

# I. STUDII, CERCETĂRI, ARTICOLE

## MORAL-CIVIC EDUCATION – A COMPONENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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### Abstract:

Educația este una dintre principalele căi prin care putem schimba cu adevărat lumea în bine. În acest scop, trebuie să construim în jurul ideii de valoare, să învățăm ceea ce înseamnă respectul, bunăvoința, responsabilitatea și moralitatea din primii ani ai vieții noastre, pentru a putea trăi și a evolua într-o societate democratică fără prejudecăți.

Dimensiunile morale și civice ale educației sunt componente esențiale atât ale procesului didactic, cât și ale acțiunilor exercitate de familie, de mediul social, de colectiv, în scopul formării conștiinței și conduitei în conformitate cu normele care guvernează funcționarea societății.

Institutul Român pentru Drepturile Omului, în calitatea sa de instituție națională cu atribuții în domeniul cercetării, instruirii, informării și documentării pentru drepturile omului, a realizat încă de la înființarea sa în 1991 o mare varietate de activități și programe de promovare a educației pentru drepturile omului, impunând luarea în considerare a educației pentru drepturile omului ca prioritate națională, regională și internațională. Prin programele sale de instruire și educație, subliniază exemple de succes și bune practici și stimulează măsurile de îmbunătățire și dezvoltare continuă a programelor de formare existente în timp ce promovează altele noi.

**Cuvinte cheie:** educație, respect pentru drepturile omului, responsabilitate, moralitate, civism, educație civică, cetățeni activi, formare continuă

### Résumé:

L'éducation est l'un des principaux moyens de changer le monde pour le mieux. À cette fin, nous devons nous appuyer sur l'idée de valeur, apprendre ce que le respect, la bonne volonté, la responsabilité et la moralité signifient dans les premières années de notre vie, afin de pouvoir vivre et évoluer dans une société démocratique sans préjugés.

Les dimensions de l'éducation morale et civique sont des éléments essentiels à la fois l'enseignement et les actions exercées par la famille, l'environnement social, la conscience collective pour se former et conduire conformément aux règles régissant le fonctionnement de la société.

L'Institut roumain des droits de l'homme, en tant qu'institution nationale ayant des compétences dans le domaine de la recherche, de la formation, de l'information et de la documentation pour les droits de l'homme, a développé depuis 1991 un large éventail d'activités et de programmes pour l'imposition et la prise en compte de l'éducation aux droits de l'homme en tant que priorité nationale, régionale et internationale. Par ses programmes de formation et d'éducation, il met en lumière des exemples de réussite et de bonnes pratiques et encourage les mesures visant à améliorer et développer continuellement les programmes existants tout en en promouvant de nouveaux

**Mots-clés:** éducation, respect des droits de l'homme, responsabilité, moralité, citoyenneté, éducation civique, citoyenneté active, formation continue

Education is the complex process of preparing the individual as an active part of society, of the human community, of a cultural or social group. Quality education implies first fostering attitudes towards the respect and cherish of values, culture, moral and civic rules and norms. Thus, education in its triple hypostasis (**formal** – achieved in specialized formal institutions, **non-formal** – performed within non-formal institutions – achieved through extracurricular activities in clubs, theaters,

etc. and **informal** – achieved under the influence of non-systemic, pedagogically unorganized environments, in contexts of everyday life), has the role of contributing through specific activities and practices to the development of democratic behaviors that involve civic attitude, through effective participation.

Education is one of the main ways by which we can really change the world for the better. To this purpose we must build around the idea of values, learn what respect, goodwill, responsibility and morality mean from the first years of our lives in order to be able to live and evolve into an

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unprejudiced<sup>1</sup> democratic society. Parents are the first ones by the help of whom education is achieved, while school has its main role, but we must keep in mind that education can be achieved within other structures and organizations of the civil society with education and development missions aimed at fostering positive attitudes and behaviors.

The Romanian Institute for Human Rights having education as one of its main objectives covers by its activities a wide range of themes involving education for human rights, and education for democratic citizenship.

In this context, the Romanian Institute for Human Rights in its quality of national institution with attributes in the field of research, training, information and documentation for human rights, has carried out and achieved ever since its foundation in 1991, a wide variety of activities and programmes such as: promoting education for human rights; imposing and considering education for human rights as a national, regional and international priority; fostering preoccupations and awareness for human rights in adults and youth; training of trainers in human rights; training teaching staff, teachers, in primary and secondary schools; training professors at university education level; training various professional categories; evaluating, monitoring and supporting of existent education programmes in order to emphasize examples of success and good practices and stimulating measures for continuing improvement and development of existing programmes while advancing new ones.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Adrian Bulgaru, *Educarea tinerei generații în spiritul întăririi respectului față de valorile umane și morale, Independența Română – Independența prin cultură*, (Educating the young generation in the spirit of respect towards human and moral Values: Romanian Independence – Independence through Culture), Bucharest, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> With reference to the mission, the role and the objectives of the Romanian Institute for Human Rights, see Irina Moroianu Zlatescu, Anca Mot, Adrian Bulgaru, *Educație, Dreptul la Educație și Educația pentru drepturile omului*, (Education, the Right to Education and Education for Human Rights), IRDO, 2016, chapter “Rolul instituțiilor naționale în promovarea dreptului la educație și educația pentru drepturile omului” (the role of National Institutions in promoting the right to education and education for human rights), pp. 63-84, as well as various Reports and activities of the Romanian Institute for Human Rights in the field of promoting education for human rights and education for citizenship.

In the early 1990s, at the initiative of the Romanian Institute for Human Rights, the Ministry of National Education included the subjects “civic education” (for grades III-IV) and “civic culture” (for grades VII-VIII) in the disciplines for which annual competitions are held with stages up to the national level.

An important objective of the Institute are the programs that have a direct impact on educating the young generation in the spirit of respect for human rights and freedoms, dignity, tolerance and free exchange of views.

Since the foundation of the Institute, these projects have been carried out in partnership with the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research and have resulted in traditional activities and programs: the *Civic Education and Civic Culture Olympics* and *Democracy and Tolerance*, activities of in-service continuous training courses for teachers and professors, colloquia, symposiums, debates addressing a variety of topics related to human rights education. We also mention the *Teaching Creativity Contest in the field of developing auxiliary materials usable in human rights education* and the *Painting Creative Contest* for pupils in primary education.

The objective of these competitions is to respond to the need to promote the education of youth in order for them to exercise and assume their role and status of citizens in a democratic society, to form and develop the competences of participation in the public life, in the spirit of respect for values, understanding and tolerance. These competitions aim to stimulate young people’s preoccupations for the concepts of democracy, human rights, tolerance, the rights of the child, as well as to foster a better knowledge of the main national and international regulations in the field. Furthermore, they are intended to teach young learners about democratic attitudes and behaviors, tolerance, civic spirit and the formation of engagement skills in their life at school and within their local communities. The ultimate aim of these competitions is to generate and develop the youth’s motivation for promoting and defending human rights and the rights of the child.

Given the fact that in the context of the present society, the Romanian youth is confronted with

a relative confusion of values, this induces an unequal manifestation of the maturing processes, including in shaping moral and civic consciousness, all the more so since the moral-civic education represents an important personality component.

In pursuing the acquiring by young people of a way of thinking, acting and behaving in accordance with the moral norms and civic values, the general goal of this type of education remains the training of young people to become responsible citizens, fully aware of their rights and obligations.

Based on the experience gained during the contest period, there has been found a constant increase of interest in the issues and the objectives promoted, as well as a quality improvement in the presented materials. These competitions promote, in the spirit of human rights education, the development of free expression, the preparation of young people to become responsible and active citizens, their active participation enabling them to learn creatively about human rights and to concretely understand this complex issue, acquiring skills and developing attitudes and behaviors in the spirit of respect for human dignity.

From the observation of the students' participation in these competitions, a general appreciation was made, namely that the moral and civic values of the youth of our country reflect the three fundamental axes of life: family, school and interpersonal relationships. Together, these are the guiding values for current and future behaviors of young people.

The idea of whether the moral and civic education should be considered as an integral part of education has been the subject of debate and controversy, some authors being in favor of this formulation, while others choosing to deal with moral education and civic education separately.

As far as we are concerned, we opt for the formulation of moral-civic education, considering the numerous interferences between the moral and civic dimensions of social life. It is obvious that the association of moral and civic behavior is not coincidental, the two types of behavior are not only convergent but they also complement each other, depend on each other

and condition each other. We can not talk about moral behavior without respecting the traditions, norms and values of a society, so civic behavior implies compliance with the values, norms and moral rules that govern the life of a community. Both morality and civilization can be considered as fundamental dimensions of a complete, harmonious and authentic personality.

The moral dimension of behavior requires the assumption of a set of human values essential to the individual, society and humanity. Morality is a social phenomenon, a form of social consciousness that reflects relationships that are established between people in a social context delimited in time and space, having the function of regulating human cohabitation, stimulating and orienting human behavior, in accordance with the social requirements.

As a human rights education component, moral education has the role of promoting meaningful values such as: patriotism, humanism, democracy, justice, freedom, honesty, honor, dignity, modesty, etc. Morality, as a dimension of social or individual consciousness, belongs to the sphere of the ideal, while moral ethics belongs to the sphere of the real. If the essence of the moral ideal is a theoretical model that expresses the moral quintessence of human personality, moral ethics implies effective observance of moral requirements, we are talking about a certain way of thinking, acting and behaving in accordance with moral and civic values, norms and rules.

Civic education has as its central objective the shaping of man as a citizen and active supporter of the rule of law, a militant of human rights, for the good of the homeland and the people to whom he belongs. The purpose of moral-civic education is to train the individual as a moral subject, who feels, thinks and acts in the spirit of moral and social demands, as a good citizen, with committed civic behavior. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to know and respect the moral ideal, the values, norms and rules that define social morality, to acquire knowledge of the structure and function of the rule of law, and of the observance of the laws governing it, to learn and defend the values of democracy, freedom of citizenship, to acquire tolerant, non-discriminatory skills and behavior,

and to promote understanding, peace, friendship and respect for human dignity.

In moral-civic education, the moral component occupies a special place due to the role it plays in asserting and integrating the youth in society. The moral behavior is based on knowledge, feelings, beliefs, traditions and habits, and on a strong will so that their pursuit through training requires not only a well-articulated program, but also a coherent system of methods and procedures to prevent the occurrence of possible obstacles and to ensure the achievement of all the envisaged objectives.<sup>3</sup>

The moral dimension of education is an essential component of both the teaching process, as well as of the exerted actions of the family, of the social and collective environment, with the aim of shaping consciousness and conduct according to the norms governing the functioning of society.

This is an extremely delicate process and that is why it requires competence and even art to identify and solve the numerous challenges faced by the process of shaping one's moral profile. It is also important to note that any methodology will have to be permanently accompanied by the trainers' personal example and by their morally impeccable attitude in all circumstances.

Moral education is a continuous process that must offer support for the formation of young people according to the requirements of the civil, democratic society and for their natural integration into social life, for which they must be sensitized, supported and helped to understand the necessity of observing the norms. Thus they must be trained in exercising and practicing the basic rules of conduct.

Moral-civic education aims mainly at educating young people in the sense of forming a positive attitude towards society, thus being a cooperative and participatory education. For this reason, competitions have a special role and are

necessary instruments in the current context of promoting a culture of human rights.

One of the components of moral education is *religious education*. Because the individual relates to reality not only through intellect, will and action, but also through spirit, by faith, a complete education implies the intellectual, philosophical, aesthetic, technological, and religious component. Besides the cultural dimension of religious education (the transmission of knowledge from the history of religions, the knowledge of literary productions that have as substrate religious reasons), this form of moral education can contribute to the strengthening of respect for one's own values and traditions, but also to openness to diversity and cultural alterity.

Through the contents of religion programs and manuals, religious education must emphasize the common and convergent elements of different confessions; it must contribute to understanding the values, references and traditions of others. Religious education taught in school must not impair the feelings of others' religious affiliation, not lead to discrimination, segregation and separation on religious grounds, but must, on the contrary, ensure and encourage within the limits of the law everyone's freedom of faith and religion. Under no circumstances should confessional disputes be transferred in school. Religion, as a school discipline, should not become a ramp of propagation of hatred and intolerance; it must not become a means of indoctrination or manipulation of consciousness. It must encourage knowledge, in the spirit of tolerance and understanding, and openness to the values of the other.<sup>4</sup>

*Through its basic components, civic education generally targets the following objectives and directions of action: 1) Acquiring civic knowledge needed to exercise citizenship and become a "good citizen".* This knowledge refers to civic and political life (knowledge of democratic values and principles, of fundamental rights and

<sup>3</sup> About moral education, its role, values and models of moral behavior, see Savu-Cristescu, M., *Didactica educatiei morale. Demersuri metodologice pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*, (Didactics of moral education. Methodological steps for primary and preschool education) Universitara publishing, Bucharest, 2014, p.8; pp.9-13; pp.16-18, available at [http://www.editurauniversitara.ro/media/pdf/53be63d25c8c5Didactica\\_educatiei\\_morale\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.editurauniversitara.ro/media/pdf/53be63d25c8c5Didactica_educatiei_morale_PDF.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> With reference to the need, the role and functions of religious education and to the secular-religious report in achieving religious education, as well as to the exigencies of teaching religion in schools and the issue of multi confessions within religious education, see Cucos, C., *Problemele educației religioase*, (The problems of religious education) available at <http://oradereligie.3x.ro/educatie.htm> and the religious education website at <http://educatie.religioasa.gov.ro>

freedoms, of the role of political institutions, NGOs, international organizations); it also refers to the role of the citizen in a democracy (what citizenship means in a democratic system, which are the rights, duties and responsibilities of the citizens); how to engage in politics, in civil society activities, in the life of the community and the nation.

**2) The acquisition of civic qualifications and of intellectual and participatory competences that complement and enable the application of acquired knowledge.** In concrete terms, intellectual qualifications aim to acquire competencies in analyzing, explaining and understanding political and social facts, adopting critical positions about political, social, economic, institutional aspects, in other words acquiring the ability to express, analyze and evaluate. As far as civic participation competencies are concerned, they relate to the ability to be effectively and responsibly informed, thus having participation skills in the political process and civic life through interaction, communication and influence. These skills are mainly acquired in school (through activities involving interaction within small groups, exchange of views), but also within extra-curricular programs and projects.

**3) Formation of moral-civic provisions indispensable to the good functioning of the social system and to the integration of individuals into society.** These provisions and habits are expressed through personal character traits and through public character traits. Like civic competences, they develop over time as a result of family, school, community and of various organizational experiences. Individual character traits are expressed through: moral responsibility, self-discipline, respect for human dignity, courage, critical and self-critical spirit, etc., while public (social) features relate to civility, sociability, respect for laws and norms, understanding, compassion, and mutual aid, and these are indispensable to the existence and functioning of a democratic society.

These characteristic features include: autonomy, acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's own actions, assuming as a citizen legal obligations and personal, political and economic responsibilities, which implies informing about public issues, participation in voting, paying taxes, etc., observance of

work and human dignity, which is achieved by respecting the others (respect opinions, rights and interests of others, participation in civic actions, i.e. participation in voting and public debates, engaging in discussions, promoting the good functioning of democracy, through information on issues of public interest, information on democratic values and principles, commitment to peace, and the creation of a just world.<sup>5</sup>

A liberal and democratic society depends on the citizen's knowledge, qualifications and civic virtues, the civic mission of the school being to forge these qualities from the beginning of the educational process. Besides basic education, citizenship education is teaching about self-respect, the respect of others and civicism in school is a prerequisite for the formation of responsible citizens, i.e. "good citizens".<sup>6</sup>

Moral-civic education as a component of human rights education addresses a variety of themes and issues, from traditional ones, i.e. knowledge and understanding of socio-political notions and subjects, human rights and democratic values, to contemporary themes such as cultural diversity or sustainable development. Other programs focus on economic themes (developing the spirit of initiative), on religion issues, or on European and international issues.

Moral-civic education must promote opportunities for the development of individual and public character traits. In order to have a real positive impact, moral-civic education must be part of a system of daily values, norms and practices, of organizational rules that encourage and value democracy in the spirit of democratic principles. The participation of youth in the school governance by having their word in decision making processes is one of their first citizenship experiences.

<sup>5</sup> See Crittenden, J., Levine, P., *Civic Education*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter, 2016 Edition, cap. 4: Modern Forms of Civic Education", available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civic-education/>; Stimmann Branson, *art.cit.*, "What are the essential components of a good civic education?"

<sup>6</sup> With reference to the role of civic education in school programs, the specificity of the subject and ways of approaching it, see Audigier, F., "Education à la citoyenneté dans ses contradictions", in *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres*, pp. 25-34, available at <https://ries.revues.org/125>.

A democratic culture also implies the existence of programs that target the whole community, parents and especially teachers, through initial or professional training and qualification programs in civic education, but also through the development of partnerships with local organizations that enable experiences of democratic participation.

Various institutions participate in the provision of civic knowledge and skills: family, religious institutions, media, community groups, various other civil society organizations. However, schools have traditionally a special role and responsibility in the process of developing skills and civic responsibility by educating young people, both through formal and informal education for the experience of citizenship during the whole schooling period.<sup>7</sup>

Formal education has the role of familiarizing students with the provisions of the Constitution, with the laws and norms of social and political life, providing them with knowledge of the political system, the relations between the powers, and the governmental policies. Civic education also promotes knowledge of quality of life, citizens' security, economic and political relations with other states. Civic education programs focus on fundamental rights (individual rights, political, economic and social rights), but also on the responsibilities of citizens and the guarantee of the exercise of these essential rights and freedoms in a democratic state.

<sup>7</sup> With reference to the role of civic education in the Romanian education system, see Ulrich, C., "Educația civică în România. Comparații cu alte țări europene (Civic Education in Romania. Comparisons with other European Countries), in Ulrich, C., and others *Rapoartele Societatii Deschise. Predarea educatiei civice in Romania, (Open Society Reports. Teaching Civic Education in Romania* Ed. Dobrogea, Constanta, 2011, pp. 60-93, available at <http://www.fundatia.ro/sites/default/files/2011%20predarea%20educatiei%20civice%20in%20romania.pdf>.

With reference to the role of school in promoting civic and moral education and to the challenges faced by the educational process in the context of modern and post-modern society, see Lamarre, J.-M., "L'éducation civique et morale à l'école est-elle encore possible?", in *Recherche et formation*, 52/2006, pp.29-41, disponibil pe <https://rechercheformation.revues.org/1212>. Also with reference to the role of school in the shaping of future citizens of different countries see Reveaud, M., "Elève, future citoyen", in *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres*, 44/2007, pp.19-24, available at <https://ries.revues.org/111>.

These responsibilities include personal responsibilities (self-care, support for their family, accepting the consequences of their actions, adhering to democratic principles and values, respecting the rights and interests of others), as well as civic responsibilities (respect for laws, payment of taxes, participation in voting etc).<sup>8</sup>

Informal training refers both to the relationships within the school community, but also to extracurricular activities carried out by the school. Thus, on the one hand, school as an institution must be managed in accordance with the democratic values and principles that are the source of emulation for pupils who learn to acquire behaviours of respect for the rights and dignity of others and, on the other hand, through extracurricular activities they are motivated to learn, to become more confident and develop leadership skills. Connecting with school outside of formal school activities (participation in historical events, school elections, participation in community services and other civil society activities such as religious activities, youth volunteering in the service of the community for causes they believe in), undoubtedly can have a certain positive influence on the evolution of young people, with important civic consequences: the development of political tolerance (i.e. respect for political rights and freedoms), the support of the moral and political order. All these activities are an important part of civic education that can be integrated in formal and informal education. Although they are not a substitute for formal civic instruction, they complement it, allowing students to be trained for learning by way of experience.<sup>9</sup>

Promoting active citizenship is also a central objective at European level. Thus, among the priority objectives of the EU cooperation actions in the field of youth for 2010-2018 the importance of "promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people" is mentioned. This strategic objective envisages the development of citizenship through formal and informal pedagogical activities, the

<sup>8</sup> Stimmann Branson, *art.cit.* "Formal Instruction".

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Informal Curriculum*.

latter referring to “participation in civil society and in representative democracy (...) as well as to volunteering as a vector of social inclusion and citizenship”.<sup>10</sup>

Education for citizenship is present in the school curricula of all European countries. The programs reflect the multidimensional nature of citizenship, focusing on the transmission of knowledge, the acquisition of skills, attitudes and respect for values, the development of a democratic political culture, and the promotion of active participation of pupils in and out of school. Also, the programs address, besides the classical themes of this type of education, the theme of the European and international dimension of citizenship.<sup>11</sup> Although the objectives and content of civic education differ from country to country, the central objective is common to everyone, and it aims to make young Europeans active citizens that responsibly participate in the development and prosperity of the societies they live in.<sup>12</sup>

Besides school which plays a major role in citizenship education, being the place where, through everyday experience, young people learn to become active and responsible citizens, a number of other programs and measures encourage youth through extra-curricular activities to participate in the life of local communities and of the society. Civic participation (activities related to the local environment, projects in human rights, activities related to vulnerable persons or disadvantaged groups, participation in local projects – parks care, volunteering in the organization of festivals)

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<sup>10</sup> *Raport Education à la citoyenneté en Europe, Eurydice, Council of Europe*, 2012, p. 9, available at [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/139FR.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/139FR.pdf).

In the same way in the context of global interdependencies, education for a global citizenship is encouraged as a component of civic education, which starting with 2012, when the global initiative for education was launched (“Education above all”) it became one of the UNESCO priorities with regard to education. See *Education à la citoyenneté mondiale : Thèmes et objectifs d'apprentissage*, UNESCO, 2015, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002332/233240f.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> *Education à la citoyenneté en Europe*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

allow the effective exercise of citizenship ever since the school age.<sup>13</sup>

In contemporary society, one of the greatest challenges in the field of education is the transmission of knowledge skills and attitudes to young people in order for them to become active citizens capable of responsibly influencing the evolution of a democratic society. Moral-civic education corresponds to the need to raise awareness among young people about moral and civic values and aims to shape their moral-civic consciousness that allows them to understand, respect, protect and promote the norms of social life and democratic values specific to the rule of law. Moral-civic education also aims at initiating children and young people in active, responsible behavior; it makes them capable of tolerance, self-respect, and respect of others, aware of their rights and duties, free and open to other cultures.

Through programs, projects and actions, citizenship education is one of the tools by which students and young people are encouraged and supported to acquire the individual and civic knowledge and skills required to exercise citizenship. Because citizenship is a learning process, in achieving the civic education objectives, the school has a central place in the preparation of young people for the social life. The role of the school is to cultivate students’ sensitivity to human issues and civic moral values by contributing, through formal and informal teaching, to the development of their attachment and respect for democratic values and principles and enabling the experience of citizenship through modern training strategies and education techniques, supported by education sciences and school practice. The activities initiated by the Romanian Institute for Human Rights together with its partners have pupils as target groups (from schools and colleges, social centers, clubs and palaces of children, including children from disadvantaged groups), while in the educational process parents, teachers, trainers, psychologists, social assistants, programme coordinators and project managers are always involved.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.