

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES OF THE CULTURAL COMPONENT IN THE FORMATION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

IN PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract. The article analyses the cultural component of the personal identity of primary school students, as a fundamental dimension of the proposed three-dimensional construct for the formation of personal identity through education for emotional development. By referring to international documents, as well as to the normative framework in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the study highlights the theoretical, curricular and legislative basis of this component. The cultural component is examined through two complementary dimensions: national consciousness and axiological integrity, considered essential values of personal identity. At the same time, the article proposes a model for capitalizing on the cultural component through curricular and extracurricular activities brought together in the Me and My Roots module, demonstrating how these contribute to the formation of the identity profile of primary school students, respectively to the development of the attributes of the Graduate Profile for primary education.

Keywords: personal identity, cultural component, national consciousness, axiological integrity, primary education, education for values, profile of the graduate.

PERSPECTIVE CONTEMPORANE ALE COMPONENTEI CULTURALE ÎN FORMAREA IDENTITĂȚII PERSONALE LA ELEVII DIN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR

Rezumat. Articolul analizează componenta culturală a identității personale a elevilor din învățământul primar, ca dimensiune fundamentală a constructului tridimensional propus pentru formarea identității personale prin educația pentru dezvoltare emoțională. Prin raportare la documente internaționale, precum și la cadrul normativ din România și Republica Moldova, studiul subliniază baza teoretică, curriculară și legislativă a acestei componente. Componenta culturală este examinată prin două dimensiuni complementare, interconectate: conștiința națională și integritatea axiologică, pe care le considerăm valori esențiale ale identității personale. Totodată, articolul propune un model de valorificare a componentei culturale prin activități curriculare și extracurriculare reunite în modulul Eu și rădăcinile mele, demonstrând modul în care acestea contribuie la formarea profilului identitar al elevilor din învățământul primar, respectiv la dezvoltarea atributelor Profilului de formare al absolventului învățământului primar.

Cuvinte-cheie: identitate personală, componenta culturală, conștiință națională, integritate axiologică, învățământ primar, educație pentru valori, profilul de formare al absolventului

Introduction

In a society characterized by mobility, cultural diversity and accelerated social changes, the formation of personal identity is becoming an increasingly complex process. From an early age, children are exposed to multiple influences, in the family, at school, through the media and the digital environment, so there is a need to consolidate stable

landmarks that provide them with balance and coherence. Therefore, cultural heritage and assumed values occupy an important place, as they contribute to the development of national consciousness and the orientation of moral conduct. In this context, the cultural component of personal identity becomes a fundamental dimension of personal identity, through which the primary school student discovers his cultural roots and builds his own system of values.

H. Milner (2010) emphasizes that individuals and groups operate within and through cultural frames of reference, their beliefs, values, and practices being shaped by culture. The author shows that the relationship between culture, curriculum, and identity is directly manifested in the school space, the curriculum representing the context in which students have the opportunity to learn, and culture and identity influencing the way teachers perceive and understand students [11, pp. 1–11].

In the view of the authors S. Chelcea and P. Iluț (2003), quoted by M. Bocoș, culture represents a system of values, ways of thinking, feeling and acting, learned and shared by a significant number of people or by a distinct community, through non-biological mechanisms. At the same time, E. Neveanu and D. Potolea (2007), quoted by the same author, consider culture to be a set of practices and behaviours invented and transmitted in different groups, which differentiate people and groups in a specific manner [2, pp.268-269].

Curricular and Legislative Framework

The formation of the personal identity of primary school students, through the development of national consciousness and axiological integrity, is supported by a set of national and international documents, which promote respect for cultural heritage, education for values and responsible citizenship. These documents reveal that the school has the responsibility not only to form cognitive skills, but also to strengthen the system of values that guide behaviour in various social contexts.

At the international level, the cultural component is supported by a series of normative documents and educational policies approved by institutions such as the United Nations (UN), UNESCO and OECD. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which was ratified by Romania through Law no. 18/1990, provides in art. 29 that education must promote respect for the child's own cultural identity, language and values. Also, art. 30 and art. 31 support the right of the child to preserve his or her cultural identity and to participate freely in the cultural and artistic life of the community to which he or she belongs [16, 17]. In addition, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), reconfirmed and expanded by the MONDIACULT Declaration (2022), defines culture as a global public good and states that cultural diversity is as important to humanity as biodiversity is to nature. The UNESCO Recommendation on Education for

Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development (2023), approved by its 194 Member States, links education to respect for cultural diversity as an essential part of the formation of global citizens [18, 19, 20].

At the same time, the OECD emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness, values and attitudes in training students and the skills necessary for responsible participation in society through the implementation of the Learning Compass 2030 conceptual framework [12].

Through the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (2018), the Council of Europe promotes the development of democratic cultural identity and its values. This reference framework emphasizes the importance of education in order to provide students with the capacity to value their cultural identity, appreciate diversity and participate actively and responsibly in democratic life. According to the model, there are four complementary dimensions: values, attitudes, competences and knowledge and critical understanding. These dimensions emphasize that the formation of cultural awareness and awareness of civic responsibility is essential for the formation of personal identity [5].

In Romania, educational policy documents support the harmonious development of the personality of young schoolchildren, from a cognitive, socio-emotional, professional, civic point of view, so that they participate actively and creatively in the development of society, manifesting the feeling of national belonging. This aim is provided for in the Law on Pre-university Education no. 198/2023, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 613 of July 5, 2023, which promotes among the principles governing pre-university education the guarantee of the cultural identity of all Romanian citizens and intercultural dialogue, as well as the embracing, promotion and preservation of the national identity and cultural values of the Romanian people.

At the same time, the law enshrines the values that underpin the Romanian pre-university education system, namely: collaboration, diversity, excellence, equity, inclusion, integrity, respect, responsibility [10].

Another key document is the Order of the Minister of Education No. 6731/2023 on the approval of the Training Profile of the Primary Education Graduate, which defines the priority attributes of the graduate, such as responsibility, ethics, autonomy, collaboration and reflection, assimilated to axiological integrity, as part of the personal identity of primary education students [15].

The curriculum for the subject Personal Development, approved by Order of the Minister of National Education No. 3418/2013 for the preparatory class, grade I and grade II supports the development of personal identity [13]. The cultural component of personal identity is developed transversally, in grades III and IV, through the competencies provided in the school programs approved by Order of the Minister of National Education No.

5003/2014, within the disciplines Romanian Language and Literature, Civic Education, History, Visual Arts and Practical Skills, Music and Movement [14].

By conducting a comparative analysis of the curriculum for the primary cycle in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, we found that in the Republic of Moldova the curriculum pays increased attention to value and civic dimensions, such as the cultivation of national and cultural awareness, essential aspects for strengthening personal identity in the cultural context [4].

Theoretical Framework of the Cultural Component

According to the sociocultural theory developed by Lev S. Vygotsky (1978), culture is an essential factor in the development of an individual. As learning is significantly influenced by social and cultural factors, child development is achieved through interactions with parents, teachers, and peers [21].

The cultural component occupies a central place within the three-dimensional construct proposed in the research undertaken on the formation of personal identity of primary school students, because it explains the way in which students develop their awareness of cultural belonging and build their own system of values. From this perspective, the article provides the theoretical and pedagogical foundation of the cultural component, subjecting to analysis the two values that complete it: national consciousness and axiological integrity.

In Figure 1, we present the conceptual model of the cultural component of personal identity in relation to the formation of the identity profile, as well as the development of the attributes of the Training Profile of the primary school graduate.

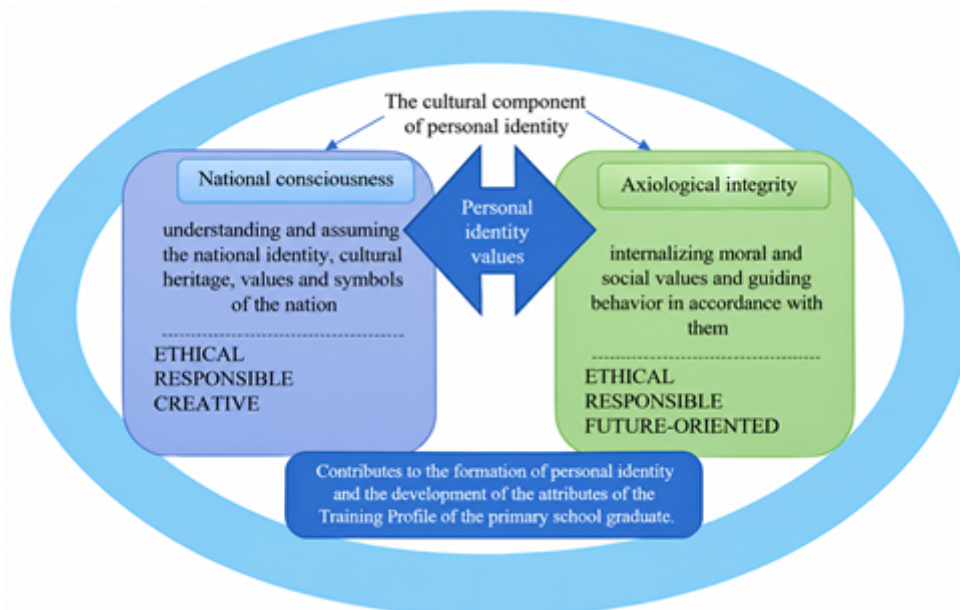


Figure 1. Correlation between the Structural Elements of the Cultural Component of Personal Identity and the Attributes of the training profile of the Primary Education Graduate

Approached from complementary perspectives — political, psychological, cultural and sociological — national consciousness is defined in the specialized literature as a form of belonging of the individual to the national community of which he is a part, manifested by identification with its values, culture, traditions and history. Che and Liao (2026) emphasize that, beyond the diversity of theoretical perspectives, national consciousness reflects the feeling of belonging to the nation, based on cognitive, affective and axiological processes, formed in the context of the historical, cultural and social experiences lived by the individual. The two authors also note the multidimensional nature of this construct, structuring it around three essential dimensions: national cognition, national identity and national responsibility [3].

In the same direction, D. Koester (1997) emphasizes that this consciousness is formed from childhood through social and cultural experiences, through contact with the symbols, traditions and values specific to the national community [9].

Axiological integrity represents a value of personal identity within the three-dimensional construct of personal identity proposed in this research. It expresses the student's ability to internalize, assume and consistently manifest moral and social values through thinking, decision and behaviour, ensuring coherence between the personal value system, the decisions adopted and the behaviours manifested in different life contexts.

In Anglo-Saxon literature, the concept of axiological integrity is associated with the internal coherence between the values assumed by the individual and their mode of manifestation in practice, being considered an indicator of the quality of reflection and behavioural consistency [8].

Research in the field of values education shows that the formation of the value system begins in the first years of life, with children developing a moral sense early on that is closely linked to their emotional and social development, initially in the family, and later through interaction with the school, the social environment, and the community to which they belong [7].

Examples of educational intervention

The theoretical foundations of the cultural component have been translated into practice through the educational intervention model. This model aims at the progressive development of national consciousness and axiological integrity, through integrated learning experiences, which take place in both formal and non-formal contexts.

To operationalize the model, the cultural component was translated into a set of formal and non-formal educational activities included in the module *Me and My Roots*.

By relating to cultural heritage, community traditions and the individual axiological system, the *Me and My Roots* module capitalizes on educational experiences oriented towards the development of personal identity. By involving students in an active learning

experience, these activities help to internalize cultural landmarks and develop a sense of belonging to the national identity space. The activities carried out, both formal and non-formal, were designed based on the DECID didactic design model.

Table 1. Educational Contexts for the Development of Personal Identity in Primary School Pupils within the Cultural Component/ Module *Me and My Roots*

General skills	Specific skills	Identity values	Formative experience	Type of activity	Identity purpose
Showing respect for one's own culture.	Recognition of symbols and elements of national identity	National consciousness	• Folk Costume Day – I wear identity • Family traditions – roots of my identity • Creative workshops – within the educational project Winter customs: crafts, masks and sorcoves – partnership with the “Iulian Antonescu” Museum Complex Bacau, Ethnography Section • Educational project Mărțișorul – tradition, emotion and identity – partnership with the “Iulian Antonescu” Museum Complex Bacau, Ethnography Section • Santa Claus... in the sweet old town of Iași – excursion	formal/curricular	Internalizing representative cultural landmarks and integrating them as a constitutive part of personal identity
	Appreciation of the traditions, customs and values of the community.			formal/curricular nonformal/extracurricular nonformal/extracurricular nonformal/extracurricular	
Adopting behaviours based on moral values.	The distinction between correct and incorrect behaviours from a moral perspective Asserting values such as respect, truth, responsibility and solidarity	Axiological integrity	• Value Map • Roll Your Values • The Tower of Values • My Values Suitcase	formal/curricular formal/curricular formal/curricular formal/curricular	Configuring a personal value system and applying it as a guiding reference in making decisions and adopting behaviours

The creative workshops: *Sorcove, Mărțișorul-* (the traditional Romanian spring symbol), *Salt Painting*, which we organized within the educational projects, in collaboration with the „Iulian Antonescu” Museum Complex in Bacău, helped students to become familiar with the symbolic elements of traditional culture and to capitalize on the cultural meanings that are transmitted between generations. At the same time, events such as the *Day of the Folk Costume – I Wear Identity*, *The Tradition of My Family* or thematic educational excursions provided contexts for reflection on cultural belonging and encouraged the assumption of national consciousness by relating to real cultural models.

Within the same module, activities dedicated to the development of axiological integrity aimed at developing the skills of identifying, understanding and internalizing the values that underpin individual behaviour and social relationships. The educational approach aimed at facilitating the progressive construction of a personal axiological system, by relating to concrete life experiences and stimulating moral reflection.

The following activities were implemented:

- *Values Map* — an exercise for exploring and cognitively organizing personal values, in which students were guided to identify values relevant to themselves and to visually structure them, thus supporting the process of awareness and prioritization of them.

- *Roll Your Values* — an interactive association and reasoning exercise that involved relating values to concrete life situations. The activity facilitated the functional understanding of values and the flexibility of their application in various contexts.

- *The Tower of Values* — a ranking and prioritization activity in which students symbolically built a tower of personal values (Jenga game), establishing the relative importance of each. This activity contributed to the development of moral decision-making capacity and the clarification of personal axiological landmarks.

- *My Values Suitcase*- a reflective approach of integration, through which students selected and internalized the values considered essential to their own identity. The suitcase metaphor facilitated the conscious internalization of values as sustainable personal resources.

Therefore, through these activities, students were supported to go beyond the declarative level of values and reach an authentic internalization, expressed in concrete behaviors and attitudes. Consequently, axiological integrity emerges as an essential dimension of personal identity, manifesting itself through coherence between values, decisions and actions, as well as through the ability to relate ethically and responsibly in diverse social contexts.

Conclusions

The research carried out demonstrates that the cultural dimension constitutes a basic pillar of personal identity at early school age, favouring both the shaping of national

consciousness and the in-depth assimilation of values that guide students' social behaviour. This perspective finds support in international regulations, but also in the legislative and curricular framework of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, which promotes the appreciation of cultural heritage, values-based education and the formation of a responsible citizen.

The proposed examples of educational intervention demonstrate that the values of personal identity developed through the interaction between national consciousness and axiological integrity contribute to the formation of the personal identity of primary school students, respectively to the development of the attributes of the graduate's training profile, especially in terms of responsibility, ethics and prospective orientation. The educational activities presented emphasize that learning experiences focused on cultural heritage, traditions and reflection on values facilitate the internalization of cultural landmarks and the shaping of a personal axiological system. Therefore, the systematic integration of these actions into the educational process can represent an effective mechanism for strengthening personal identity and training students capable of displaying ethical, responsible and involved behaviours in community life.

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