

THE ROMANIAN MULTICULTURALISM: EDUCATION, HIGHLIGHTS AND IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The spiritual dimension of culturalism reveals the very reflection of the manifestation of cultures that want to preserve their own identity. Beyond such a manifestation we can only observe that multiculturalism becomes demanding and tolerant of itself when it claims an existential assertion. Moreover, the universal expression of multiculturalism reveals the very form through which and in which the contemporary society manifests itself. Therefore, we can state that multiculturalism as a whole has a normative, descriptive and even scientific nature.

The applicative part of this study investigated the attitudes, perspectives, and opinions stated by the ethnic community (N=106) over subjects like openness, cultural preservation, identity report, social image and others. An additional study focused on investigating teachers' perspective (N=64) over their multicultural competences, skills, strategies, and responsiveness confirmed a high and insightful attitude promoted within the Romanian educational system.

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Introduction

The understanding of the multicultural phenomenon, viewed as a whole, basically expresses a state of fact through which contextual situations are highlighted correlated with civic idea (Modood, 2007), and multi- and inter-cultural dimensions (Ghosh; Tarrow: 1993, 81-92; Glazer, 1997; Levey, 2012; Harris, 2013). In other words, multiculturalism means community and not the individual as a person. In this sense, identity and tolerance are pillars to support a sustainable policy designed to promote and support the idea of multiculturalism at the national level, but also with visibility at the international level. Thus, we can talk about taking over the reevaluation of minorities, and such an approach is found in Romania.

Through multiculturalism, communities are connected in thought, tradition, deeds and spirit. The observance of the rights and freedoms of all expresses the very idea of assuming and accepting what diversity and tolerance stand for. It is for these reasons that an identity of the spirit must be assumed. By assuming and preserving the identity, the very diversity of the multicultural dimension is accepted.

Under these conditions, the characteristic reality of multiculturalism can be deciphered by calling for assumption and awareness of identity and diversity. That is why the distinction between multiculturalism and globalization is necessary. In other words, we can clearly state that multiculturalism stands by no means for globalization.

On the one hand, the globalization keeps spirits away from each other, but at the same time it tries to assimilate them by hijacking their own identity. On the other hand, multiculturalism connects them, unites them. The multiculturalism is, rather, a special form of education. That is why the form of education that people associate with in relation to the idea of multiculturalism becomes fundamental in the ontic dimension of the human being.

Multiculturalism and identity in the Romanian territory

Romania is a country where multiculturalism is at home. Historical circumstances (Rogobete, 2006, Șerban, Stelu, 2007, 393-406) have not always been the most favorable for the recognition of various ethnic communities. Over time, however, Romania has shown that, by recognizing multiculturalism, the identity of spiritual communities that have spirituality in common is accepted. The Romanian

Constitution, the fundamental law of the Romanian state, recognizes the rights of national minorities to preserve develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity (Article 4 of the Romanian' Constitution). It is clear that when we talk about multiculturalism we must consider, on the one hand, the ethnic religious, cultural community, a community that must be interested in protecting its own identity, and on the other hand, we speak of multiculturalism as a political theory (Horton, 1993). Taking into account the multiculturalism analyzed in relation to cultural affiliation, we notice a more than interesting situation in Romania.

Thus, when we talk about specifically multicultural communities in Romania, our analysis must focus mainly on different cultural identities such as Ukrainians / Hutsuls, Lipovans, Germans, Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers, Albanians, Armenians, Turks, Bulgarians, Czechs and Slovaks, Serbs, Poles, Macedonians, Tatars, Azerbaijanis, Italians and the list goes on. In other words, the diversity and richness of multiculturalism in Romania are more than obvious. The values and practices that all these communities share are recognized and accepted in Romania, each person benefiting from their own rights in this regard.

The cultural diversity in Romania predominates and enjoys freedom of expression in this respect. It is a diversity that encourages the spiritual identity, legitimizing cultural customs. Regardless of the area to which it deals with, the multiculturalism found in Romania is one that tries to establish a series of connections at an ideational, inter-community level. In other words, multiculturalism unites and connects people into a unitary whole (Liu, 2007), but with particular non-discriminatory manifestations. It is a whole process of deciphering the social and cultural reality in particular, but also the identity in general (Werbner, 2005).

The exigency of multiculturalism consists precisely in the way in which it expresses its own identity (Cretan R, Turnock, D and Woudstra, J., 2008). It assumes the new paradigms without giving up the traditional paradigms. The gratitude for the past becomes a virtue for the present and for the future (Thomas, 2011). Tolerant of itself, the multiculturalism knows how to unite the temporal dimensions: past-present-future.

The convergence between such dimensions reveals the very existence of "possible worlds" where the images of cultural differences do not create any divergences. Any multiculturalist solution refers to ideas such as education, tolerance, relationships, consolidation and valorization. The legitimacy of some communities is validated by assuming the norms at the level thereof.

Forms of manifestation of multiculturalism in Romania

A first example that we want to bring to your attention is that of the Ukrainian minority, a minority that is mostly found in northern Romania and in the areas near the border with Ukraine. Thus, the Ukrainians (also known as or *Ruthenians* in some areas of the country such as Maramures, or known as *Hutsuls* in northern Bukovina or even *Haholi* in Dobrogea) have lived with Romanians over time. Their education was special in the sense that there were and still are schools / classes with teaching in Ukrainian (Ukrainian is accepted as an optional subject in schools / universities). A testament to the preservation of cultural, linguistic and ethnic identity is a specific body, namely the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, which aims to strengthen Romanian-Ukrainian cooperation relations.

A second example we want to offer is that of the Lipovan community, known as an ethnic group of Russian origin, but not Russian in the true sense of the word (Ipatiov, 2001; Song, 2010). Lipovans are found in the eastern part of Romania, more precisely in Tulcea, Constanta and Braila counties. Among a series of Lipovan personalities who lived and honored their own community and Romania, we can mention Ivan Patzaichin (former Romanian canoeist who won a 4-time gold medal at the Summer Olympics), Ioan Chirilă (writer and sports journalist), Vlad Ivanov (film actor) and others.

Another ethnic but not unitary group that we can mention is the one represented by the German community (Böhm, 2003). We specify in this context that this group is not as numerous as it was used to be 40-50 years ago, but nevertheless it finds its representation in Romania in several areas. In the German community in Romania there may be some researchers, including Saxons, Swabians and Zipser Germans (Zipsers). The Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania is known in this sense. Among the German personalities with a strong impact on the Romanian territory can be mentioned Klauss Iohannis (president of Romania), Michael Klein (athlete / footballer in the Romanian national team), Stefan Walter Hell (originally from Romania, physicist and who received the award Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2014).

A fourth community we can refer to is that of Hungarians, currently the largest ethnic minority in Romania. It is very visible in the western part of Romania (Covasna, Harghita, Mures, Cluj, Bihor and Arad counties) and continuously promotes its own values. This community is organized as a unit from a political point of view under the name of the Union of Hungarians in Romania and has in Romania, besides the Hungarian language teaching schools, a series of its own institutions such

as the Hungarian Opera in Cluj, the Hungarian State Theater in Cluj and Oradea and the Hungarian Television in Transylvania.

Our synchronous, systemic analysis continues with the ethnic group of Szeklers identified towards the center of the country (Covasna and Harghita counties). The construction and the attempt to reconstruct their own identity represented and still represents, from a historical viewpoint, an effort to legitimize their own way of being and living in the Romanian territory, and their historical meaning was a special one within it. For example, the Szeklers (documented in the 13th century), identified as descendants of Bulgarians related to Hungarians or as descendants of Huns or Eastern Khazars (Bruno) had a privileged situation from the beginning, as they were exempt from paying taxes precisely because they were considered to be free (Russu, 1990).

Throughout history, the Romanian territory has been transited by a series of ethnic groups, minorities who have also given a series of outstanding personalities in terms of culture and science, as follows:

- The Albanians who lived in the 16th century in the territory now called Romanian. Examples of personalities are the rulers Vasile Lupu and Gheorghe Ghica (who had a special influence on the culture and politics of the seventeenth century), the writer Victor Eftimiu or Naum Penajot Veqilhargi exemplary personality who published the first alphabet in Albanian in Romania.

- The Armenians in Romania who had the right to autonomy and free trade (Albinetz, 2012). They are found especially in Tara Romaneasca, Moldova and Transylvania (for example, in the cities of Gherla and Dumbrăveni there were Armenian courts). Spiru Haret (the father of education in Romania), Ana Aslan (gerontologist), David Ohanesian (journalist), Varujan Vozganian and Varujan Pambuccian (politicians) and others can be mentioned among the famous personalities of the Armenian community.

- The Bulgarians from Dobrogea, Banat Muntenia, Oltenia and Transylvania (personalities: Panait Cerna and Alexandru Macedonski-poets; Anton Pann-writer, Magda Isanos-lawyer and writer) (Балкански, 1996).

- The Czech or Pehmi (in the Banat area): Karel Liman - architect; Alexandru Cihac-philologist; Lascăr Viorel-painter.

- The Slovaks (in the Bihor and Arad counties area): it is worth noting the presence of the Slovak Theoretical High School Jozef Kozaček "with teaching in

Slovak language (Budoii in Bihor County) and the Theoretical High School" Jozef Gregor Tajovsky "in Arad which had a language teaching section Slovak.

-The Serbians (in the Romanian Banat region): Dositej Dimitrije Obradović-writer; Sava Tekelija - politician), Lavinia Milosovici-exceptional gymnast who represented Romania.

- The Poles (in Suceava county) represent a rich and traditional community: Władysław Dunin, engineer and journalist; Fred Micoş-graphic artist and painter; Andrei Ostop-sculptor; in the city of Suceava there is Dom Polski which represents a cultural association of friendship; in Bucharest there is also the University Association of Friends of Poland. Among the important Polish representatives who worked in the Romanian space can be mentioned: Gustav Otremba - doctor; Izydor Kopernicki, anthropologist; Victor Dombrowski, general, mayor of the city of Bucharest (1938-1940, 1944-1948); Teodor Rogalski- musician.

Multiculturalism in Romanian educational system

In order to analyze the multicultural factor and his impact in Romanian social dynamics, a reversed study was also required: in order to understand and evaluate the cultural specificity and the general attitudes towards it, we needed to establish prior the issues that minorities encounter by living in Romania. Although we aimed for a qualitative and not quantitative research, a semi-structured scale of items was necessary. Therefore, the proposed interview guide was focused on specific matters of concern for the investigated population, such as: their perspective/ opinion regarding the ability to preserve their cultural customs, language, heritage and traditions, the opportunities to promote or transmit their cultural customs, language, heritage and traditions, any intercultural bias that they encountered, the feeling of being represented (at local, regional and national level), the trans-cultural opening, the level of community openness, the correlation status between their beliefs and traditions and the current national legal context. This first stage of the study was applied to 106 volunteers with the further backgrounds: Magyars, Szeklers, Csangos (32%), Rromani (27%), Poles (9%), Ukrainians (12%), Serbs (2%), Croats (1%), Slovaks (1%), Bulgarians (1%) Greeks (1%), Jews (4%), Turks and Tatars (4%), Armenians (2%), Lipovans (3%), Asians (2%), Africans (2%). The design of this study also included the community size, its intern cohesion and the transgenerational factor.

Results show that Magyars, Szeklers and Csangos have positive opinions about their ability to preserve and forward trans-generationally their cultural customs, language, heritage and traditions. A moderate concern was stated by Rromani and Polish communities. Regarding any intercultural bias encountered, Rromani and the new communities of migrants declared some struggles derived from the trans-cultural impact. The feeling of being represented (at local, regional and national level) register high result for the Magyars and moderate results (community representation case) for Rromani, Poles, Ukrainians and Turks/Tatars. The feeling of low represented communities is stated by the Asian and African communities and we will further correlate this result with the social-politic context. The trans-cultural opening is more noticeable usually starting from the second generation for the members of the newest minorities, while in 40% of the older communities was stated a sense of historical and social stigma, while, in order to protect their heritage, a few number of communities transformed in small enclaves of cultural aggregate.

We concluded that the main obstacles in the social cohesion are strongly linked to the educational system, as schools became the main instrument to enforce the intercultural dynamics and communication. The highlights on this matter are mainly focused on the support offered by the state administration. For example, via educational projects like „Romanians worldwide”, it is granted access to middle and upper education for Romanians around the world, but also for the historically and politically estranged former Romanian communities from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Since the cross-cultural values are mostly processed through leaned data and attitudes, we consider that the school formation must be the main messenger for the multicultural discourse, opening altogether the inter- and transgenerational channel in social, politic and historic context. Pedagogical skills, multicultural knowledge and curricula became, mostly after the European integration, a focal point for the educational reformation.

Starting from this premise, we consider necessary to adapt the model developed by Sue et al. (1982) concerning multicultural competency to evaluate the level of multicultural awareness, skills and knowledge in educational field. A second research was based on the Spanierman et all. (2011) scale used to examine Teacher Multicultural Competence. Another validation studies, including the 2-factor and the 3-factor scales were taken into consideration (Hue & Kennedy, 2014; Leung & Hue 2020) to adapt this scale for Romanian teachers (N=64). The proposed scale is based on 16 items concerning the activities that celebrate diverse cultural practices communication styles knowledge, received instruction in the field/ pedagogical formation, cultural-responsive methodology used in classroom, unbiased cultural

knowledge shared, opinions, perspectives, values and experiences shared in class and others. The overall evaluation implied normal scoring (eg. My curricula integrate topics and events from racial and ethnic minority populations) and reversed score (e.g. I rarely examine the instructional materials I use in the classroom for racial and ethnic bias). A series of demographic items were annexed: age, gender, level of experience, level of studies, and number of ethnic students per year, ethnic match teacher-student and the school system level.

Analyzing total scores, teachers' perspective over their multicultural teaching skills, competences, knowledge and strategies is evaluated as medium-high (.84). Higher results were positively correlated with gender (women teachers being more involved in inter-cultural mediation), level of experience (5 to 10 and 10 to 15 years of experience were correlated with a better use of multicultural pedagogy), level of studies (trained teacher scored a better result for skills and knowledge), number of ethnic students per year (for 91% of cases, the higher level of diversity was correlated with better results to F2 and F3), ethnic match (was the most relevant aspect, especially in skills and relation items) and the school system level (higher results were correlated with the higher educational system). General results also demonstrated a low ethnic match with no difference for the Hungarian community and moderate effect in the Romani community, better skills in the 5-10 and 10-15 years of experience and exposure-gained knowledge for teachers that have more than 5 students originated in different cultures per year.

Multicultural skills is the most consistent factor, as 89% of subjects reported that organized or collaborated in school events and programs meant to develop cultural awareness and promote diversity and inclusion. Teachers professing in middle and high educational systems, young and middle-aged teachers (<40 years), teachers with 5 to 15 years of experience, teachers working in heterogeneous communities and teachers that scored a high level of ethnic match were more prone to assess their pedagogical skills as multicultural-focused. The second factor, multicultural knowledge was stated by 83% of respondents, teachers reporting a proper understanding of social, cultural and historic background of the race and ethnic diversity. Higher scores were correlated with the ethnic match, community diversity and the number of ethnic students per year. Third factor, grouping the attitudes and relational items, scored the least result, as only 80% of participants consider that they are able to offer the right amount of support to their ethnic students or to facilitate inclusion with visible, high result. Most conclusive results are linked to variables like: level of studies and level of experience, gender and school-system level, with higher results for teacher that followed studies in psiho-pedagogy, teachers that are working in primary and tertiary systems and teachers with 5 to 20 years of experience.

Conclusions

The normativity theory at the level of multiculturalism (Semprini, 1997; Rattansi, 2011) can be analyzed in relation to the interrelationships of minority groups and communities. Moreover, the forms of expression found at the level of intercultural spaces (Barry, 2001; Amin, 2002) reside in the very possibilities of validating what we call *the spiritual coexistence*. The representative dimensions for such a status are validated by the presence in the Romanian geographical territory of various forms of nationalities. These become representative for the very idea of multiculturalism and implicitly, for that of inter-culturality.

Such ideas prove their legitimacy through the high level of education found in Romanian schools. Thus, the Romanian school currently supports the idea of multiculturalism. Moreover, the Romanian legislation is permissive in this respect. The educational policies are clearly focused upon supporting and promoting language learning through formal and non-formal activities from an early age.

From the first years in the schooling system, pupils are encouraged to learn foreign languages precisely because such an approach is a gateway to cultural, social and economic openness. The ethnic communities engaged in such activities are supported precisely by capitalizing on uniqueness in diversity. In other words, in Romania multiculturalism is at home.

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