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Cultivating the Ethnic Identity Consciousness of Pupils in the Romanian Primary School

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Abstract

This paper proposes some theoretic and methodological aspects concerning to formation the consciousness of ethnic identity on the young children. These aspects are specific for primary schools but they could be adapted for superior classes.

Our propose is substantiated by the observations effectuated during the pedagogical practice of students who prepare for training teacher. In this way we have presented many learning activities and didactic strategies which students can develop their knowledge about Romanian identity. Also they can formed the appropriated behavior against their ethnic community and others which belong a different community.

We hope to this paper is important for teachers in our activity with children, interested by cultivation the skills of pupils to accepted the Others. We hope to contribute to the development of interethnic dialogue.

Keywords: History ; national ; tolerance ; education ; primary school;

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1. Introduction

The building-up of the children's ethnical conscience represents an aspect upon which school must focus and upon which the research field must offer new understanding perspectives. This problem is generated by the reality of our time: the actual world is affected by globalism, ecumenism, migration and terrorism. At their base often stands the way which people understanding „national identity”. Therefore, the basis of these preoccupations are, of course, given by the social-political, economic and cultural realities of their time, realities which mark, orient and make the pedagogical initiatives more substantial.

In general, the interest manifested by the teachers towards the development of the ethnic identity conscience of pupils is a component of the social-civic dimension of the pupils' personality. Of course, the cultivating one's *proactive capacities* is not a recent scientific interest one, as the history of pedagogy proves its existence and the development of some similar concepts a long time ago (Stanciu, 1995; Joița, 1998; Antonesei, 2002). There were generated different opinions and solutions which support the need to involve the pupil in the instructive-educational activities, according to each one's own physical – psychological structure, his / her own developmental capacity, interests and desires. But, the ethnic identity conscience represents more than these aspects. For example, in the primary school, the ethnic identity conscience is correlated with the self-image of each pupil, with the pupil social place among others and with the dialogue of pupil who he is carrying with others.

In order to build-up a ethnic conscience it is necessary to gain a set of civic, moral, social and patriotic values and attitudes, them being also a means to make the individual more responsible. These values and attitudes give it autonomy towards manipulation and persuasion (Tompea, 2011). So, behavior and conscience are supporting each other and they are interlinked; no one can manifest a moral-civic behavior without believing that this is the good and the right one to have. Therefore, the ethnic conscience are interdependent to learning and internalizing the moral and national norms, values and judgments.

Making the pupil aware that he belongs to a certain ethnical identity is linked to the following goals:

- The knowledge and acknowledgement of the elements which define it in regards to other ethnical identities;
- To the respect and the interiorization of the national values;
- To the transformation of the national values into inner goals in order to manifest the proper conduct specific to that respective ethnical identity;
- To the proud manifestation of the feeling of belonging to that ethnical community and to the expression of that feeling;
- To the expression of the patriotic feeling.

So, the ethnical identity conscience is dependent on the national conscience which gives it value and autonomy towards the ideological and political manipulation.

2. Premise and objectives

The present paper starts from the premise that in order to cultivate the ethnical identity conscience, it is important to organize one's learning activities from the perspective of what is right and good for Romanian community and for another ethnic communities, also. Therefore, the ethnic identity conscience depend on the quality of the act of knowing what defines a moral behavior, getting used with the idea of good/evil, of right/wrong, justice/injustice, of duty, gratitude, etc. So, before analyzing the fact, the pupil is getting used with the standards according to which an action is

considered to be right or wrong, good or evil, and also with the principles so called moral which determine the behavior expected from him by his community.

Avoiding the need to clarify this concept, the ethnical identity conscience, the paper has focused upon some practical means by which the learning process done by pupils, at the teacher’s advice or not, can support the cultivation and the manifestation of the ethnical conscience. Next we will offer a set of educational activities that, we believe, will be useful for the teacher and parents so as to build-up the ethnical conscience of the small pupils. The examples that we are illustrating adhere to the democratic principles of equality between people, of the human rights and of the civic rights and freedoms

Our observations are the result of research activities done together with the 2nd and 3rd year students that are getting ready to become teachers for the pre-school and primary school. Our hypotheses were shaped under the form of instructive- educational activities, them being discussed with the students during the classes meant to prepare their pedagogical practice. The students have applied these proposals in their practice held to i-iv graders (the pupils aged between the 7 / 8-10 / 11 old years). During of the pedagogical practice they have gathered the data needed for reaching 2 objectives:

- a. The means in which the activities proved to be efficient on what concerns getting to know the elements which define the Romanian nation;
- b. The manifestation of some behaviours which prove the building-up of the Romanian ethnical conscience in the case of small pupils.

The data obtained were processed under the form of observations, part of which was included in the present paper. Others were rendered here under the form of recommendations, learning activities and examples of good practice.

3. Observations and discussions

Generally, the conscience of belonging to an ethnical identity is shaped in time; it is being dependent on the quality of the knowledge related to the elements which define an ethnical identity and of those which build-up the conscience of belonging to a certain nation. A possible representation of the ethnical conscience may be made under the form of the following diagram:

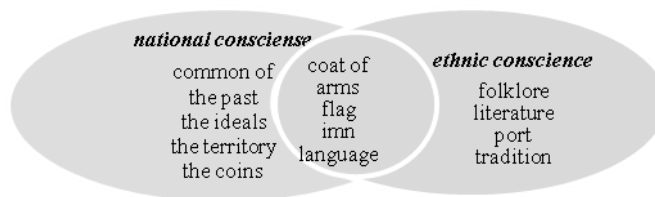


Figure 1. National identity – conscience and values

As we can see from the *Venn diagram* the common elements are represented by the *national values*. These values are the coat of arms, the flag, the imn, the language. Thus, in the current paper, we will focus on the means to build-up these values and on their degree of interiorization because the national values are the greatest contributor to the ethnical conscience.

The national values must be assimilated and assumed by the members of an ethnical community as being definitive for their ethnical identity. Taking into account the Romanian realities manifested in the school practice, this aspect may be applied in 2 ways, not so very different from one another.

a. Getting to know and interiorizing the national values through means of formal education

In Romanian primary school, a class, the main form of manifesting the instructive-educational process, offers enough situations to psycho-pedagogically intervene in order to develop the ethnical conscience of small students. The main approach is the disciplinary one, meaning going through different learning activities specific to each school subject who is mentioned of the *Educational Plan* that it is part of the *writing curriculum* (official and regulatory curriculum). An example of how the different types of activities are correlating with the common goal of generating Romanian identity values can be rendered in the table below:

Table 1. Cultivating of Romanian identity values by the formal educational activities

Discipline (School subject)	Objective	Learning activities
Romanian Language and Literature	Knowledge of Romanian identity elements.	To identification of elements who are the Romanian characteristics identity, pupil use in this way the texts and images; to recognition of Romanian cultural values compared with other values of the different ethnic communities; to development of vocabulary that defines Romanian identity; to reading the texts with patriotic message.
Geography	Describing and discussing of the geographical goals of the Romanian space.	The exercises to comparison each other the Romanian geographical elements with the elements of other countries; to characterization of the Romanian territory and to discussing and to drawing its elements; to know how are the Romanian specific activities towards other ethnicities.
Self personal development	Formation of self-pride in terms of ethnic identity.	To have the self-knowledge and self personal development with the social and national expectations.

This approach is very useful for building-up the knowledge regarding the aspects that define the Romanian identity. Equally useful is the integrated type of approach by means of which learning becomes more efficient, because it makes possible the use of the abilities specific to an experiential field in order to know and understand another experiential one. Therefore, it is recommended to assimilate and consolidate such knowledge by means of integrated type activities (Almy & Cunningham, 1975) an approach that suits better the direct and practical needs of pupils' education.

For a better understanding, we offer a few examples of how to apply the integrated approach to the class. These activities content so as to build-up and cultivate the Romanian national identity in primary school pupils. A few of these practice examples can be rendered in the table below:

Table 2. Cultivating the national conscience by integrate activities

Education field	Learning activities
Romanian Language and Literature (Language and Communicate) and Artistic Abilities	Creative exercises that give the national and democate message; to artistic representation of a text message who containing the specific elements of Romanian identity.
Civic Culture and Musical Abilities and Practice Abilities	To interpretation of patriotic, national and popular songs and to singing of them; to drawing and to painting the Romanian and European symbols; exercices that reproduction, coloring and compliance contour of the national and European symbols.
Mathematics and Civic Culture	Composition of problems using national and European symbols;
Romanian Language and Literature (Language and Communicate) and Civic Culture	Composition the textes with patriotic message; exercises to discussing the civical behavior, the national behavior towards other peoples.

b. Getting to know and interiorizing the national values through means of non - formal education.

This type of activities is taking place outside of the classroom and of school, it being important in reaching the following goals:

- The development of the pupils’ cognitive acquisitions regarding the meaning of the ethnical identity concept and of its characteristic elements;
- The verification and consolidation of the knowledge regarding the specific elements of the Romanian identity;
- The foundation and cultivation of emotions, values and attitudes which lead to the manifestation of a correct behavior towards one’s own ethnical identity and towards the other’s;
- The manifesting of the ethnical conscience in different contexts more or less linked to the patriotic dimension.

On what concerns the means to make pupils manifest their Romanian ethnical conscience, the extra-school and extra-curricular activities may come in handy for reaching this pedagogical aspect, especially due to their emotional character, of the fact that they address mainly the emotional experiences, the pupils’ interests and motivation. In order to prove their importance, we are focusing on the most significant non-formal activities which we will correlate with their contribution to building-up and cultivating the Romanian ethnical conscience .

Table 3. Cultivating identity conscience bu the extra-school and extra-curricular activities

<i>The type of non-formal activity (extra-scholar and extra-curricular activities)</i>	<i>The goal</i>	<i>Objectives in terms of goal purpose</i>
Vizit activity		Knowing and recognizing the achievements of the historical past;
Commemorative activities	Training and cultivated the ethnical conscience by showing patriotic and democratic behavior	development of national pride; manifestation of the desire for peace among peoples, for equality and freedom; participation to the comemrotive activities who signiflicated facts from past community; preparation and presentation of artistic moments for different comemrotive activities.
National celebrations		organizing activities in honor of the national celebrations participation with the distinct momens to the national celebration events; organization and involvement in competitions with historical, civical, cultural subjects; these subjects are refered to Romanian and Non – European space;s.

The ethnical conscience depend on the quality of the act of knowing what defines a identity community, getting used with the reflexivity. Before analyzing the fact, the pupil is getting used with the standards according to which an action is considered to be national or foreign (out-national). Reflecting over the social and national experiences develops the pupil’s self-awareness ability and the control needed towards the others. All of these components manifested as conscious acts (Noel, 1991), contribute at building-up the moral and ethnic conscience which is also social by definition (the one which reflects the relationships between people and which define a regulating function over the human co-habitation, by stimulating and orienting the human behavior as per the social requirements) (Bocos, 2002).

Understanding by means of reflecting over the *consequences* of our actions towards others or towards ourselves, determines the building-up and consolidation of the moral values. So, the quality of these reflections, correlated with the moral norms, is responsible in a great deed for assuming a certain *modus operandi*, a certain *behavioral pattern* which will be used in certain situations. Of cours, tese observations are refered to the formal and non-formal education activities can to cultivate the ethical conscience in Romanian school.

4. Conclusion

Ethnical conscience, even if it is not granted a separate unit of content, it is still very important in building-up the pupils’ personality by means of instructive-educational activities. Ethnical conscience presupposes the interiorizaton of these values which define it in regards to other nations, a process which needs to lead towards the foundation and manifestation of conducts, attitudes and behaviours. So, in building-up the ethnical conscience one must take into consideration the fact that it determines the type of relationships that have been or will be established with others that belong maybe to different ethnicities. In other words, the ethnical differences, which are becoming visible as a result of the ethnical conscience, will be perceived according to the direction in which the conscience works. If the building-up and cultivation of self-discovery, as a member of the Romanian identity, was done by means of using the democratic principles, then, the relationships with those pertaining to a different ethnicity will be based on communication, tolerance and understanding. In this situation, the problems which have created in the past a tense relationship with others, cannot generate today

conflicts and resentments because they have been understood in their context, a context which is far from the contemporary situation in which pupils live.

As a conclusion, we believe that the national values must activate the universal values such as: tolerance, openness towards dialogue and interculturalism. By knowing oneself, the pupils can get to know the others, by showing one's ethnical identity, they can learn from the ethnical identity of others, by respecting the national values for which their ancestors have sacrificed their lives, they will show respect to oneself and to the others and will manifest the desire to continue their forbearers' work so as for peace and liberty to prevail.

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