.

Cuvinte-cheie: *motivația performanței, implicare academică comportamentală, implicare academică cognitivă, implicare academică emoțională.*

Introduction

One of the most acute and complex challenges currently facing education systems globally is maintaining a constant level of academic engagement, both among students and among pupils [6]. The difficulty of maintaining the coherence of academic engagement has become all the more visible in periods of transition to new education formats, especially those involving the virtual and online environment, respectively alternative methods and complementary aspects to the traditional teaching method. These have been widely adopted especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequently becoming an integral part of education systems [18].

Globally, the pandemic has acted as a catalyst for significant educational transformations, causing profound and rapid changes in the way the educational process is organized, conducted and perceived, with the impact being felt strongly and in a relatively similar manner in various regions of the world. During these major educational transformations, the perception of academic engagement has been directly influenced

by the context of the health crisis. Higher education institutions, along with other forms of education, have been forced to adopt, in a very limited time frame, new teaching and assessment methods, often extremely different from traditional ones. Also, strategies for managing educational interactions have changed to meet the new requirements generated by the conditions imposed by distance learning [15].

Inevitably, all these transformations have affected not only the quality and efficiency of educational interactions, but also the psychological well-being of all those involved in the educational process: teachers, students and the entire academic community. Although the pandemic period, which generated major changes in the conduct of academic activity, has been overcome, the elements imposed by the adaptation to it have been preserved even after the resumption of the traditional learning process, as alternatives and complementary models: hybrid or exclusively online education.

Thus, adapting to a less predictable and much less interactive educational environment has generated challenges related to academic involvement, motivation for performance, stress management, maintaining social cohesion, cultivating a sense of belonging to the university community [2].

In this context, students' academic engagement becomes not only a variable of theoretical interest, but also an essential indicator for understanding contemporary educational systems, for identifying strategies to support motivation for performance and academic engagement in times of crisis accompanied by accelerated changes.

The relationship between performance motivation and students' academic engagement

The specialized literature indicates that academic engagement is an essential component of the contemporary educational process, playing a decisive role in structuring learning experiences, in consolidating academic performance and in preventing the phenomenon of university dropout.

Numerous studies in the field of educational psychology consistently highlight the fact that a high level of academic engagement exerts direct, significant and visible effects on university performance, constituting a determining factor for the individual development of students, as well as for considerably reducing the risk of educational dropout [7, 16].

Academic engagement is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that goes beyond the simple physical participation in teaching and assessment activities, including a complex set of behaviors, attitudes, and psychological processes that reflect students' commitment to their own educational process [5]. Student academic engagement involves not only participation and attendance, but also a constant, conscious, and goal-oriented effort, manifested by assuming academic responsibilities, using effective learning strategies, and actively engaging in various knowledge-enhancing activities. Students with a high level of academic engagement tend to exhibit behaviors of active participation in classes, perseverance in the face of difficulties, increased intellectual interest, and a strategic orientation toward achieving performance.

In this context, academic engagement becomes a robust indicator of educational success, contributing decisively to reducing the dropout rate, increasing satisfaction with the educational experience, and optimizing long-term outcomes [14].

Achievement motivation is one of the most important non-cognitive predictors of academic engagement and educational success among students. In the literature, it is conceptualized as a relatively stable tendency of the individual to pursue high standards of performance, to exert sustained effort in order to achieve personal goals, and to persevere in the face of obstacles [18, 3].

Numerous studies have highlighted the fact that students with strong achievement motivation are more behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively involved, demonstrating active participation in the classroom, a positive affective investment in learning activities, and a strategic orientation towards the use of effective study techniques [11].

Achievement motivation contributes to the development of self-regulation in learning, in the sense that students set clear goals, monitor progress, select appropriate strategies, and adjust their learning behaviors according to academic demands [19].

Achievement Goal Theory also suggests that individuals with a growth mindset – who seek to improve their own skills, not just demonstrate performance – show higher levels of academic engagement and persistence [4].

In addition, achievement motivation is closely related to perceived self-efficacy, a factor that contributes to increased confidence and reduced anxiety in assessment situations, thus facilitating sustained engagement in complex academic tasks [1, 10].

Recent meta-analyses confirm that achievement motivation is a robust predictor of academic performance and persistence in higher education, explaining a significant proportion of the variance in academic engagement [12].

In this sense, the development of achievement motivation is an essential component of modern educational strategies, playing a central role in stimulating student engagement, optimizing academic results and consolidating their educational path.

Thus, understanding and stimulating academic engagement, as well as optimizing performance motivation, are priority objectives for teachers, psychologists, educational institutions in order to develop effective learning environments, oriented towards the long-term success of students.

Research Methodology

The purpose of the research conducted in the current context of concerns in the field of educational psychology regarding the identification of factors that contribute to the optimization of the academic experience and the increase of student performance is to investigate the role of achievement motivation, in all its aspects, as a possible predictor of academic engagement. More specifically, we focus on analyzing the relationship between performance motivation and academic engagement of students, in order to determine the extent to which the motivational variable can explain the differences that have arisen in active participation, cognitive effort and emotional investment manifested in the context of educational activities.

By examining this relationship, we aim to highlight how students' orientation towards achieving performance, the desire for self-improvement and the tendency to reach high standards of achievement can influence the degree of commitment to the learning process.

Another dimension of the research is to deepen the understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying students' academic involvement, in order to provide an integrative perspective on how performance motivation can function as a determinant of adaptive educational behaviors.

The results of the present research may have important practical implications for the development of educational and psychopedagogical strategies aimed at increasing motivation and strengthening academic commitment, thus contributing to improving academic performance and reducing the risk of university dropout.

Measurement instruments

To conduct the research, scientifically validated psychometric instruments were used, selected to cover the main variables targeted in the study: motivation for achievement and academic engagement. The choice of these instruments was based on their validity and reliability, as well as their recognition in the specialized literature.

1. *Achievement Motivation Inventory (AMI)*

Used to assess achievement-oriented motivation, this questionnaire was developed by Schuler, Thornton, and Frintrup and is a well-established instrument in applied psychological research. The AMI consists of 17 scales, each addressing a specific dimension of achievement motivation (such as perseverance, recognition desire, goal orientation, ambition), and also provides a global motivational index, reflecting the general level of motivation. The instrument contains 170 items, which allows for a nuanced and comprehensive assessment of the targeted construct [13].

2. *University Student Academic Engagement Scale (USAES)*

Recently developed in 2023 by Parra-Pérez and his collaborators, the USAES scale is intended to assess academic engagement among students. The instrument is composed of 14 items and provides both a global measure of academic involvement and a differentiated assessment on three essential dimensions: behavioral (reflecting effort and active participation), emotional (related to attitudes and affective experiences towards the educational process) and cognitive (referring to the level of concentration, perseverance and orientation towards learning) [9].

The instruments applied are scientifically validated questionnaires, each addressing a fundamental dimension of the study: measuring achievement motivation and quantifying the level of academic engagement of students. By combining these instruments, the research ensures a comprehensive approach to the phenomenon studied, each questionnaire bringing a distinct and complementary contribution to the understanding of the relationship between achievement motivation and academic engagement.

Research sample

The data collection process was carried out over an extended period of nine months, with data being collected using a form that included both the questionnaires selected to measure the research variables and a section dedicated to collecting socio-demographic data, necessary for characterizing the sample. At the end of the collection stage, the responses of a total of 232 participants were centralized, all involved on a voluntary basis and in compliance with the ethical principles of research, by signing the informed consent. The substantial size of the sample provides an adequate degree of representativeness for the studied population and allows the formulation of statistically relevant conclusions. The average age of the research participants is 35 years. The frequency analysis shows that 46 respondents (19.8%) fall into the male gender category, while 186 respondents (80.2%) belong to the female gender category. Of the total respondents, 102 participants are at the first faculty (44%), 114 participants are enrolled in the second faculty (49%), constituting the largest category, and 16 (7%) participants attend the third faculty, a relatively small group, but significant through their constant involvement in education and continuing training.

For clarity of the results obtained, we present below the table containing the composition of the group of research participants (table no. 1), structured on socio-demographic details and details relevant to the research, in which we presented the numerical and percentage structure for each category.

Table 1. Presentation of general data of research participants

Socio-demographic data	Categories	Number	Percent
1. Gender aspects	Masculine gender	46	20%
	Feminine gender	186	80%
2. Age (years)	18 – 25 years	72	31%
	26 – 30 years	25	11%
	31 – 35 years	31	14%
	36 – 40 years	22	9%
	41 – 45 years	37	16%
	46 – 50 years	29	12%
	51 – 55 years	7	3%
	56 – 60 years	9	4%
3. Rank of university studies	First faculty	102	44%
	Second faculty	114	49%
	Third faculty	16	7%
4. Level of study	Bachelor	212	91%
	Master	20	9%
5. Year of study	First year	97	42%
	Second year	75	32%
	Third year	60	26%
6. Average grade of the previous year	Between 6 – 7,99	59	25%
	Between 8 – 8,99	81	35%
	Between 9-10	92	40%

Results obtained

Following the exploratory analysis of the dependent variables, it was found that most of them do not follow the normal distribution model, presenting significant deviations from the expected parameters of a normal distribution, the only exception identified was the Total Motivational Index variable, which presented statistical characteristics compatible with a normal distribution ($p=0.137$ in the Shapiro-Wilk normality test). For the other dependent variables, the normality tests applied revealed significant deviations, which indicates the need to use non-parametric tests to verify the research hypotheses (Sperman correlation test) [17].

Hypothesis No. 1: There are associations between performance motivation and behavioral academic engagement.

Hypothesis No. 2: There are associations between performance motivation and cognitive academic engagement.

Hypothesis No. 3: There are associations between performance motivation and emotional academic engagement.

Hypothesis No. 4: The total motivational index is a significant predictor of students' academic engagement.

The results obtained after verifying hypothesis no. 1 using the Spearman correlation test are presented in table no. 2.

Table 2. Associating behavioral academic engagement with aspects of performance motivation

Variable 1	Variable 2	Statistical significance (p)	Spearman correlation coefficient (rho)
	Perseverance	0,000	0,319
	Dominance	0,000	0,294
	Commitment	0,020	0,153
	Success Assurance	0,000	0,397
	Flexibility	0,000	0,368
Academic Behavioral Commitment	Absorption	0,059	0,124
	Fearlessness	0,000	0,300
	Internality	0,000	0,425
	Compensatory Effort	0,008	0,173
	Pride of Performance	0,000	0,340
	Desire to Learn	0,000	0,406
	Preference for Difficulty	0,000	0,273
	Independence	0,000	0,296
	Self-Control	0,000	0,319
	Status Orientation	0,002	0,199
	Competition Orientation	0,785	-0,018
	Goal Setting	0,006	0,181

The results obtained indicate that most facets of performance motivation correlate significantly with behavioral academic engagement, namely active participation in the educational process (statistical significances in the range $p=0.000$ and $p=0.020$). The exceptions are the correlations without statistical significance between behavioral academic engagement and absorption ($p=0.059$), competition orientation ($p=0.785$). The strongest correlations are between behavioral academic engagement and internality ($\rho = 0.425$), desire to learn ($\rho = 0.406$), certainty of success ($\rho = 0.397$). The effect size for these correlations is large, thus *these facets have a strong association with behavioral academic engagement, confirming the role of internality, desire to learn and certainty of success in increasing behavioral academic engagement.*

The results obtained after verifying hypothesis no. 2 using the Spearman correlation test are presented in table no. 3.

Table 3. Associating cognitive academic engagement with aspects of performance motivation

Variable 1	Variable 2	Statistical significance (p)	Spearman correlation coefficient (rho)
	Perseverance	0,000	0,414
	Dominance	0,000	0,368
	Commitment	0,000	0,247
	Success Assurance	0,000	0,498
	Flexibility	0,000	0,438
	Absorption	0,049	0,130
	Fearlessness	0,001	0,211
	Internality	0,000	0,327
Academic	Compensatory Effort	0,000	0,352
Cognitive Commitment	Pride of Performance	0,000	0,380
	Desire to Learn	0,000	0,489
	Preference for Difficulty	0,000	0,409
	Independence	0,000	0,294
	Self-Control	0,000	0,348
	Status Orientation	0,000	0,357
	Competition Orientation	0,882	0,010
	Goal Setting	0,000	0,380

The results obtained highlight the fact that almost all facets of performance motivation correlate significantly with cognitive academic engagement, namely cognitive participation in the educational process (statistical significances in the range $p=0.000$ and $p=0.049$). The only exception is competition orientation ($p=0.882$). The strongest correlations are between cognitive academic engagement and success certainty ($\rho = 0.498$), desire to learn ($\rho = 0.489$), internality ($\rho = 0.425$) and cognitive flexibility ($\rho = 0.438$). The effect size for these correlations is large, indicating that these facets have a strong association with cognitive academic engagement, highlighting *the role of success certainty, desire to learn and cognitive flexibility in increasing cognitive academic engagement in the educational process*.

To verify the third hypothesis, we applied the Spearman correlation test, the results being presented in table no. 4.

Table 4. The association of emotional academic engagement with aspects of performance motivation

Variable 1	Variable 2	Statistical significance (p)	Spearman correlation coefficient (rho)
	Perseverance	0,001	0,221
	Dominance	0,027	0,146
	Commitment	0,000	0,237
	Success Assurance	0,000	0,362
	Flexibility	0,000	0,323
	Absorption	0,580	0,037
	Fearlessness	0,124	0,101
	Internality	0,000	0,266

Academic	Compensatory Effort	0,000	0,363
Emotional Commitment	Pride of Performance	0,000	0,307
	Desire to Learn	0,000	0,325
	Preference for Difficulty	0,000	0,267
	Independence	0,000	0,244
	Self-Control	0,000	0,252
	Status Orientation	0,000	0,230
	Competition Orientation	0,396	-0,056
	Goal Setting	0,000	0,240

The results after performing the statistical test suggest that a large part of the facets of motivation for performance correlate significantly with emotional academic commitment (statistical significances in the range $p=0.000$ and $p=0.0027$). However, there are also facets that do not correlate significantly with it, namely: absorption ($p=0.580$), fearlessness ($p=0.124$) and competition orientation ($p=0.396$). The strongest correlations are between emotional academic commitment and certainty of success ($\rho = 0.362$), compensatory effort ($\rho = 0.363$) and desire to learn ($\rho = 0.325$). The effect size for these correlations is moderate to large, indicating that these facets have a fairly good association with emotional academic engagement, thus demonstrating that *success certainty, compensatory effort, and desire to learn play a determining role in increasing emotional academic engagement towards the educational process*.

The results obtained after verifying the last hypothesis using the linear regression test are presented in table no. 5.

Table 5. Results of the linear regression test between Total Motivational Index and Total Academic Engagement

Coefficient	Coefficient value
Constant regression coefficient (B)	1,020
Regression coefficient (B1)	0,065
Standard error (SE B)	5,573
Standardized regression coefficient (Beta)	0,530
Model coefficient (t)	9,471
Anova test significance (p)	0,000
Coefficient of determination (R^2)	0,281
Adjusted coefficient of determination (AR^2)	0,277
Anova comparison coefficient (F)	89,702
Statistical significance of the model (p)	0,000

The results showed that the regression model is significant, $p < 0.001$, and explains approximately 28% of the variation in academic engagement ($R^2 = 0.28$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.28$). The standardized regression coefficient indicates that the Total Motivational Index is a positive and significant predictor of academic engagement (Beta = 0.53, $t = 9.47$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the large and significant value of F ($F=89.70$), confirms that the Total Motivational Index significantly explains the variation in academic engagement. These results highlight a very important result, which shows that this predictor has a clear influence on academic engagement. In our case, the regression coefficient is almost 16 times higher than its standard error ($SEB=5.573$) which indicates a strong and robust effect.

The p value < 0.001 indicates that the probability that this relationship is the result of chance is less than 0.1%. *We can thus state that the Total Motivational Index is a significant and strong predictor of academic engagement. The results obtained confirm the hypothesis that achievement motivation is an important*

predictor of academic engagement. Although the model explains approximately one third of the variation in academic engagement (28%), this represents a relevant proportion in psychological research, suggesting that achievement motivation plays a central, but not exclusive, role in determining the degree of commitment of students to the educational process. This fact highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation and performance orientation in supporting academic engagement.

Discussions

The analysis of the relationship between performance motivation and students' academic engagement, in order to determine the extent to which the motivational variable can explain the differences in active participation, cognitive effort and emotional investment manifested in the context of educational activities, highlighted how mainly the certainty of success, the desire to learn, cognitive flexibility, compensatory effort and internality, elements of performance motivation, can influence the degree of commitment to the learning process.

The results of the correlation analysis indicated the existence of significant positive relationships between behavioral academic engagement and the variables internality, desire to learn, and certainty of success. We also observed that cognitive academic engagement is most strongly associated with certainty of success, desire to learn, cognitive flexibility, and internality. The results of the correlation analysis also highlighted the fact that emotional academic engagement is most strongly associated with compensatory effort, certainty of success, and desire to learn.

The results of the regression analysis indicated that approximately 28% of the variance in academic engagement is determined by performance motivation. Also, the Total Motivational Index was found to be a positive and significant predictor of academic engagement, suggesting that higher levels of motivation are associated with a greater degree of academic engagement among students.

These results demonstrate that students who perceive academic results as dependent on their own actions and efforts demonstrate a higher level of active involvement in academic activities. At the same time, the desire to learn and the genuine interest in the accumulation of knowledge favor constant, cognitive and behavioral participation in educational tasks. Also, confidence in one's own chances of success contributes to maintaining a high level of behavioral, cognitive and emotional involvement, as students who perceive themselves as capable of achieving good results are more motivated to invest effort in academic activities.

The relationships highlighted by this research suggest that students who demonstrate confidence in academic success are willing to put in extra effort to overcome difficulties and show interest in the learning process, also developing a stronger emotional involvement in academic activities. Overall, the results highlight the important role of motivational factors in supporting affective attachment, as well as cognitive and behavioral involvement in the educational process.

Conclusions

Taken together, the results highlight the central role of achievement motivation in supporting the different dimensions of academic engagement – behavioral, cognitive and emotional. The observed correlations indicate that students who demonstrate confidence in their own success, genuine desire to learn, perception of personal control over outcomes – internality and cognitive flexibility tend to be more involved in academic activities both through active participation and through cognitive and emotional investment.

These findings can be explained by the fact that motivational factors influence the way students interpret academic demands and their own coping resources, determining the level of effort, perseverance and strategy invested in the learning process.

In addition, the results of the regression analysis confirm that achievement motivation is a significant predictor of academic engagement, suggesting that students with a high level of motivation are more likely to exhibit active learning behaviors, use effective cognitive strategies and develop a positive affective relationship with the educational environment.

Thus, achievement motivation can be considered an essential psychological factor that supports academic engagement and contributes to optimizing student performance and adaptation in the university environment.

Although the research was limited by the relatively small number of participants, a potential future direction of research is emerging by diversifying the sample and increasing its volume, in order to verify other aspects of the results obtained.

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THE PARTICULARITIES OF ANXIETY IN ADULTS IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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The use of the Internet and social networks occupies an important part of a person's life, in a universe dominated by advanced modern technology and positively or negatively influences both children, adolescents and young people but also adult users, so that it has become almost impossible to dissociate it from our daily activity. The digital age has radically transformed the way adults interact, work and spend their free time, generating new stress factors known as digital anxiety which is a state and not a trait. The main determinants of anxiety in adults in this context are structured on three areas of interest, namely permanent interconnection, online social pressure and information overload.

Keywords: *digital age, social networks, anxiety, adults, factors, mental health, behaviour.*

PARTICULARITĂȚILE ANXIETĂȚII LA ADULȚI ÎN MEDIUL DIGITAL

Utilizarea internetului și a rețelelor sociale ocupă o parte importantă a vieții unei persoane, într-un univers dominat de tehnologie modernă avansată și influențează pozitiv sau negativ deopotrivă copii, adolescenți și tineri, dar și utilizatorii adulți, astfel că s-a ajuns aproape că nu se mai poate disocia de activitatea noastră zilnică. Era digitală a transformat radical modul în care adulții interacționează, muncesc și își petrec timpul liber, generând noi factori de stres cunoscuți sub denumirea de anxietate digitală care reprezintă o stare și nu o trăsătură. Principalii factori determinanți ai anxietății la adulți în acest context sunt structurați pe trei zone de interes și anume: interconectarea permanentă, presiunea socială online și suprasolicitarea informațională.

Cuvinte-cheie: *era digitală, rețele sociale, anxietate, adulți, factori, sănătate mintală, comportament.*

Introduction

We naturally ask ourselves what are we exposing ourselves to with digitalization and the answer is that no one can predict it, but it is certain that the rapid changes in human behavior in the last decade in how we communicate and compare ourselves to each other are broader and deeper than we can imagine [4, pp. 10-11]. It is one of the reasons why serious research is being undertaken today on the effects of digitalization on the human brain. Hansen (2022) states that not only digital habits have changed but also our current habits so that we have become more sedentary, we sleep less and stress is different from that of the past. In evolutionary terms, humans have made major changes in the environment in a few thousand or even hundreds of years, which is very little on the scale of the history of the evolution of the human race, but the current changes of the digital age challenge us to the limit of the statement that “we evolved for something else and we are not synchronized with the times in which we live” [3, p. 23].

The digital age and the challenges of anxiety

The modern era has seen numerous technological revolutions, namely Industry 1.0 - steam power, Industry 2.0 - electricity and mass production of consumer goods, Industry 3.0 - the use of computers and the Internet. They represented the foundation for Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 and have become a part of each of us's reality, changing the way we think, feel or behave. What Klaus Schwab called the „Fourth Industrial Revolution” or „Industry 4.0” [11, p. 12] came with new concepts already assimilated into current language such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data and Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Digital Twins. This period is characterized by the transition to Industry 5.0 which emphasizes sustainability, resilience and collaboration between the individual and technology. In other words, the industrial age has been replaced by the digital age, which will shape our existence even more in the coming years, so that the individual's presence on the network becomes a palpable and necessary reality.

Of course, all these transformations and adaptations carried out in a very short period of time and with an evolution that has a high degree of unpredictability produce an anxiety that the digital age has called digital anxiety, which has become a major challenge in the personal and professional areas. For the period of „Industry 4.0” there are a series of particularities in terms of manifestation and sources such as job insecurity due to technology and artificial intelligence, negative stress generated by the inability to cope with the use of new technologies or the feeling of overwhelm due to the huge amount of information that we can or cannot process in real time, the overlap of the professional and personal plan and this was especially visible during the pandemic period, the continuous effort to learn, the pressure to achieve professional performances in a competitive regime, mental fog and cognitive fatigue or digital isolation. For the Industry 5.0 period, we can also consider series of particularities in terms of manifestation and sources, such as anxiety resulting from direct collaboration between humans and robots, which means real-time performance and anticipated and expected behavior in the personal workspace, anxiety generated by creativity, empathy and critical thinking compared to technology that cannot currently replicate such human characteristics, tactile anxiety generated by augmented reality, ethical and decision-making anxiety, especially in relation to professional activity where the consequences are amplified by technological hyperconnectivity and, last but not least, anxiety generated by monitoring the work environment and the functioning parameters of the human body for high professional yields.

The impact of digital technologies and the Internet on our daily lives, from what we are and do to what we feel and think, is huge and represents an object of study for different disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, economics, neuroscience or psychology [11, p. 15]. In applied psychology, a new field of specialization emerged towards the end of the 1990s, namely digital psychology or cyberpsychology, “an interdisciplinary scientific field that focuses on psychological phenomena that arise as a result of human interaction with digital technology, especially the Internet” [11, p. 11]. Cyberpsychology is an emerging field that investigates human interaction with computers, mobile phones, virtual reality and video game consoles, artificial intelligence and thus gradually contributes to a better understanding and scientific knowledge of our behaviors but also of cognition and affectivity in relation to modern technology. In this sense, the relationship between man and technology is a two-way street: technology influences human cognition and behavior, but personality and social structure also shape technological use and acceptance [9, p. 321]. The Internet has become so widespread that we have access to a huge amount of information and goods without moving or leaving our homes and has expanded the ways of social connection. The digital environment influences the maturation of our brain but also empathy as a skill that can be trained and developed. The frontal lobe matures last and plays a major role in achieving social interaction and hence the longer need to practice and gain experience. There are opinions of some authors [4, p. 141] according to which this maturation today is influenced more by the environment than by our genetics and that, in order to participate in complex social interactions, we need a training of the frontal lobe that could be compromised by the digital lifestyle. This is explained by the fact that screens hinder the development of social skills by the simple fact that we do not interact „face to face” and do not develop the ability to appreciate the thoughts, emotions, behaviors or intentions of those with whom we interact directly. On the other hand, understanding what others think or feel is the basis of authentic interpersonal relationships, of creating a climate of trust but also of developing another important skill called empathy, so that, in the absence of direct interaction, we end up abstracting without wanting the suffering of the person in front of us. The „theory of mind” capacity that Hansen brings to the table [4, pp. 122] refers to the fact that we practice continuously and that we need to observe the facial expressions, movements and body language of others, which cannot be obtained through text messages, photos or tweets. In the absence of „face-to-face” interaction, this author believes, two important human skills suffer, namely empathic concern and interpersonal sensitivity [4, p. 122] with effects on our egocentrism and obsession with status and appearance, especially among adolescents and young people.

Katzer [7, pp. 8-9] naturally asks the question of what the change in the coordinate system and the addition to the real world of virtual worlds that cannot be physically perceived but which involve the visual perception of data or images on a screen mean for us. Thus, most of the time we barely realize the need for breaks

when we are online and the more we use cyberspace, the more important it is to answer the consequences of the change in the virtual environment on each of us and the individual position in society as a whole.

The use of the Internet and social networks occupies an important part of a person's life, in a universe dominated by advanced modern technology and positively or negatively influences both children, adolescents and young people, but also adult users, so that it has become almost impossible to dissociate it from our daily activity [7, p. 1]. This use can become problematic to the extent that there is an excessive preoccupation with these networks, a need to spend more and more time here, emotional or physical discomfort, loss of control, neglect of various activities related to personal and professional life, etc. Hence the need to be aware of how they affect their thoughts, emotions and behaviors, impulsive or compulsive, respectively, their general health [1, pp. 57-58]. The problematic use of the Internet and implicitly of online social networks is manifested by two aspects, namely the fear of using it or its excessive use, and there is no consensus on the criteria of normality in this area, as shown by research and specialized literature, especially that in the clinical area. Defining an addiction to the Internet or other channels that use the Internet is quite difficult. Attempts have been made to assimilate it with pathological behaviors in the area of gambling disorders, and here tolerance may be a key word in the efforts to find a more adequate definition. The American Psychological Association (APA), in 2016, outlined a definition of tolerance in the context of Internet addiction, namely that it represents “a need for significantly increased amounts of the Internet to achieve intoxication or the desired effect” or “a significantly diminished effect following uninterrupted use of the same amount of the Internet” [12, p. 213]. In 2014, Andreassen and Pallesen proposed a definition of social media addiction as a manifestation of being excessively preoccupied, driven by a strong motivation, or using and devoting so much time and effort to it that it affects other social activities, interpersonal education, health and psychological well-being [12, p. 213]. Essing explains how the effects can be visible beyond the behavior itself in that individuals can no longer achieve fundamental life goals such as the ability to regulate their emotions, to form an identity, to be independent, to build self-confidence and to improve their social skills [12, p. 213].

Therefore, in the spectrum of Internet and social media use, we do not have a unified approach and consensus on what constitutes appropriate use, problematic use versus addictive use. Rocklin & Aktar [12, p. 215] point out that in general, existing studies have focused on children, adolescents and young people, but they identified two studies that found factors associated with Internet addiction in both adults and adolescents, namely socio-demographic variables, the way people use the Internet, psychosocial factors and comorbid symptoms such as mood disorders, OCD, ADHD and anxiety (social anxiety or social phobia).

A whole series of theories have been developed related to internet addiction, excessive or abusive use and they consider, depending on the research projects identified, neurobiology, social connection, attachment and relating to objects, psychology of the self, but whichever way we start to carry out an analysis, there are three elements that make the Internet a unique environment that can encourage pathological behaviors. It is a „totalizing” environment because almost everyone is connected to it, it is a „social” environment and it is an „intelligent and personalized” environment because it offers you the opportunity to learn everything about your life and your inner desires through that technology [12, p. 236].

Thus, at this time, although problematic use through abuse has characteristics similar to addiction, it is not considered a distinct disorder in the clinical area and therefore does not have a recognized scientific definition or specific therapeutic approach. To meet clinical criteria for addiction, either a biochemical or a chemical component must be identified and the person diagnosed with an addiction must demonstrate a developing tolerance and experience withdrawal. Therefore, there must be evidence that a person has an increasing need for use and this is tolerance and when they no longer have access, states of anxiety, fear, discomfort are caused, that is, withdrawal [1, p. 69].

The American Psychological Association (APA) has stated the following components as essential to declare a behavior as Internet addiction and the need for further study: excessive use associated with loss of sense of time or neglect of primary needs; withdrawal associated with depression and anxiety when the computer is not accessible; tolerance including the need to have more powerful equipment or more software programs; negative social consequences and poor school, professional or social performance [1, p. 80].

In the field of cyberpsychology, a series of psychological theories are used to understand how the individual creates, modifies and presents his or her self-image in the digital space, building multiple representations of their self towards others and these constructions can be associated with depression, anxiety or a general state of balance, as the case may be. Among these theories, the one by E. Tory Higgins (1989) called the Self-Discrepancy Theory stands out, which proposes three mental representations of the self, both from one's own point of view and from the point of view of others, that is, of significant people for us. Thus, the "real" self (who you are) or the actual self (Actual Self) – represents the attributes that a person believes they possess and the opinion that others have regarding the abilities that we have. The "ideal" self (who you want to be) (Ideal Self) – represents the attributes that a person would like to have as well as those that we believe others would like us to have. The "imperative/normative/obligated" self (who you think you should be) (Ought Self) – represents the attributes that we or someone else believes we should have. The better the Actual Self adapts to the Ideal Self or Ought Self, the less there will be conflicts between the image we have and the one we project and we will have better psychological health and self-esteem. When there are large discrepancies associated with low levels of self-esteem, there will be discomfort or there will be conflicts that can manifest themselves in the form of sadness, agitation, frustration, dissatisfaction, disappointment, guilt, etc. This creates three main directions of research that are related to mental health, online behavior and motivation. Regarding mental health, studies have shown that discrepancies between Actual Self and Ideal Self would be more likely to be associated with depression, while discrepancies between Actual Self and Ought Self would be more likely to be associated with anxiety [5, pp. 93-136]. Regarding online behavior, users can adjust their image or act freely under the umbrella of anonymity. Regarding motivation, studies have shown that a moderate discrepancy can be a driver for change, and a discrepancy perceived as large can lead to demotivation or procrastination, and here the theory of uses and rewards can help understand why we use virtual spaces and social networks, as well as the resulting personal gains. Here we must make a distinction between state anxiety and trait anxiety, namely that if in the first category the emotional state corresponds to a transient state that can occur in any person, under certain conditions, in the second we are talking about an individual, personality trait, which can manifest itself both as a predisposition to feel states of fear in the presence of stimuli that for other people are less or not at all anxiety-provoking and as a predisposition to develop conditioned fears in the presence of stimuli that are not anxiety-provoking by nature. The digital age has radically transformed the way adults interact, work and spend their free time, generating new stress factors known as digital anxiety which represents a state and not a trait. The main determinants of anxiety in adults in this context are structured on three areas of interest, namely permanent interconnection, online social pressure and information overload. Thus, according to the most recent studies, we can identify determining factors, as follows:

- Social comparison and displaying an image of perfection online where social platforms are usually ideal versions of others' lives and this mechanism can lead to the evaluation of one's own life, personal achievements, physical appearance, etc. through unfavorable comparisons with one's own reality, bringing with it feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, with the potential to amplify anxiety. The image of perfection online determines the cleaning of the displayed content and the editing of an idealized version of the user, excessive processing of photos or the reflection mainly of only successful moments.

- Excessive use of the internet and social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok generates a constant analysis and comparison with idealized lifestyles and can cause decreased self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. Abusive use is rather associated with adolescence and youth due to the lack of maturation of some structures of the central nervous system and the difficulty of controlling impulses. However, this does not mean that adults are exempt from the temptation of excessive use, but they manifest a somewhat more reserved attitude towards digital technology through the lens of accumulated experience. Then there are a series of personality traits associated with problematic Internet and social media use behaviors such as impulsivity, narcissism, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, etc. There are also psychological or psychiatric disorders that are vulnerability factors such as social anxiety, social phobia, drug addiction, depression or ADHD. Another dimension in the area of pathology refers to cybersickness, which actually defines a condition caused by the movement of objects relative to a referent, with symptoms such as mental

fatigue, headaches, dizziness, oculomotor disorders, disorientation generated by the disagreement between the different sensory channels and the expected and experienced stimuli, which is especially found in virtual reality [2, pp. 96-97]. And last but not least, there are factors of an academic, professional or personal nature such as peer influence.

- FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) represented by the compulsive need to check digital information updates to stay up to date with the latest social events or news that generates a continuous state of alertness and anxiety and a fear of missing important events.

- Informational and cognitive overload through the continuous flow of news and notifications causes cognitive fatigue, mental fog, difficulty concentrating and anxiety related to possible global events. Informational and cognitive overload is a direct consequence of the fast pace of life and multitasking, of a volume of data and stimuli that exceeds the brain's ability to process, analyze and manage efficiently and can lead to mental exhaustion and increased cortisol levels in the body with consequences on the general state of health. A particular phenomenon also appears, namely information anxiety, when the user is blocked from achieving his goals due to stimulus overload.

- Hyperconnectivity and the need to be available is the „always connected” culture, amplified especially by working from home or by professional activities carried out outside office hours that eliminate the boundaries between personal and professional life. This can cause fragmented attention when we lose our ability to concentrate deeply due to successive interruptions at short intervals of a few minutes, anxiety through the infusion of constant doses of cortisol with the notifications received or can ultimately cause burnout and chronic stress.

- Cyberbullying and online harassment can take various forms, from insults and threats to the distribution of false or embarrassing information about a person in the public online space under the anonymity offered by digital platforms, being more difficult to stop and the information is distributed quickly and to a large number of people. They can cause anxiety or depression and are associated on a personal level with feelings of isolation and exclusion, guilt, insecurity and the impact on the community is equally worrying generating fear and distrust in the virtual space.

- Cyberchondria, transient or chronic, represents a (self)induced anxiety that can escalate during the online search for any health problem, as a (self)diagnosis procedure that can amplify the concern of people who are generally less anxious or do not have medical training [1, p.266]. The medical information we seek in the online environment is relatively easy to find and, at first glance, this activity has nothing wrong in itself but from a healthy behavior of diagnosis and treatment in the online environment it can lead to pathogenic behavior that could otherwise have been avoided by presenting to a doctor or psychologist. Cyberchondria is not a pleasant state because it is associated with unpleasant effects manifested in the form of anxiety that has the role of restoring the pathological cycle of searching for the causes of symptoms and methods of treatment. Thus, metacognitive beliefs moderate the relationship between catastrophic interpretation and anxiety about health and they may be an indicator of the tendency to monitor and control excessive thoughts, thus contributing to a cycle of maladaptive self-regulation that produces the need to continue using the Internet repeatedly and increases negative emotions [2, pp. 104-105].

- Screen addiction, sleep disorders and social isolation are those that disrupt the biological rhythm of the body but also the structure of interpersonal relationships. Excessive time spent in front of screens, especially before bedtime, disrupts sleep cycles, through exposure to blue light that inhibits melatonin secretion and this is directly associated with increased anxiety levels. Digital content keeps the brain in a state of alertness leading to fragmented sleep and insomnia, and shifting bedtime delays the moment of falling asleep and reduces the total number of hours of rest, with obvious consequences on the general state of health. On the other hand, the transformation of digital interactions into a substitute for real relationships leads to the attenuation of social skills, to conflicting relationships with those around them by withdrawing more and more into the virtual environment, resulting in, among other things, profound social isolation, depression and anxiety. The vicious circle known from the treatment of anxiety disorders, which consists of isolation, anxiety towards social connections and again isolation, is reinforced by the possibilities offered by the internet and implicitly by social networks [13, p. 225].

- The uncertainty surrounding Evolving Technologies (AI) that improve their performance through continuous learning, radically transforming the way we interact with the world, is likely to create anxiety at an individual and collective level related to loss of control, uncertainty about the professional future and the workplace, but also a technological overload.

- Demographic differences refer to the fact that young adults are often more prone to anxiety related to screen time and social networks, while older adults face anxiety related to digital exclusion due to the rapid evolution of information and communication technology.

Conclusions

The analysis of the specialized literature has shown us that the subject has been mainly researched from various aspects in relation to children, adolescents and young people who are more exposed and vulnerable than adults who show a somewhat more reserved attitude towards digital technology. Technologies are diversified and in permanent dynamics, without a correspondent in the recent past that could offer a solution for navigation and adaptation in the face of, for example, situations of instant feedback or global exposure in real time, online. In social networks there are all aspects of human experience and behavior, amplified either for better or for worse – because it is known that the inhibition threshold is significantly reduced by anonymity and physical absence. On the other hand, there are also opinions according to which these new living conditions impoverish the intrapersonal experience, bring fewer moments in which we can reflect and temporarily cover the need for meaning and fulfillment, sometimes with obvious consequences on our general state of health. Regardless of our position, we can still admit that social networks ultimately provide a basis for maintaining social relationships, communication and information exchange, for identifying users with similar interests as well as for locating content and knowledge shared by other users in various combinations of forms from forums, blogs and collaborative projects to virtual communities.

We live in the digital age and regardless of the opinions pro or con, secular or religious, regarding new technologies, they are part of our lives and we must use them in such a way that we are able to maintain our physical and mental health. Future research projects in the field of psychology that involve analyzing the above factors as well as practical ways to adjust our behaviors in and towards the online environment must take into account the theories appropriate to the scientific approach, the psychometric aspects and interpretation of the results, the ethical and deontological challenges, the emerging directions of application in different areas of social life that are reflected on three levels, namely the economic plan, the social plan and the cultural plan.

On the economic level, any research must provide those innovative tools, intended to bring a conscious and balanced approach and to support, through individual or group mechanisms, the optimization of the use of the online environment, with effects such as: limiting the time spent on social networks, awareness of negative effects and avoiding harmful comparisons, following positive and educational content, prioritizing real interactions.

On the social level, any research must contribute to a better understanding of the influence of the digital environment on the human system, providing relevant data for developing a strategy for its responsible use and awareness of the impact it has on users to ensure optimal mental health.

On the cultural level, any research must contribute to understanding how the online environment, a central element of daily life for many adults, influences them to create, consume and distribute content and interact with other users, forming important virtual communities in areas such as entertainment, marketing, health, education and even activism.

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CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LOYALTY AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

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The article aims at conceptualizing the notions of organizational loyalty and organizational commitment, from a psychological perspective. The paper carries out an in-depth analysis of the literature on the two notions, starting from the definitions in dictionaries, as well as from studies dedicated to the subject. Also, various theoretical perspectives on organizational loyalty and commitment, coming from Romanian, Russian and international literature, are presented, highlighting such dimensions as attachment to the organization, identification with its values and the desire to contribute to the achievement of common objectives. Based on the analysis of literature, the article proposes a conceptual delimitation between engagement and loyalty, highlighting both the common elements and the differences between them.

Keywords: *loyalty, organizational commitment, organizational culture, human resources management, personnel retention.*

DELIMITĂRI CONCEPTUALE DINTRE LOIALITATE ȘI ANGAJAMENT ORGANIZAȚIONAL

Articolul vizează conceptualizarea noțiunilor de loialitate organizațională și angajament organizațional, din perspectiva psihologică. Lucrarea realizează o analiză aprofundată a literaturii de specialitate privind cele două noțiuni, pornind de la definițiile din dicționare, precum și din studii consacrate subiectului. De asemenea, sunt prezentate diferite perspective teoretice asupra loialității organizaționale și angajamentului, provenite din literatura română, rusă și internațională, care evidențiază dimensiuni precum atașamentul față de organizație, identificarea cu valorile acesteia și dorința de a contribui la atingerea obiectivelor comune. Pe baza analizei literaturii, articolul propune o delimitare conceptuală între angajament și loialitate, evidențiind atât elementele comune, cât și diferențele dintre acestea.

Cuvinte-cheie: *loialitate, angajament organizațional, cultura organizațională, managementul resurselor umane, retenția de personal.*

Introduction

The labor market in the Republic of Moldova faces challenges both in attracting human resources and in creating a positive attitude toward the workplace, so that the employee is actively involved in achieving the organization's performance. More and more employers are concerned about the loyalty of employees, capitalizing on their potential in order to achieve the institution's goals. This is also due to a massive exodus of the population since 2000, against the backdrop of socio-economic crises in the country [3, p. 60]. Thus, challenges in the field of human resources increase the need for management teams to identify and manage situations related to the loyalty of the employed staff. "In order to meet the demands of the labor market, companies can capitalize on several concepts that guarantee better employee retention: Motivation, involvement, job satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, etc [3, p. 60].

Researches (Holtom, Mitchell, Thomas și Eberly, 2008; Comșa, 2008) indicates that organizational commitment and loyalty correlate positively with performance, staff retention, work involvement, leadership confidence and professional satisfaction, constituting relevant predictors of the intention to leave the organization, even stronger than job satisfaction. Low levels of these variables are associated with absenteeism, psychological distancing, and increased recruitment and training costs [1, 3, 4, 7, 21, apud 10].

In this organizational context marked by high professional mobility and instability, the analysis of commitment and loyalty becomes essential for understanding and supporting organizational sustainability.

To define the phenomenon in the literature, various terms are used, including loyalty, commitment,

devotion and fidelity. Although notions are often used as synonyms and can be replaced by each other, there are small conceptual differences that nuance certain aspects specific to each notion. In this article, we will refer to the conceptual delimitation between “commitment” and “loyalty” in particular, given the most widespread notions used in the literature in the Romanian area when talking about the organizational environment.

Organizational engagement research

Research on organizational engagement has been gaining since the 70s. Among the first studies we can delineate the research conducted by american professors Richard T. Mowday, Richard Steers and Lyman Porter [13] and canadian professors John P. Meyer and Natalie J. Allen [12]. During this period, the scales for measuring organizational commitment were founded, which became classics in organizational psychology. We can also mention the achievements of sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1961), who makes one of the first classifications of commitment: moral, egoistic, imposed, based on “the criterion of compliance with the directives of the organization to which individuals belong” [apud 10].

According to the researchers who laid the foundation for this concept, we can describe organizational commitment as “loyalty to an organization, identification with an organization, and willingness to engage in an organization” [13].

Delineating the differences is all the more challenging, as translations from literature from other languages also use the terms interchangeably. Thus, in English literature we observe the frequent use of the terms “commitment” and “loyalty”. The associated notions and descriptions, such as the types of commitment: affective, normative and continuity, can be found in some research and in the description of the concept of affective, normative and continuity loyalty [20].

If we appeal to the definitions in the Romanian language dictionaries, we will identify the following meanings:

- „**Commitment** - 1. *Promise to accomplish something.* 2. *Employment of someone in a job; (concr.) a contract whereby a person makes his services available to another person or institution and provides for the conditions of employment*” [2].

- „**Commitment** - 1. *An obligation taken by someone, on his own initiative, to do something; a solemn promise*” [9].

Brown in 1996 [apud 5] proposes a linguistic analysis of the concept of “**commitment**”. It gives the following meaning to the term: “*A pledge, a promise, or an obligation of a certain type.*” The term is usually used to describe “*the state of a person who has decided with another party in relation to a future event.*” We can say that the commitment functions as a “guarantee” for the organization, thanks to which short-term fluctuations in the attitudes or dispositions of the dedicated person do not lead to sudden changes in his or her behavior related to the conditions for fulfilling the obligations.

In the English explanatory dictionaries, „commitment” is defined as follows:

- „*agreement or promise to do something in the future*”, “*state of obligation or emotional impulse*” [11];
 - „*dedication to a cause or policy*”, „*obligation limiting freedom of action*” [22];
 - „*the desire to devote your time and energy to something you believe in*”, „*the promise or firm decision to do something*”, „*something you must do or that requires your time*” [19].

Thus, „**organizational commitment**” represents a „*set of internal obligations assumed by the employee toward his organization, a state of devotion and involvement in the organization’s activity*”. Allen and Mayer [12] stated that commitment can be empirically defined as „*a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization*”. In other sources, translated from English into Romanian, we identify that organizational commitment is regarded as:

- „*an obligation taken on its own initiative to carry out something or an agreement on the part of employees regarding the goals and objectives of an organization and the willingness to work toward those goals and objectives*” [21];

- „*organizational commitment is the willingness of the individual to engage consistently and continuously in the activities of the organization*” [18];

- „the power with which an individual identifies and engages in a particular organization, characterized by three factors such as: belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; willingness to make an effort; a strong desire to remain a member of the organization” [3].

Organizational engagement studies mention that this phenomenon usually occurs when individuals identify with the organization's goals and values and strive to achieve them [6] the commitment is due to „a combination of work experiences, perceptions of the organization and personal characteristics, leading to positive feelings toward the organization” [13]. Some studies also reveal the causal relationship between the level of engagement and the person's position in the organizational structure, their age and period of working [3].

In addition to the behavioral dimension, some researchers such as Mowday and colab. (1982) have also integrated the attitudinal component. From their perspective, attitudinal and behavioral engagement influence each other, which means that “engaged attitudes lead to engaged behaviors, and to reduce internal inconsistencies between what one says and what one does, engaged behaviors contribute to the formation of engaged attitudes.” [3]

Analyzing the literature devoted to organizational commitment, A. Reichers points out that there are three dominant ways of conceptualizing this commitment [apud 1]:

- „as a function of the rewards and costs associated with the individual's departure from the organization”;
- „the connection of the individual with his or her behavior”;
- „a dimension that reflects the willingness of the employee to work for the organization and to accept its goals”.

J. Meyer and N. Allen [12] have distinguished themselves by creating a comprehensive classification of organizational commitment, which includes the types: affective, continuous and normative. The affective component „reflects the employee's emotional attachment to the organization, identification with and involvement in it”. Organizational commitment to continuity involves staff retention by involving the benefits provided by the organization, which are positively assessed by employees (their forms may vary from one institution to another, such as: opportunities for personal and professional development, career advancement opportunities, performance degrees and other facilities, etc.). As for the normative component, here we refer to „the feeling of obligation that the employee has toward the organization, which is why he will remain loyal” [12].

Organizational loyalty research: Organizational loyalty is one of the fundamental concepts in the field of human resources and organizational behavior. In the literature, this concept has been approached from various perspectives: psychological, managerial, sociological and behavioral, which has led to a diversity of definitions and explanatory models. To build a comprehensive understanding, it is useful to examine the different definitions proposed by researchers. Starting from the explanations given in the Romanian language dictionaries and in the literature, organizational loyalty can be defined in the following ways:

- „**Loyal** - the ability to be loyal, honest” [2].
- „**Loyalty**, loyalty, gratitude, and devotion to an authoritative person, benefactor, institution, or collective; by extension, a way of being open, honest, trustworthy” [15].
- “**Loyal** – who fulfills with honor the obligations assumed; honest, leal” [2].

A similar perspective is found in Russian literature dictionaries, in which the adjective loyal is attributed the meaning of: „compassionate, human, welcoming, sincere and benevolent” [5]. In international resources we find other explanations of the concept “**loyalty**” as:

- „an individual's perception that both sides of a relationship have met their mutual expectations that denote lasting attachment between two parties. It involves self-sacrifice in the face of alternatives. They are loaded with debt obligations”;
- „a member's devotion to the group, lack of criticism of the group's work, and sustained work for the future of their group”;
- „adherence to a social unit of which the individual is a part, as well as its purposes, symbols and beliefs”;
- „adherence to group rules, fairness, truth in relation to group members” [6];
- „showing low interest in personal well-being for the group”;
- „the intention or desire of employees to maintain their membership in the organization, to participate enthusiastically and to make a sustained effort to achieve its objectives” [20];

Below we present examples of definitions of loyalty found in Russian literature [5], where:

- **“Loyalty shows a positive, benevolent, fair, respectful and honest attitude toward the company, its leaders and colleagues, compliance with existing corporate rules, norms, prescriptions and codes, even in case of disagreement with them; There is devotion in all his thoughts and initiatives”** (Korosteleva, 2004).

- **“Loyalty is the kind and respectful attitude of the employee toward both the management of the company and the decisions taken by it, as well as the willingness to comply with the management’s instructions even in the event of disagreement with them”** (Kalabin, 2004).

- **“Loyalty presents employee satisfaction with working conditions, reward, development and prospects collectively, as well as protection against external threats”** (Staroverov, 2006) [apud 5].

We can say that loyal people can be characterized as those members of the organization who stay with it even in times of major difficulty, without ignoring or abandoning it in crisis situations. Organizational loyalty is manifested when the employee is willing to contribute to the well-being of the organization and, in certain situations, even subordinate his personal interests in order to strengthen the relationship with it. „Business organizations claim that the optimal form of loyalty is that in which both the company and employees obtain mutual benefits” [4].

Organizational commitment is „an attitude expressed by the employee that determines his desire to remain a member of the organization” [3]. This attitude is often the result of concrete actions and loyalty systems organized within the institution, processes that encourage the creation of an organizational culture oriented toward collegiality and collaboration. „It is cultures that encourage trust in leadership and employee empowerment that create engagement, and cultures that focus solely on profit that tend to reduce engagement” [3]. Speaking of the similarities and differences between the concepts of loyalty and commitment, we can summarize them as follows:

Table 1. Conceptual similarities and differences

Commitment	Common aspects	Loyalty
- a conscious and voluntary attitude of the employee to get involved in the work of the organization - taking on professional responsibilities - making decisions that are oriented toward the good of the organization - it involves a form of internal obligation in the sense that the employee feels responsible for his role and the contribution he makes to the organization - involves active involvement in professional activities and participation in organizational processes	- willingness of the employee to work for the benefit of the team and the organization. - reflects the orientation of the individual toward cooperation, the contribution to achieving the objectives of the organization - a favorable attitude toward the organization persists - openness to harness personal skills and resources for the collective good	- refers to the attachment to the values, principles and identity of the organization. - it involves adherence to institutional values - identification of the employee with the organization and its organizational culture. - the presence of a pronounced affective component - a sense of belonging and a desire to maintain a long-term relationship with the organization persists. - form of loyalty to the organization, in which the employee either resonates intensively or internalizes the values and objectives of the institution

Conclusions

The common aspects between commitment and loyalty are reflected in the employee’s willingness to work for the benefit of the team and the organization. Both commitment and loyalty express the individual’s orientation toward cooperation, contributing to the achievement of common goals and supporting the organization in its activities. However, commitment is more related to taking responsibility, while loyalty is

more associated with affective attachment and identification with organizational values. In both cases, the employee demonstrates a favorable attitude toward the organization and is willing to use their personal skills and resources for the collective good. We can consider organizational commitment and loyalty as two distinct components that are nevertheless closely related in meaning.

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