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ETHICS – A COMPULSORY DISCIPLINE IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

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Ethics – A Compulsory Discipline in Pre-University Education in Romania

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Abstract

Along with the fall of the Communist regime, the emergence of democracy and the frequent changes regarding the law of education, the educational system in Romania has undergone many transformations, which were misinterpreted by the beneficiaries of the system. In this article I shall refer to the fact that students most often misinterpret education, considering that the system itself does not offer the guarantee of a better life or tomorrow's safety. We shall also emphasize the fact that pre-university education schools in Romania require considerable change in terms of the students' behaviour, and we propose the study of ethics starting with high school classes. This way, the students will be educated in the spirit of the ethical codes, which they will understand and commit to, both in order to promote civic behaviour as well as to understand the need for responsibility towards the society we live in.

Keywords:
Ethics, education, responsibility, civic behaviour, ethical codes

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Introduction

The society we live in provides behaviour models that are not exactly adequate for the future of the young graduates. Romania's entry into the European Union, followed by the emigration of a large number of people towards a better life has entailed serious consequences for the young students in pre-university education in Romania. We would like to emphasize the fact that the students' vacations abroad and the parents' desire to provide them a better life have raised most young people's desire to make money, instead of their interest in education. For this reason, increasingly more young people seem to be interested only in graduating high-school and going abroad for a better life. The idea we intend to develop in this paper is that Western countries impose a civilized behaviour, which needs to be promoted starting with high school, since foreign countries provide jobs not only for high-school graduates, but also for those who already have a career and hold a bachelor's or master's degree.

2. The need for ethics in schools

Humanities and social disciplines provide students with a lot of information regarding the society, communication and the human individual, while ethics can help us behave rationally (Tirado Guirao, J.A., 2004: 155-161) and commit to the values of peaceful coexistence of the pluralistic society (Tirado Guirao, J.A., 2004: 155-161). Education is impregnated with the need for ethics, which emerges from the view according to which the human individual is capable of transcending (Ovelar Pereyra, N., 2004: 453-460). The best way to introduce ethics into the education of the future adults can be achieved by formal, informal and non-formal education. We believe that this is the best method because through formal education - based on a curriculum and methodology - the individual can assimilate the theoretical part of ethics and thus can use this knowledge in everyday life. Informal and non-formal education can help the adult be aware of the consequences of unethical acts, since irresponsible behaviour can have serious consequences both for himself and for the persons around him. We believe that ethical education can include ecological ethics, bioethics, morals, business ethics and professional ethics in order to provide the students with a wide range of examples; they will be able to shape their behaviour according to the norms and values promoted by this discipline.

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Regarding ethics teaching in high school, there are only two chapters that provide information on this subject: the 10th grade text book of Entrepreneurial Education - business ethics, and the text book of philosophy for the 12th grade, which includes the moral theories. We believe that in just one class per week the student cannot assimilate the theoretical aspects adequately, so as to be able to put them in practice in everyday life. If the focus were strictly on this discipline, and if it were promoted not only during classes, but also outside classes, then in several generations time we would be able to say that we are developing young people who commit to the moral values of the society we live in. The teacher's role is to develop life skills and that is why philosophy should have a privileged role in education. The society is constantly changing and is characterized by significant social movements (Alvarado Davila, V., 2005: 9-14). Besides the fact that education is not an abstract but concrete fact, the human individual must act as the subject of his own life (Bautista Arrien, J., 2003: 73-91), given that the incidence of the social factors in education is a large nucleus of problems and perspectives of analysis (Bautista Arrien, J., 2003: 73-91). Juan Bautista Arrien believes that we are facing a reality with two sides: on the one hand, the incidence of the social factors in education and on the other hand the global incidence of the social environment as a setter of stimuli and patterns of conduct (Bautista Arrien, J. 2003: 73-91). Education breaks the formal and institutional boundaries and becomes the common action of the various social communities, from the family to the information and communication media that have a major impact and multiple effects (Bautista Arrien, J., 2003: 73-91). In these circumstances, ethics plays an important role as social and moral responsibility derives from the essence of education. This leads to the fact the teacher's involvement in the training and education of the future adult aims at promoting ethical and responsible attitudes towards the community, the environment and the society in general in order to ensure a balance between the individual and the outside world. From this point of view, David Ansoleaga San Antonio and Juan Luis/Gomez Gutierrez focus on several ethical criteria based on the following principles:

- The principle of respect for the person, which means acting in the interest of the subject, promoting freedom and autonomy, physical and mental integrity, preventing and informing against the situations of violence, abuse, torture, violation of

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rights (Ansoleaga San Antonio, D., Gomez Gutierrez, J.L., 2004:1-12) ;

- The principle of the person's protagonism, which means proportioning truthful and adequate information to a concrete situation, encouraging the participation in taking decisions that affect a particular situation of the individual, proportioning the recipient's capacity of free choice regarding the educator (Ansoleaga San Antonio, D., Gomez Gutierrez, J.L., 2004:1-12);
- The principle of honesty: committing to the moral, political and religious conscience of the subjects, non-discrimination in providing services, avoiding the creation of false expectations, defending the right to accept or reject a case (Ansoleaga San Antonio, D., Gomez Gutierrez, J.L., 2004: 1-12);
- The principle of confidentiality: using the information derived from know-how, proper custody of the records, assessments and other documents that contain information about the recipients, using the information only for the benefit of the recipient, informing him and asking for permission to use his personal information (Ansoleaga San Antonio, D., Gomez Gutierrez, J.L., 2004: 1-12)

3. Communication – an important value in teaching strategies

The process of transmitting messages primarily regards the teaching attitude, which is why we believe that an ethical attitude can make the difference between the correct reception of the messages and their incomprehensibility. Creating a universal culture regarding human rights according to which the transmission of knowledge should shape the attitude of the individual must be based on:

- Respect for the human rights and freedoms;
- Tolerance, understanding and gender equality regardless of race or nationality;
- Active participation.

These criteria can be met by effective communication and ongoing education in the spirit of ethics and morality. However, we believe that the normative character plays an important role in the decision making. For example, in our country, students whose parents are working abroad believe that money can buy everything, including freedom; however, violating the legal framework may entail negative

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consequences, and money may not be able to buy neither freedom, nor the human values that have already been violated. We believe that before reaching such extreme situations, ethical education can help young people make better decisions regarding the violation of the rights and freedoms of other persons. The absence of the parents cannot compensate for the family emotional climate, which is largely dependent on maternal love (Sarbu, T., 2005: 12-17 (13)). Researchers in educational sciences have identified a number of gaps regarding the axiological and behavioural aspect of education in terms of the educational system (Sorici, O., 2013: 9-16). Grigore Drondoe believes that education in the spirit of the modern social life norms involves assimilating the values of culture and the narrated values as a vital necessity for the individual, for his intellectual and psycho-somatic fulfilment, for the progress of the society he "volens nolens" lives in (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117-134). Education also involves a complex and complicated process of socialization; through education, the individual is trained in relation to certain goals and social norms (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117-134), ethical norms and moral values. Through morality the human being reaches his plenary development; its achievement involves a series of nodal stages:

- First the child is helped to leave his own self and adapt to small groups (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117-134);
- Moral education helps him develop awareness regarding professional obligations (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117-134);
- It will help the individual become himself, to find himself as belonging to the humanity (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117-134).

For this reason, the teenager - especially during high school - requires a strong ethical and moral education, given that the society does not always provide examples of good conduct and civic attitude. However, since the teacher has the capacity to inoculate values, we can see no reason why ethics cannot be introduced in schools as a compulsory discipline. Social integration is the result of communication and socialization and involves shaping individuals in such a way that they become capable of self-achievement. (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117-134). Citing Hibbes, Locke and Rousseau, Drondoe G. emphasizes the fact that an individual is considered to be educated if he admits the legitimacy of any law that imposes a desirable behaviour, a reasonable and rational behaviour, which is in accordance with the civic requirements (Drondoe, G., 2009: 117 -134).

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4. Education for the future

For an individual to grow and develop in line with the requirements of a changing society, he has to benefit from axiological education within the family. An effective valorisation will generate axiological capacities, effort and ability to transpose values into behaviours, which will contribute to the development of his own criteria regarding values (Sorici, O., 2013: 16-22). Paraphrasing Gh. Bunescu, Oxana Sorici states that "valuing each person involves the road from negative freedom/the freedom to refuse to deny to positive freedom/the freedom to take initiative, to get employed, to create value, the freedom of behavioural creativity; this involves shifting the focus from homily/reprimand, recommendation to sensitivity, which means stimulating internal motivation through an inductive, practical, active approach, an approach of ethical shaping focused on practical self-improvement" (Sorici, O., 2013:16-22). Education for the future can be understood from two perspectives: firstly from the perspective of entering the labour market and secondly from the perspective of providing our own children with the values of a democratic society. The continuous changes may affect the individual, but a strong ethical education, which focuses on values as being primordial, can help overcome the obstacles and accept the situations that are not necessarily related to the person's singular action. The development of certain moral habits requires the concern for autonomy, rights and justice, freedom, etc. Teaching strategies are the basis of the personal and ethical development of the future adult and therefore the theoretical exposure to key situations that describe a conflict of values leads to the intellectual understanding of the ethical principles (Rodriguez Perazzo, B., 2001: 141-151) that the individual will assimilate. We believe that the study of ethics and values provide students with an alternative to certain compulsory disciplines, which are purely theoretical and have no applicability or have applicability for a percentage of 1% of the students. Education for the future does not only refer to knowledge about history, geography or chemistry but also to preparing the individual for the integration into the society.

In this paper we have tried to present several arguments regarding the introduction of ethics as a compulsory subject in schools. We have emphasized the fact that the contemporary society does not always provide role models, money and the absence of the parents being the reason why some teenagers commit acts which are worthy of the society's opprobrium. We have also discussed the fact that promoting values since

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high school could have a positive impact in terms of the respect for freedom, justice, self-determination, etc.

5. The importance of ethics in schools

The future of the society depends directly on the people that we are training today. The key to many of the problems we are facing globally is the lack of ethical values. Developing life competencies is one of the central concerns of education, and for this reason we believe that schools should also develop ethical responsibility besides the knowledge they transmit. Considering the risks they are exposed to every day, children and adolescents need guidance and counselling for overcoming the obstacles and understanding the situations and problems of everyday life. In this context, schools should provide them with the tools for overcoming these obstacles and especially for building their own scale of values. Trying to promote values such as equality, freedom, self-determination and tolerance is most often erroneously associated with indoctrination. Systematic education, which explains the role of ethical and social norms, the role of the laws and the role of the rights and duties, comes to justify the sanction as a consequence of abusive acts. Therefore, in order to promote a society based on values, all the beneficiaries of the educational system should support the introduction of ethics in schools as a compulsory discipline. Collaborating with the family is more than necessary given that the family's attendance is required at meetings so that the students may be assessed on a regular basis both at home and at school.

The teenager must view this discipline as a way of self-knowledge, as he himself is the creator of his own general culture, of his own values and his own cognitive structure. The teacher's role is to direct the individual towards psychological development so that the teenager can value himself and the others, be responsible for his acts and promote an attitude of care and respect towards the others and towards himself.

Conclusions

Today ethics is considered indispensable, especially for the young generation. The society we live in does not provide an education for the future based on moral or ethical criteria. The absence of the parents and the shortcomings of everyday life made teenagers perceive unearned money as a value, which is not in accordance with education and morality.

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We have considered important to discuss in this paper about the introduction of ethics in schools as a compulsory discipline since the society we live in does not provide examples of good ethical conduct, but rather encourages indecent behaviour and, why not, behaviours that violate the ethical values and legislative framework. If ethics were introduced in schools, with the help of parents and the educational system in general, we could hope for future ethical generations.

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