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**AXIOLOGICAL OPTIONS OF HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS – A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

The quality of human model represented by every teacher is closely connected and determined by the teacher's implicit axiological system, deeply rooted in his character structure, which he explicitly manifests in action, through his entire conduct. Both forms of manifestations are essentially determined by the education received. The aim of our study was to develop an axiological model for the set of values that express high-school teachers' pedagogical ethos. The research uses the questionnaire-based inquiry method. The research group comprises 300 high-school teachers, representing two counties of Romania, Bacău and Prahova. To achieve its purpose, there was applied a double comparative analysis: 1st order comparative analysis, interregional comparative study between the axiomatic sets identified for each subgroup of teachers to establish the relations between the values identified for the two groups of teachers; elaboration of the axiological model for the set of values that express the high-school teachers' pedagogical ethos; 2nd order comparative analysis, educational intra-system comparative study on the axiological system of secondary-school teachers (highlighted by us in a previous study) and that of high-school teachers (to see if there are significant differences between the values shared by teachers at the two stages of the pre-university educational system).

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Keywords: Value; axiological system; high-school teachers; initial and continuous training

1. Introduction - The high-school teacher and the values he/she holds – between parallel mirrors

Whenever we try to analyse the axiological stance of a teacher, especially of high-school teachers (because he finds himself face-to-face with a young teenager who is tormented, curious, undecided on the doorstep of choices, who may become anything but does not know yet exactly what to become!), our representation resembles a huge room with parallel mirrors. These mediate the relation between teacher



and world, teacher and students, teacher and culture, teacher and himself. Fascinated by the fervour of the values he holds, by the light poured by the mirrors and the universes that are set into motion at the protagonists' meeting, he forgets the impact that his own axiological anchors have upon his students. But, "only the teacher who possesses a strong life-purpose basis is capable to focus learners on searching meaning of life while working with them" (Salikhova, 2016). Thus, any moment of awareness, analysis and reflection on his own system of values can only be beneficial. The transition of values (known – unknown, conscious - unconscious, assumed - not assumed) from teacher to his students, may be correlatively approached from two perspectives: explicit (direct, deliberate, organized) and implicit (indirect, unintentional, unorganized). The former perspective involves training (teaching-learning) and education, knowledge, strategy, design, implementation, and, if possible, a bit of pedagogical calling, talent, persuasion. The latter perspective is only about education, transfer of values, simple formative impact that occurs in teaching. In any of these (explicit curriculum and implicit curriculum), the transfer is values-laden (Brady, 2011) in a manner that combines the personal with the social dimension in a way that differs from one teacher to another. The interesting and complementary analyses developed by Albu (2016), Mogonea&Mogonea (2015), Çelebi, (2014), Harecker (2012), Panti&Wubbels (2012), Collinson (2012), Brady (2011), Tirri (2011), Sirin&all (2009), Lovat (2008), Slater (2008), Kohn, A. (1997) cover the various facets of the issue of teachers' axiological universe, also revealing, simultaneously, its complexity and depth.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Aim, Research Questions, Objectives

The conducted ascertaining-comparative research aims to verify the existence of a proper set of values supporting and orienting the high-school teaching process, as well as its relations with the specific set of values of middle-school teachers. *Research question 1:* Is the set of values specific to high-school teachers from Bacău County confirmed when the sample is doubled by adding a group of 150 high-school teachers from Prahova County? *Research question 2:* Does the set of values specific to high-school teachers have common elements with the axiological profile of middle-school teachers?

Research objectives and their correlation with the items:

O1: Comparative analysis (high-school teachers from Bacău – HST-B versus teachers from Prahova County – HST-P) on the first three values guiding the activity of high-school teachers (items 1,4,5,8); O2: Comparative Analysis (HST-B versus HST-P) on the central value for the activity of high-school teachers (items 2,3,7); O3: Comparative analysis (HST-B versus HST-P) on the model of the axiological profile of high-school teachers; O4 - Elaborating a final model of the axiological profile of high-school teachers; O5: The comparative analysis of the axiological profile of middle-school teachers with that of high-school teachers.

2.2. Methods

The questionnaire was applied July 2015 - March 2016, on 2x150 high-school teachers from the counties of Bacău, respectively Prahova. The groups were established by random sampling. The data

collection tool was a questionnaire with 8 open-ended items. For the items that required a hierarchization of the options, the score of each value was as follows: 3 points for the first position, 2 points for the second position; 1 point for the third position. The syntagm teachers' values was used (like in our previous studies on this topic, since 2012) to refer to general values, purpose-values, namely what teachers cherish, regard as worthy, relevant, desirable at a higher level.

3. Presentation and Analysis of Results

To achieve *O1*, the subjects had to answer to: I1: "The first three values in which I mostly believe are..."; I4: "I believe that, nowadays, the most dangerous counter-values are..."; I5: "I believe that the fundamental values which pre-university education should inculcate to students nowadays are..."; I8: "The future society needs the following three values..." Table 1 is a systematized comparative representation of the collected data (B means HST-B, P means HST-P):

Table 1. Comparative presentation of the data obtained from the perspective of achieving Objective 1

Item no.	Rank I values /points			Rank II values /points			Rank III values /points		
	value	B	P	value	B	P	value	B	P
1	fairness	78p	132p	professionalism	52p	-	respect	51p	-
				truth	-	53p	honesty	-	49p
				moral	-	53p			
4	deceit	80p	112p	indifference	63p	-	superficiality	53p	-
				superficiality	-	55	aggression	-	48p
							incompetence	-	48p
5	respect	96p	-	fairness	76p	-	education	36p	-
	morality	-	58p	respect	-	56p	fairness	-	54p
8	respect	63p	-	education	52p	-	fairness	78p	-
	fairness	-	65p	seriousness	-	47p	tolerance	-	46
Total	1. respect	159p	-	1. fairness	76p	-	1. fairness	78p	54p
	2. fairness, truth	158p	309p	2. respect	-	56p			
	<i>fairness, truth- 467p</i>			<i>fairness – 76p</i>			<i>fairness – 132p</i>		

Data from Table 1 shows that: 1. According to O1, we have succeeded in the comparative analysis of the data obtained from the 2 groups of teachers and we have identified only one, not three, values that guide the activity of high-school teachers: *fairness*; 2. Data provided by HST-P confirm the extremely high importance given to fairness, amplifying this value from two options given by HST-B to the 3 options, the possible maximum; 3. We appreciate, as in the previous analysis (Cojocariu, 2016) as extremely interesting and relevant the obsessive predominance of the value of fairness as moral value for the axiological universe of teachers in Romania; 4. The fact that the rank I, II and III value is the same, *fairness*, is a very good indication about the acute need for morality and the depth of the crisis of values, felt by the world of teachers, students and parents alike.

To achieve **O2**, the subjects answered to: I2: “In relation to my work, the value which concerns me most is...”; I3: “I believe that the most important value for a teacher’s activity is...”; I7: “I believe that the value which will always preserve (save) humankind is...” Table 2 is a systematized comparative representation of the collected data (B means HST-B, P means HST-P):

Table 2. Comparative presentation of the data obtained from the perspective of achieving Objective 2

Item no.	Rank I values /points			Rank II values /points			Rank III values /points			
	value	B	P	value	B	P	value	B	P	
2.	fairness	20o	34o	professionalism	14o	12o	education	12o	-	
							responsibility	-	10o	
3.	fairness	18o	12o	professionalism	11o	20o	empathy	9o	-	
							competence	-	10o	
7	education	19o	-	love for people	15o	-	faith in God	13o	-	
	love for people	-	14o	faith in God	-	13o	truth	-	8o	
Total	fairness	38o	46o	professionalism	25o	32o	faith in God	13o	-	
							responsibility	-	10o	
							competence	-	10o	
			<i>fairness – 84 options</i>			<i>professionalism – 57 options</i>			<i>faith in God - 13 options</i>	
							<i>responsibility – 10 options</i>			
							<i>competence – 10 options</i>			
<i>fairness – 84 options (28%)</i>										

The data from Table 2 shows that: 1. According to O2, we analysed and compared the central value for the activity of high-school teachers selected by the 2 groups of teachers; 2. This value is *fairness*, again, gathering 84 options (28%), the highest number of options as rank I value; 3. This result confirms and strengthens the data obtained in the first study on the values of high-school teachers, where, as a central value, *fairness* gathered 38 options (25.33%) from the group of 150 teachers from Bacău County (Cojocariu, 2016); 4. The value obtained is not only in line with the value obtained from previous items integrated in O1, but is actually the same; 5. It is obvious that the 300 high-school teachers from the two counties share the axis of their value systems, namely the value of *fairness*; 6. Although it is a central rank II, respectively rank III value, *faith in God* obtains the same score in both groups, 13 options (4.33%), which illustrates that, in an equal proportion, although reduced, the high-school teachers from the two groups keep the religious value alive; 7. Other values that obtained the appreciation of teachers in this context are: *education* (6.33%) (at the B group) (rank I central value) and 4.00% also at them, as rank III central value; *love for people* (4.66%) (atP) (rank I central value); *love for people* (5.00%) (atB) (rank II central value); *responsibility* and *competence*, each with 3.33% (at P) (rank III central value); 8. From the 18 values with only one nomination (0.33%) of those received from the HST-B, we regard as interesting the following: *freedom*, *creativity*, *transparency*, *cooperation*, *trust*, *modesty*. Of the 12 values with one nomination received from the HST-P, we mention: *dignity*, *common sense*, *generosity*, *humanism*, *peace*. Within certain limits, we believe that given the one option only for these values, it may be possible that they are represented less and less in the axiological system of teachers and, why not, on the brink of extinction. Which would be extremely dangerous!

I6 –“If tomorrow were my last meeting with my students, I would address them, as a final message, the idea...” yielded a great diversity and heterogeneity of answers, making it difficult to analyse and compare data qualitatively. The first value directions indicated by the messages of high-school teachers are the following: 1. *learning* – 26 (8.6%) of the messages contain the word ‘learn’ for HST-B and 35 (11.66%) for HST-P, a total of 61 (20.33%). There are messages that support the need to learn, propelling it towards the level of training: Learn so that you may become worthy people! The more you learn, the more you’ll have! Learn to become worthy people! 2. *perseverance* – 16 messages (5.33%) at HST-B and 11 messages (3.66%) at HST-P, a total of 27 (9.00%) – Life is a battle, therefore fight!, Do not allow yourselves to be defeated by hardships on your road to success! Every victory will make you better, every defeat will make you prepare better!; 3. *work* - 13 messages (4.33%), *humanism*–9 messages (3.00%) HST-P; *dignity and education*– 8 messages each (2.66%), at HST-B -Education provides your future!; 4. There are statements that highlight unique values: *cherishing values* – Cultivate the values you cherish most!; *valiance* - Dare! Nothing is impossible!; *change*– Be open to change!; *generosity* – By giving you will receive! at HST-B; *optimism*- Be optimistic!; *respect*–Respect to be respected in turn!; *truth* –Choose truth! at HST-P. These data enrich and diversify the central values identified above, depending on the profile of each teacher, reconfirming our previous findings on the prevalence (relatively natural!) of moral values in the axiological universe of teachers in general.

To achieve **O3**, we have comparatively analysed the final results from Tables 1 and 2.

a. *The first dimension*– O1 –the first three values in which high-school teachers believe – is found on the Total row in Table 1. It results that for HST-B, the first 3 values they cherish are: rank I- *respect* (159p); rank II -*fairness* (76p); rank III - *fairness* (78p). For HST-P, the first 3 values cherished are: rank I –*fairness* (309p); rank II – *respect*– (56); rank III - *fairness* (54p). Figure 1 shows a comparative representation of these values for HST-B and HST-P.

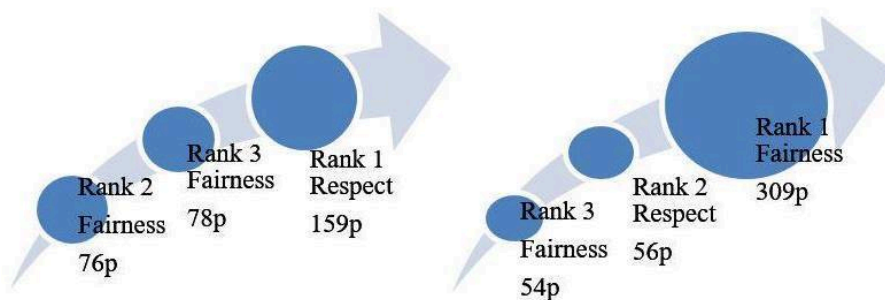


Figure 1. Comparative representation of the anchor-values of the axiological set of high-school teachers (left - HST-B, right- HST-P)

We appreciate as interesting the reversal of the first 2 anchor values, respect and fairness, in the profiles of both categories of teachers, however with quite different scores and the identification of the same rank III value, fairness. For our comparative analysis, it is very important that we have found the same values, even if on different positions and with different percentages (which is, in fact, a sign of normality).

b. The second dimension - O2 - a central value for the activity of high-school teachers - is found on the row Total in Table 2. It results that for all the high-school teachers investigated, the cherished central value is the same – *fairness*, only with a different number of options (38 versus 46).

To achieve O4, we have combined the previous comparative analysis results and reached the representation from Figure 2 of a possible final model of the axiological profile of high-school teachers:

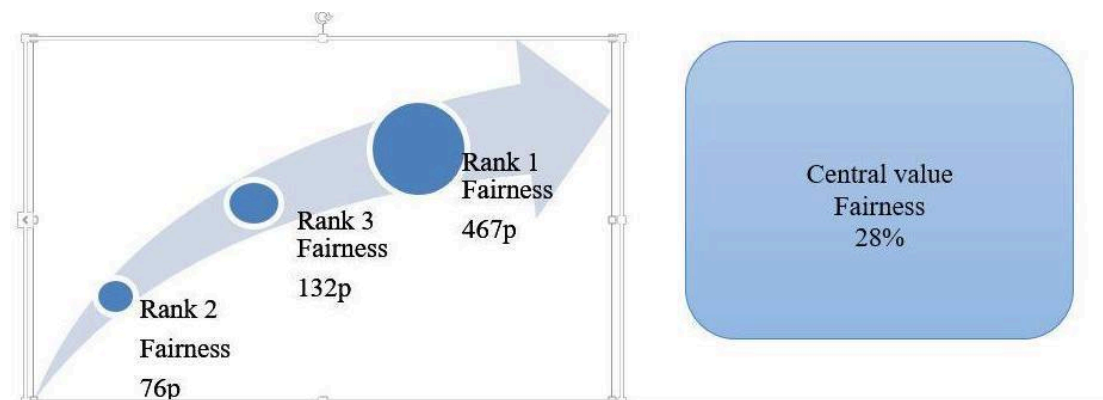


Figure 2. A final possible model of the axiological profile of high-school teachers

What appeared for the first time in the studies we have conducted since 2012 on the values shared by teachers from the entire education system (preschool, primary, secondary, university, including students who train for the teaching career) is the full overlapping between the 3 anchor-values (fairness) and, subsequently, placing it as the central value. Virtually, the axiological universe of high-school teachers is dominated by, and merges with this value.

To achieve O5, we have proceeded to a comparative analysis of this model with the model developed by us in a previous study (Cojocariu, 2015). The data obtained are presented comparatively in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparative analysis of the anchor-values and central values characteristic of the axiological profile of middle-school teachers and high-school teachers

Rank	Set of anchor-values, axiological profile of the middle-school teacher	Set of anchor-values, axiological profile of the high-school teacher
1	respect – 167p	fairness – 467p
2	work - 149	fairness -76p
3	respect – 59p education – 58p	fairness – 132p
	Central values	Central values
	professionalism – 33.33%	fairness - 28%

The analysis of these data indicates the fact that there are essential differences between the two profiles. None of the anchor values of the model of middle-school teachers is not present in the axiological model of high-school teachers. Meanwhile, the value of fairness, which defines the axiological set of high-school teachers is absent from the set of values of middle-school teachers. The two models look as if they have no common value. On the other hand, we cannot deny the fact that the values of respect and professionalism (from the set of values of middle-school teachers) implicitly rely on a great

deal of fairness. Although mathematically and graphically the models do not overlap explicitly on any of their segments (anchor-values, central value), in reality (in the educational-instructional activities in which middle-school and high-school teachers operate with the values they cherish on a daily basis) the two models are complementary.

4. Conclusions

Our entire teaching and research activity relies on the assumption that the teacher's socio-moral worth is given by the set of values in which he believes, that he applies in every moment of his activity and that he turns into both beliefs and action vectors for himself and for his students alike. Although in Romania Values Education is not an established domain like in other educational systems (e.g. Australia), it is achieved, like many other segments of Romanian contemporary education, implicitly. There is no denying that with the content of the school subjects taught and with his whole conduct in the classroom, the teacher transfers values: work, respect, tenacity, love of people, truth, professionalism, empathy, generosity, tolerance. School is not free of values or a social engagement and educational area that is axiologically neutral (Lovat, 2008). It results that the teacher's role in the personal, social and professional development of students is growing, a fact increasingly recognized and confirmed by the results of specialized studies (idem). On this basis, the teacher leads his students into going beyond superficial learning, in order to reach learning "that engages the whole person in depth of cognition, social and emotional maturity, and self-knowledge" (idem). The conclusions drawn from our approach are:

1. *All the objectives were achieved:* O1: There was developed a comparative analysis (high-school teachers from Bacău (HST-B) versus those from Prahova County (HST-P) on the first three values guiding the activity of high-school teachers. This highlighted, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, a great similarity between the anchor-values cherished by them. The values of respect and fairness are combined, with different positions and shares, in their axiological profile; O2: There was performed a comparative analysis (HST-B versus HST-P) on the central value for the activity of high-school teachers. It led to the establishment of a common core value, fairness (Table 2); O3: There was performed a comparative analysis (HST-B versus HST-P) on a model of the axiological profile of high-school teachers. The results revealed that the two models elaborated for the 2 groups of high-school teachers do not have significant differences, being convergent on the values of respect and fairness, as anchor-values, Figure 1, and the value of fairness as central value, Table 2; O4 –There was outlined a possible final model of the axiological profile of high-school teachers, Figure 2; O5: There was performed a comparative analysis of the axiological profile of middle-school teachers and that of high-school teachers, Table 3. The results indicate a significant difference between the 2 value reports of these categories of teachers. Whereas for the middle-school teachers there are 3/4 anchor-values (respect, hard work, respect and education) and another central value (professionalism), for high-school teachers there is only one value, 3 times an anchor-value but, simultaneously, also central value, namely fairness.

2. *There were formulated different answers to the research questions.* For the *research question 1*, the answer is affirmative, the set of values of high-school teachers from Bacău county has been confirmed when adding a group of 150 high-school teachers from Prahova county to the research group. There was formulated a negative answer to the

research question 2: No, the specific set of values of high-school teachers shares no element with the axiological profile of middle-school teachers.³ The axiological profile of high-school teachers is structured in a very interesting way, around a single value, *fairness*.⁴ This study gives us important and exciting milestones in continuing our efforts to develop a general axiological model of teachers at the level of our educational system. All our future comparative analyses will consider the absolutely specific case of high-school teachers, deeply quartered into one single value, *fairness*.⁵ All the data gathered during the 5 years of studies on the axiological universe of teachers in Romania reconfirms the need for a solid axiological component in the initial and continuous training of teachers. This may be a course on the axiology of education (but not necessarily) or training for meta reflection. Teachers rarely make the effort to self-evaluate the values in which they believe/that they give/receive and how the learning contents correlate with the axiological universe. Perhaps if they did it more often, they would be surprised to find how many significant values are hidden in everyday school contents. They just need to be identified, highlighted and processed through the prism of the teacher's own values and offered to students for cultivation.⁶ Other practical consequences that can be developed based on this study are: to identify the axiological differences between students and teachers at the various stages of the educational system; to identify the main axiological obstacles between generations; to establish correlations between the axiological option and addressing conflicts in education; the transfer of values from students to teachers; the development and implementation of optional subjects in the domain of axiology, based on the suggestions collected from pupils/students: Values education; My axiological system; Values and non-values in art; The kitsch and the authentic values; Classic and modern (Mogonea&Mogonea, 2015). Such themes could also be the basis for various debates, workshops, meetings with scientists, artists, engineers, athletes.

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