

The Values of Early Education from the Perspective of Beginner Teacher

Keywords

*Beginner teacher, early education, preschool curriculum,
kindergarten curriculum, values education*

Abstract

The first year of teaching is extremely challenging. Many teachers are tempted to give up on the very first days. Some problems seem almost insurmountable. Many teachers begin to recover from shock only after the first three months of teaching. And during this time, they focus in particular on "surviving".

Given the important challenges that teachers have to face in the first years of teaching, do they still have enough energy to worry about integrating the values assumed in the educational practice? Is this still an important topic for them? Perhaps focusing on survival consumes all the available work power.

Beginner teachers are very vulnerable. Lack of experience, daily challenges, and pressures from parents are sometimes difficult to overcome. However, teachers keep the deep sense of their profession, become aware of the huge stake and choose to follow their great destiny, to be the creators of the new society and to

send their present values in the future, through the children they educate.

1. Values and Beginner teacher

Values and education

All the existing forms of education are based on an educational ideal, a concise description of the personality desirable for the local culture. In defining the educational ideal, there are eight values adopted by almost all modern cultures. Four of them belong to the classical Greek-Christian humanism: Truth, Good, Beautiful, Feeling of the Sacred. The last four are social values added in modernity by the French Revolution and the revolutions in England: Freedom, Equality, Fraternity and Legality (Antonesei, 2015, p.122).

Cristea (2017) writes about general pedagogical values that are socially and psychologically determined. These are:

- Moral good - important for the formation and development of moral pedagogical awareness;
- Scientific truth - involved in the formation and development of intellectual pedagogical awareness;
- The utility of applied scientific truth - involved in the formation and development of technological pedagogical awareness;
- Beauty - important for the formation and development of aesthetic pedagogical awareness;
- Psychic and physical health - involved in the formation and development of psychophysical pedagogical awareness.

Antonesei (2005a, p.42) proposes a reform of education that will consider the return of the eight basic values of modernity, through important changes in the following fields:

- the reflection in the educational ideal of the eight values;

- deduction of the general objectives from the set of the eight basic values;
- improving the content by introducing new areas that meet real needs;
- reintroducing all teachers in the spirit of European values.

Culture is the totality of material and spiritual products of people's work and creation, referring to nature, society and the idea of value (Macavei, 2001, p. 46).

Recognizing the central role of values for culture leads to the re-establishment of values in the centre of education. If education is born of culture, then this is logical. In this case, it is necessary to move the emphasis from the instruction to the formation and modelling of the personality (Antonesei, 2005b, p.30).

The principles underlying the Curriculum for early education indicate the fundamental values are taken into account (Ministry of National Education, 2019, p.4):

- The principle of child-centred education;
- The principle of respecting the rights of the child;
- The principle of active learning;
- The principle of integrated development;
- The principle of interculturality;
- The principle of equity and non-discrimination;
- The principle of education as an interaction between educators and the child.

Based on these principles, it can be said that early education is based on the following values: respect for the uniqueness of the child, equality in rights regarding education, encouraging the right to expression and initiative, interdisciplinarity and integrated teaching, interculturality, equity, and non-discrimination.

Regarding the researches carried out in the field of education, the researchers selected different values for the study. For example, Collier and Dowson (2007) chose to study conscience,

compassion emotional growth, social growth, service of others and commitment to God. Kiru (2019) selects the following values for an in-depth analysis in the field of education: order, harmony, measure, integration, creativity, curiosity, involvement, play and usefulness of the information. Cobb-Moore, Lunn-Brownlee, Walker, and Boulton-Lewis (2014) mention 'doing the right thing'. Jones (2009) points out that the predominant discourses regarding values education are concentrated in the following areas: civics and citizenship education, values inculcation and character education.

The challenges of beginner teachers

Beginner teachers have many challenges. Many of them have mentors to guide them, and the effort I make is often greater, for this reason. They still do not have enough experience in maintaining the discipline in the classroom and they work quite hard with the bets. Then, they discover that the documents that need to be completed are much larger than expected. Moreover, I find fewer and fewer matches between what they have learned and practice (Spătărelu, 2019). Usually, specialized teachers for pre-school education have dual specialization. They can also teach in primary education. However, the majority choose kindergarten work for the beginning of their career (Spătărelu, 2015), because they find it easier.

Studies show that the main problems encountered during the first years of teaching are:

- lack of experience (Kozigoglu, 2018);
- disappointment (Kozigoglu, 2018);
- anxiety (Kearny, 2017; Kozigoglu, 2018);
- the relationship with the staff (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Kozigoglu, 2018);
- inefficient mentoring (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks & Lai, 2009, Kozigoglu, 2018);

- tensions between program requirements and practice (Mitchell, Howard, Meetze-hall, Hendrick & Sandlin, 2017).

The concern for knowing the problems that beginner teachers face is very important. Many of them brought so much stress that they can lead to leaving the education system. The first years of teaching are decisive for the formation of the personal style. Only after this subject is studied with interest and attention can valuable strategies be developed for beginner teachers.

2. Methodology

Objectives

The objective of the research is to discover the attitude that the beginning teachers have regarding the values of early education.

Hypotheses of quantitative research:

The following hypothesis has been described for this research:

The level of integration of moral values in teaching in early education is influenced by socio-professional variables.

Hypotheses of the qualitative research:

What are the opportunities and obstacles that accompany teaching in the idea of transmitting values in pre-school education?

Variables

The socio-professional variables discussed are age, seniority in employment, type of employer institution, institution environment, type of employment and level of education.

Methods and Tools

The main method used was that of the investigation by interview. During the interview, numerical data were also collected

to provide a quantitative perspective of reality, along with the qualitative perspective conferred by its use.

The main method used was the interview. During the interview, questions were also inserted that allowed the recording of quantitative information. The interweaving of the quantitative elements with the qualitative ones allows a more accurate description of realities and analysis from different perspectives.

Population

The population was selected based on the variables presented above. The choice of teachers of the most varied ages was sought. This is possible because mature people are also oriented towards education, who have started their careers in other fields. They find that this profession can provide great satisfaction, that it can be easier to find work in this profession and that it is a viable option for mothers who do not yet have a specialization. For this reason, it was relatively easy to find beginning teachers of older age.

The eleven interviewees have at most four years of work experience, employed in both private and state institutions, both in urban and rural areas. Some are employed permanently, others for a year or two. About one-third of them have only secondary education, but they continue their education to complete their education.

3. Results

Values transmitted through early education

The teachers expressed their opinions regarding the types of values that can be transmitted through pre-school education. Their answers had two ways of organizing. Some preferred to provide general answers, others preferred punctual answers and descriptions related to the implementation modalities. The

teachers in the first category summarized four categories of values: moral, civic, religious and social.

Those who preferred to give more detailed descriptions mentioned several values that they considered important: respect, kindness, perseverance, honesty, diversity, moral good, honesty, independence, common sense, discipline, punctuality, collegiality, loyalty, tolerance, creativity, flexibility, inclusion, truth, justice, the pleasure of knowing and learning, obedience, empathy. Table 1 and Figure 1 shows how often each appears in the speech of the interviewed subjects.

Kindergarten values and parents' values

In most cases, teachers tend to believe that parents do not support them in transmitting these values. Probably they formed this opinion because of the multiple interactions they had with their parents. Perhaps the parents did not respond enthusiastically when they were asked to help with the various projects. They may have been anxious or inattentive when interacting with their children, and teachers were surprised by this and cataloged it as disinterest.

However, this situation is different depending on the kind of kindergarten. There are two categories of parents in private institutions. Teachers report that some parents work very well together. These are the parents who make sacrifices to provide their children with quality training. For many parents for whom bringing the child to a private institution is not a financial sacrifice, collaboration with the kindergarten is not a priority. They think they are paying enough for the services they receive and that they don't have to do anything extra.

Activities for integrating values in the kindergarten

The teachers indicated several types of activities through which they believe that the values can be transmitted very effectively: game, example, story, diversity, objects, songs, poems, morning

meeting, nature lessons, socialization, role play, discussions, video, exercise, artistic-plastic activities, brainstorming, celebrations, social projects, trips, concerts, parables. All these activities were centralized in Table 2 and displayed in Figure 2.

Obstacles to integrating values

The interviewed teachers, being at the beginning of their career, encounter greater difficulties in the process of integrating values. These have indicated some of the challenges they face in this area. The first big problem that could interfere with the process of transmitting values is a large number of school documents that must be completed by each teacher. This category includes annual planning, half-yearly planning, unit planning, activity projects, minutes, individual assessments and special projects. Beginner teachers are in difficulty early in their careers. The concern for completing these documents could also swallow the energy needed to organize efficient activities for the transmission of values.

Lack of communication with parents can be an equally important issue. Even if the beginner teacher would find the energy to organize valuable activities, if the parent does not support the same values as the kindergarten, the educator's work will not be successful.

In other situations, teachers are not sufficiently motivated to convey authentic values. Some subjects said they encountered careless teachers. They do not realize that they shape characters. I do not know the importance of their activities.

Several beginner teachers have discussed the technology. They believe that the habit of children to spend a long time each day in front of a screen decreases their interest and ability to concentrate on educational activities that require intellectual effort.

A large number of children in the preschool group may be another obstacle to the efficient integration of values in the teaching-learning-evaluation process. In this situation, the process

is very cumbersome and the right methods can be quite reduced. The lack of diversity in teaching caused by the need to teach mainly from the front can lead to boredom and disinterest. In this case, the problem of time is also associated. When there are many children in the group, the time dedicated to each one is greatly shortened. The interaction between the teacher and the child is vital in this situation.

Beginner teachers and values integration

Most beginners interviewed teachers seem to understand the importance of integrating values into teaching. Many of them said that for them this topic is one of the most important. One of the subjects says: *"Just as intelligence, the moral sense can be developed through education, discipline, and will. The moral sense is more important than intelligence. If he disappears, in a nation the whole social structure begins to shake"* (G.G., 33). The other continues: *"The integration of values helps us to organize the teaching of activities and the achievement of the performances not only at the level of knowledge but globally"* (M.C., 40).

The biggest challenges for beginner teachers in early education

The teachers listed several types of problems that they have to deal with during the first years of teaching:

- Transposition of theory into practice;
- Lack of teaching positions close to home;
- Lack of teaching materials;
- Lack of experience in working with children with disabilities;
- Poor educational communication;
- Be more captivating than cartoons;
- Working effectively with a large group of children;
- To teach differentially;
- To gain the trust of parents;

- To design new projects daily;
- To collaborate with experienced teachers;

The first year of teaching is extremely challenging. Many teachers are tempted to give up on the very first days. Some problems seem almost insurmountable. Many teachers begin to recover from shock only after the first three months of teaching. And during this time, they focus in particular on "surviving".

The temptation to give up

Many educators confess that they have been tempted or think that they will be tempted in the future to give up this profession. Some argue that the current generation of children is much more difficult, either accusing parents of disinterest or the system of excessive bureaucracy. However, some educators live their calling and vocation: *"Sometimes the job chooses you and not you, as it was in my case"* (M.C., 33).

Some educators do not want to permanently drop out of education, but just try another level of teaching, such as primary education.

It is very encouraging that most early education teachers have stated that although sometimes the work is difficult, they find enough satisfaction to never give up this position.

Self-assessment of the integration of the values in teaching

Each subject interviewed was asked to give a score from 1 to 100 in terms of personal practice regarding the integration of the values assumed in the teaching-learning-evaluation process.

It should be noted that the scores offered for self-evaluation were very favourable. The lowest value was 70. Two people gave the maximum score. The average score was 85.

Figures 3-8 show the distribution of scores according to the experience and age of the teachers, the type and area of the school

in which the teacher works, the type of teaching position and the level of teacher education.

It can be observed that the teachers with the longest experience give their values above average ($M = 91$), a tendency maintained also in the case of the teachers of advanced age ($M = 90$).

The average of teachers in private schools ($M = 78$) is well below the total average ($M = 85$), and the average of teachers in state schools is above this average ($M = 90$). The scores obtained in rural institutions are higher ($M = 90$) than those obtained in urban institutions ($M = 83$).

Regarding the scores offered by teachers depending on the type of job occupied, those employed in the short term have higher averages ($M = 85$) than those employed in the long term ($M = 78$).

The level of education was the last variable discussed. High school teachers offered slightly higher scores ($M = 87$) than did higher education teachers ($M = 85$).

4. Discussions and Conclusions

Given the important challenges that teachers have to face in the first years of teaching, do they still have enough energy to worry about integrating the values assumed in the educational practice? Is this still an important topic for them? Perhaps focusing on survival consumes all the available work power.

Even if the beginning of the activity is difficult for a teacher, the answers received show that the concern for values is present in his activity. This has a special significance. The educator has a clear awareness of his mission and the impact it can have on society. The sense of responsibility that emerges from the recorded answers gives dignity and importance to the profession.

The values repeated with the highest frequency (respect, perseverance, independence, morality) emphasize the formative side of the didactic activity and the commitment that the teachers have for this occupation.

It is interesting the difference in scores between teachers in state schools and those in private schools. Given that the classes in private education have fewer children, higher scores would be expected there. Things are different. The highest scores are obtained in state education. There seems to be sufficient time here for the effective integration of values into teaching. Another explanation for this phenomenon could be the fact that the teachers in private education have much higher expectations from their people and consequently, they are evaluated much more seriously, compared to the other teachers. This situation should be reconsidered in further research.

Beginner teachers are very vulnerable. Lack of experience, daily challenges, and pressures from parents are sometimes difficult to overcome. However, teachers keep the deep sense of their profession, become aware of the huge stake and choose to follow their great destiny, to be the creators of the new society and to send their present values in the future, through the children they educate.

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Tables, figures and appendices

Table 1. Frequency of each mentioned value

No.	Value	Frequency
1	respect	3
2	kindness	2
3	perseverance	2
4	honesty	2
5	diversity	2
6	moral good	2
7	honesty	2
8	independence	2
9	common sense	1
10	discipline	1
11	justice	1
12	punctuality	1
13	he pleasures of knowing and learning	1
14	collegiality	1
15	obedience	1
16	loyalty	1
17	empathy	1
18	tolerance	1
19	creativity	1
20	flexibility	1
21	inclusion	1
22	truth	1

Figure 1. Frequency of each mentioned value



Table 2. Frequency for each activity mentioned

No.	Activity	Frequency
1	game	4
2	story	4
3	example	3
4	poems	3
5	lessons	3
6	discussions	3
7	exercise	3
8	morning meeting	2
9	nature socialization	2
10	role play	2
11	artistic-plastic activities	2
12	brainstorming	2
13	songs	2
14	concerts	1
15	celebrations	1
16	video	1
17	social projects	1
18	diversity	1

19	trips	1
20	parables	1
21	objects	1

Figure 2. Frequency for each activity mentioned



Figure 3

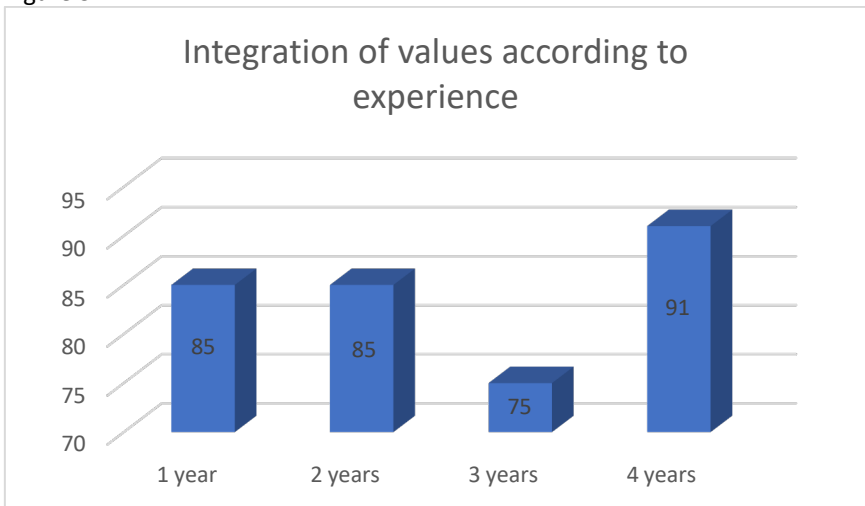


Figure 4

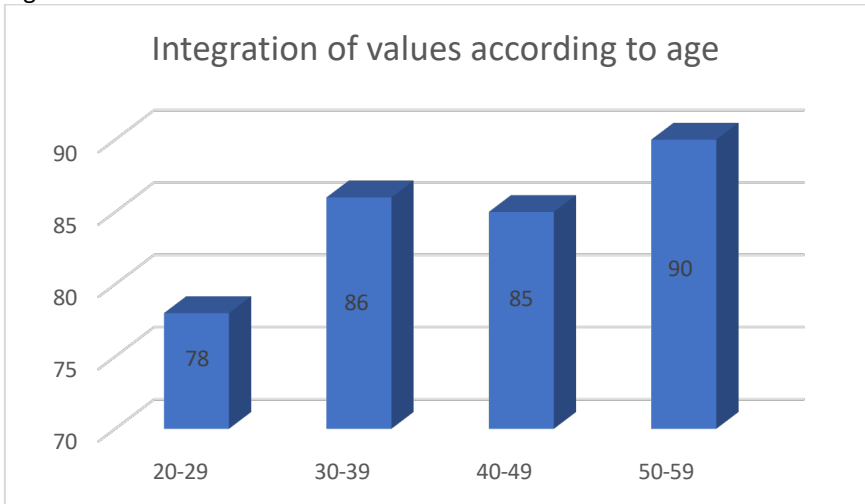


Figure 5

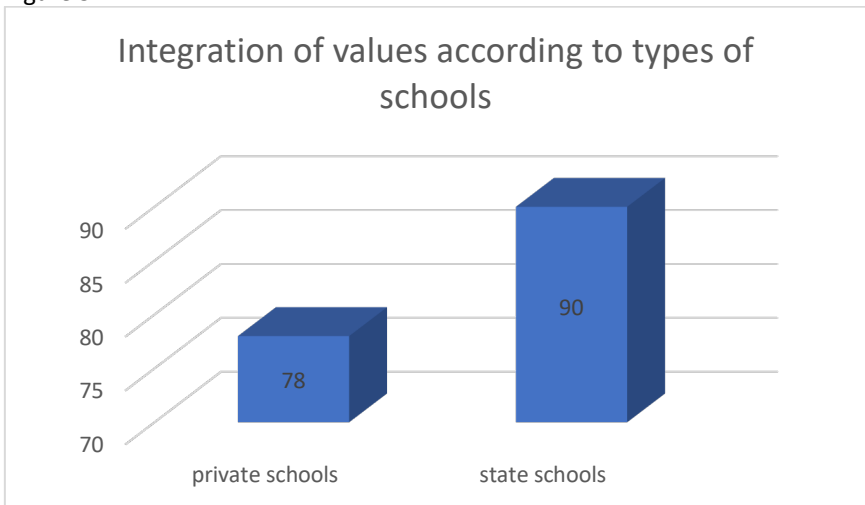


Figure 6

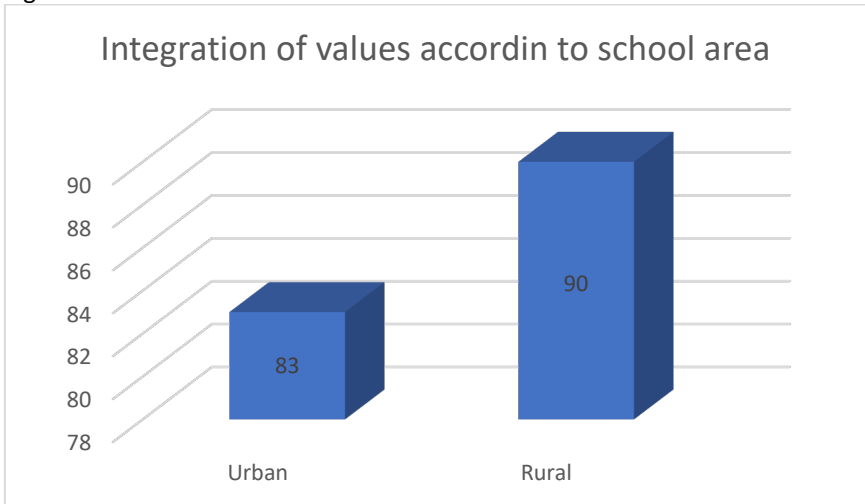


Figure 7

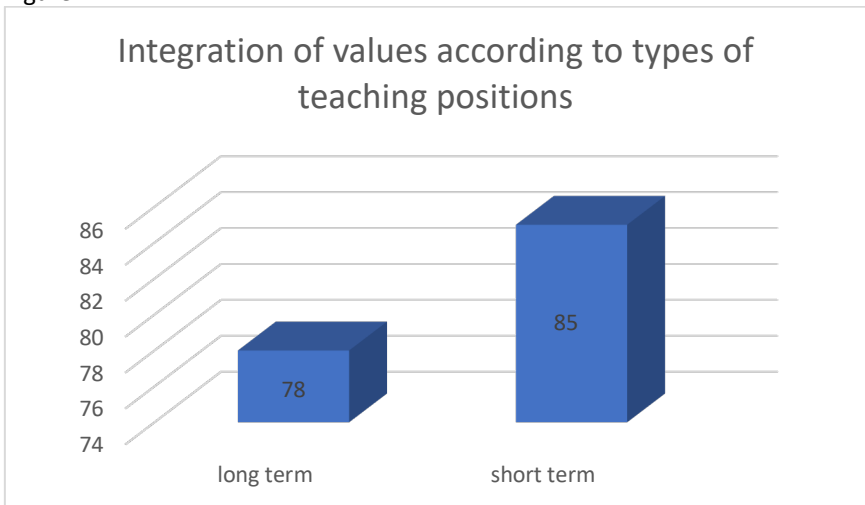


Figure 8

