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## **FORMING AXIOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FOLKLORE AND FAMILY TRADITIONS AT PRE-SCHOOL AGE**

### **Introduction**

The tradition, as a set of concepts, customs and beliefs which are established within social and national groups, has its specific feature for each group. Without being fully synonymous with tradition, the terms as usage, custom and practice are used in the same sense. Customs and practice could be considered as the actions of the tradition, alongside with which the spiritual songs and poetry, transmitted orally from generation to generation, would enter.

Through its Latinity, the Romanians are a passionate people. Its traditions are dominated by cults: the sacred cult, the labour and land, the homeland, the ancestor's, the child, the humanity, the kindness and beauty cults. As follow, we will refer to how these cults were reflected in folklore and traditional practices, highlighting their formative role of the axiological orientations to the children.

The cult of the sacred is the supreme cult among the Romanian people. In the traditional family, the child is taught from an early age with certain behaviours that express love, gratitude, hope, and trust in God, Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Lady. The child learns prayers by which he asks for divine protection, starting from the angels and continuing with Our Father and Our Lady. The prayer is found in the school curriculum in the first half of the last century [1, p. 82].

We take over from traditions what corresponds to a certain affective state of the new generation and, at the same time, what is imposed by their quality and what is prestigious; the prestige itself being given by the respect for the forerunners. The tradition explains both, the connection in time and the continuity of social relations through its formative role: it offers activity models exempting the human being from the research on how to solve each situation, leading, at the same time, to social and national solidarity in time and space.

### **Theoretical Assumption**

According to Nicolae Silistraru, “the important and always actual theme of “Plugușorul” (literally translated little plough) symbolizing difficult, but necessary work - the growth of the rich wheat crop, the bread production, without which the human society cannot exist, the veracity of the characters (the ploughman, the blacksmith, the harvesters, the miller), the expression of ideas and dreams, the people’s morality, the developed and at the same time rustic artistic sense simply adapted to concrete-historical conditions - all these qualities determined the longevity of this popular poetry, this agrarian motif in carols being the most frequent even today” [9, p. 76].

The cult of labour is expressed in popular paremiology. The proverbs, sayings, and riddles have a pronounced didactic character, being accessible and understandable to children through the plasticity of language and suggestive and intuitive character. Thus, labour is useful and necessary: A handful of trade, (is) a handful of gold; A good beginning is half the battle; The pig doesn’t put on weight on Christmas evening; Haste makes waste; Strike while the iron is hot; Never put off till tomorrow; The early bird gets the worm; Sloth is the key to poverty; Idleness is the key to beggary; Deeds, not words.

### **Methodology**

The theoretical-methodological concepts of the research establish a wide spectrum of scientific knowledge in the fields of psychology, social psychology, ethno-psychology, pedagogy, ethno-pedagogy. It reveals the essence of the particularities, the functions of their formation mechanism. The orientations of the ethnic values are the ethnic hills, the values and the general norms, which actively determine the development of the ethnic group. It is manifested both at the level of the individual’s existence in a social way and at the existing level of the individual in a social way.

## Discussion

Ethnic values include the cognitive component, in which the person's experience is concentrated and based on which the knowledge of reality takes place, which constitute ethnic values, the affective component, which reveals the individual's feelings about the attitude towards values and which determines the person's meaning towards this behavioural attitude, which is based on the results of the last two components. [4, p. 47]

We are convinced that the basic ideas of perpetual pedagogical thinking find their roots in popular pedagogy, not explicitly, discursively and logically cohesive, but implicitly at the level of popular suggestion and wisdom, considers B. Şerbănescu. In the author's vision, the epistemic aspect of the folkloric educational conception and the axiological aspect, referring to the educational valences of folklore, constitute the educational aspects we need to rely on when researching folklore.

The traditions passed down from generation to generation (stories, advice and literary folklore) and through traditional practice (customs and traditions) are not the only proof of our people's concern for the perpetuation of the national being, but also an inexhaustible source of inspiration for modern pedagogy, as well as for ethno-cultural and inter-cultural education. The tradition's spontaneous character does not mean, by far, that it is unconscious, but, on the contrary, its transmission has always been intentional. The tradition forming process itself presupposes a selective accumulation of experience, and its transmission is not only due to imitation, but to the intention that the customs and traditions shall be carried on because that's how it's good, that's how it should be, and that's how we got from elders. The standard elements are always enriched by new contributions, determined by the attitude of those who transmit the traditions.

At a popular level, the children begin to learn cultural elements into the family, starting from the first years of their lives, and continue throughout it in social communities and schools in a systematic way. The education itself is a tradition, a whole process in its broadest sense. The fact that education at some point becomes a specialized and institutionalized social activity and tradition, the fact that school education is organized and systematic, and the tradition acts spontaneously, does not diminish its formative role on the child's personality [9, p. 16].

The child's value orientation towards the understanding of good and evil, as it happens through the fairy tale, allows the gradual transition to value-oriented behaviour. The language of the fairy tale is attractive and convincing. Standard

formulas are easily memorized and train the children to follow the action (... and there is much more ahead...), the sayings are related to facts and consequences, which allow the children to make the connection between deed and reward, not only at the level of fairy tale events, but also in the daily life.

Folklore is a specialized branch of tradition. In a limiting conception, folklore includes all the popular artistic works – literature, music, choreography and plastic arts. The greatest popular works of our people are related to the crossroads in national history when the popular imagination created models of heroes and deeds that people believed in and wanted to imitate. In an ethno-cultural context, proverbs and sayings are the quintessence of the lessons learned from the daily life experience, from the successes and failures suffered by the commoner while confronting reality. The concrete folkloric creations – music, poetry, dance, traditional costume, etc., express the complexity of the Romanian popular spirituality, in which the fantasy is intertwined with reason, the aesthetics reflects and explains pragmatically the world [9, p. 62].

Popular pedagogy is “that pedagogy which is not written anywhere, but which, nevertheless, exists in another form. There are education rules, which are inherited from generation to generation and which, seen from the perspective, appear to us as a whole life system of a nation and an era. This is the very popular pedagogy, of the whole nation, an existence above animality; in a way, it is more valuable than modern education. As long as the education ensures the growth of a privileged minority, traditional pedagogy preserves the very conditions of human existence. As vague and rudimentary as it may appear to the modern scientist, traditional pedagogy still has principles and evolves” [9, p. 27].

Popular pedagogical wisdom underlies many educational systems. As for us, “folklore can help the most and within it the paremiological side, proverbs and sayings, alongside with riddles and children’s games which are somehow part of the family” [9, p. 30]. The fairy tales and the stories, probably, appeared as a human escape from everyday life, as a projection of the Romanian highest aspirations for kindness, beauty, honour and humanity. The reality which we find in these creations is embellished, but also full of unforeseen circumstances, of confrontations between good and evil as life itself is. The miracle from the fairy tale expresses not only the aspiration, but also the people’s confidence that the world can become better and favourable to them if they know how to benefit from circumstances.

“Basmul” – the fairy tale (Slavic etymology “basni” – Romanian “născocire”) is an epic folk tale in which fantastic stories of imaginary characters are narrated

(charmed princes, charmed beautiful girls, fairies, wild animals), fighting with the evil forces such as “balaur” (many-headed dragon, legendary creature), “zmeu” (a Romanian dragon from folk tales), witches, etc. which would eventually be defeated. The fairy tale describes the fighting principle between good and evil, promoting good as an ethical value, an ethical concept worthy for the educational area.

The fairy tale expresses a certain vision of the world and the good forces always prove to be triumphant. The fairy tale is characterized by fantastic situations and characters, by the confrontation between good and evil, by typical actions (the epic). In fairy tales, it is promoted with priority the human values such as truth, kindness and beauty, which appear expressed in the saying: “Do well and have well!” [6, p. 48]. Besides that, the concept of good has been placed at the top of the value pyramid since pre-school age. As a rule, in a discussion with children about good and evil, we will easily find a scale of virtues and vices such as: It's good .../It's bad ... to be respectful/to be rude; to be obedient/to be naughty; to be diligent/to be lazy [1, p. 51].

Depending on their friends and own experience, the children express what is good and what is bad concerning concrete situations. The fairy tale world enriches the horizon of good and evil through the heroes' desirable or undesirable behaviours. The children feel encouraged to behave well because they are part of this fantastic world, identify themselves with the heroes, and want the well-deserved reward for their deeds. Like the fairy tale heroes, the children encounter difficulties in life, experience events that test their strength and skills, often fail and have to start over. They learn from hardships and failures. They hit the top threshold and see the one below. They assume the mistakes: As they brew, so let them drink! More than any moralizing discussion, more than any piece of advice, the “re-living” of events together with the heroes teaches the children good behaviour [9, p. 66].

The child's value orientation towards the understanding of good and evil, as it happens through the fairy tale, allows the gradual transition to value-oriented behaviour. The language of the fairy tale is attractive and convincing. Standard formulas are easily memorized and train the children to follow the action (... and there is much more ahead ...), the sayings are related to facts and consequences, which allow the children to make the connection between deed and reward not only at the level of fairy tale events, but also in the daily life [1, p. 21].

The fairy tale is influenced by the language, the narrative evolution, the ability to transpose oneself to another world, the events in which the children take part,

and, especially, by the victory of the good. The children enrich their language and learn different kinds of behaviour by listening to and retelling the fairy tale.

The fairy tale, the story heard once or several times, told and retold by each child, with additions and omissions, bearing a personal accidental or circumstantial imprint, is an important form of communication between adults and children, even between children themselves. It develops the pre-schoolers' imagination and thinking, enriches their emotional life, and influences their ethnocultural behaviour.

The children's attitude towards the fairy tale characters' behaviour is often found in games, in curricular or extracurricular activities, in role interpretations, etc. The fairy tales, the legends, and the ancient popular motifs are adapted and reinterpreted into a modern language. About the new coat of folklore, Iulian Filip says that this is a natural evolution generated by today's society but mentions that it is important not to lose the spirit of popular myth [9, p. 89].

The distinction between non-values and values in the child's mind cannot appear without a certain teacher's explanations. The dragon is attractive because it is invincible until a certain moment. If we focus on this point, the child may want to become like a dragon. Following the story thread, highlighting the dragon wickedness and cruelty, the narrator or the educator will relate what this represents in folklore, namely, the embodiment of evil. The dragon and the other negative characters' presence in fairy tales are as necessary as the presence of Făt-Frumos (Prince Charming) or Prâslea the Brave (the youngest brother in Romanian tales). Only the presence of some reference elements, the confrontation of good and evil allows the children to differentiate the values [6, p. 99]. A special educational role has the adequate presentation of the auxiliary characters: the horse, the bee, the ant, the raven, etc. The children learn to be protective of nature, to be friendly and generous from the hero's attitude towards the living things.

The Romanian folk tale embodies the ideal personality of our people who are open to ethno-cultural and inter-cultural education. The hero (usually Prince Charming) possesses such essential attributes as courage, purity, justness, physical and spiritual strength, cleverness, passion and unshakable love, absolute fidelity to the given oath. He is an ordinary man, but somehow unusual. He is miraculously born (from pea or a piglet, has old parents), he is the son of a king or a poor man, he grows in one day as others in a year, he is very skilled, but sometimes he is deceived or wrong because he is young. He does good deeds, rewards the right actions, but also punishes evil things, learns from his parents and life events. If he is a king's son, he will have teachers. If he is the youngest brother, he will

not be entrusted with heavy tasks, either because other people don't trust him (especially if the older brothers have failed), or because of the protective fear with which his parents surround him. Also, he has to prove his value and go out into the world. Sometimes in the world means the other land where the obstacles are even more difficult. He often gets into trouble, but the courage and confidence, on one hand, and the Calul Năzdrăvan (All-Mighty Horse), the Fairy Queen, the birds and insects, on the other hand, always help him to bring these to a positive resolution with dignity. The All-Mighty Horse flies like thought and the wind, the Fairy Queen brings him the Water of Life to defeat the Zmeu (dragon), he receives pieces of advice from Sfânta Vinere (the Good Friday). And why all this?! Because he is kind and brave, and kindness must be rewarded and courage must lead to success. Sometimes the hero is deceived with mischievous answers of Baba Cloanța (Zmeu's mother), and then he has to overcome major dilemmas or start everything from the beginning [1, p. 78].

The fairy tale heroine is a fairy beautiful maiden (usually Ileana Cosânzeana), for whose sake the hero faces so many dangers and goes through so many troubles. She is a simple, hardworking, kind girl, waiting patiently for her beloved. She is the original concept of feminine beauty, represents the feminine ideal not only of Prince Charming, but also of our people: shy, but determined, eager to be loved and protected, but strong and wise when needed.

The hero is a fierce enemy of malevolent characters (Zmeu, Balaur, Baba Cloanța or Muma Pădurii etc). The presence of demonic monsters and malevolent characters is a natural thing in the Romanian fairy tale. The history of our nation was full of obstacles, enemies who wanted to destroy us or at least enslave us. The character strength, the will, the sacrificing spirit, the power to endure the evil until you can overcome it – without all these you cannot endure your sufferings or get rid of them.

The children must be involved in creative activities in this regard. S. Cemortan mentions: "A story or a fairy tale composition according to the model is an intermediate type of verbal-artistic activity placed between the ordinary reproduction of a literary work and its creative story. This kind of activity includes both reproduction and creation, because, writing on the model, the children repeat it to a certain extent, manifesting at the same time, in their composition their creative skills. The fairy tale or story invented by a child differs from the model (author, teacher), but also the creations of other children" [4, p. 41]. Thus, memory, ingenuity, fantasy, etc. develop simultaneously with the language.

Iulia Lascu claims that the students' creativity development reopens the human being to his/her positive side and is focused on optimizing and creatively transforming him/her in the sense of the naturalization and extension of his/her knowledge abilities and action. The application of the creative development methodology ensures the achievement of the formative curricular objectives and the didactic strategies development [9, p. 8].

Proverbs are concise, plastic, relatively standard formulas which express general value truths, resulting from the combination of a wide and rich practical experience, with pertinent observations on the surrounding world phenomena and things. In a metaphorical and suggestive language, they express our people's specific conceptions and attitudes and lead to a wide and general conclusion accompanied by explanations. The proverbs are accessible to the children, easily retained and reproduced, gradually understanding their meaning.

Sayings are popular expressions designed to briefly and plastically characterize life circumstances. They emphasize an idea, a piece of advice, prevent evil and support a statement. The language is ordinary and simple, with a more stressed metaphorical structure than proverbs. The sayings represent conduct rules and, thus, have an accentuated didactic character [8, p. 8]

Undoubtedly, while working with children, this differentiation is of no importance. It is important to use the educational elements contained in these gems of the Romanian wisdom, to sensitize children and introduce them into the world of values in an accessible form. The proverbs and sayings also involve the explanation and illustration with concrete examples from the reality accessible to children.

Examples of proverbs and sayings expressing:

hard work and laziness: A handful of trade is a handful of gold; No time like the present; Sloth is the key to poverty; idleness is the key to beggary;

honesty and dishonesty: Honesty may be dear bought, but can never be an ill pennyworth; He that will steal a pin, will steal a pound; He that will steal an egg will steal an ox; Once a thief, always a thief;

prudence: Better safe than sorry;

patience: Haste makes waste; Slow and steady wins the race;

friendship: A friend in need is a friend indeed; A good friend is a treasure;

truth: To be caught red-handed; Truth will come to light;



the beauty (from fairy tales): fallen from the sun, beautiful like a day, beautiful to take someone eyes, beautiful like a flower;

wisdom: He who has an art has everywhere a part; Who has a trade, has a share everywhere;

kindness: A good deed is never lost; Kind words go a long way.

The riddle is a small, aphoristic and enigmatic literary species. It is a collective linguistic game, using metaphors and allegories, and is intended to test human intelligence, abilities and cultural skills. It includes a concrete definition of the object (being, thing, phenomenon), periphrasis, allegory, personification or metonymy, and the answer which confirms the accuracy of the judgment issued. The riddle game is engaging, children make rational efforts to understand the intelligent connections and to capture the question-answer essence. The game contributes to the intensification of interpersonal relationships, develops the competitive spirit and the desire to assert one's personality.

The riddle range is very wide. For pre-schoolers the riddles are chosen to be solved by some of them at least. Examples of suitable riddles: Who has ears, but does not hear? (The needle); Who has six legs, but only four walks? (The horse and its rider); What goes through the water and doesn't get wet? (The shadow); Who comes from the mountains carrying white stars? (The snow clouds); Green belt, through the grass you lose. (The snake); He is a strange man/in coats-clothed in the summer/and naked in the winter (The tree); I enter through a door and go out through two; when I went out, I'm in (The pants), etc. [8, p. 83].

The children are not only consumers, but also folklore producers. Children's folklore occupies a special place in popular culture. It is very accessible, it is learned through imitation and, for certain basic reasons, the children's ingenuity creates a multitude of variants. The most common children's artistic productions are formula of songs and counting. These songs invoke stars, animals, plants, or imaginary characters to attract either goodwill for the author or punishment for enemies.

The counting is presented as rhythmically organized poetry. It is used as the main way to distribute roles in a game. Usually, the counter eliminates one by one the other participants in a game, the last remaining one fulfils either the role of game leader or the most unwanted role. Some rules of the game are well established, others are set ad hoc, however, they must be strictly observed. If the child says "I have drawn a fire line" and he is still caught, he will revolt and the group must admit. The failure to comply with the rule, the fraud used

to obtain an advantage or the victory, all these are sanctioned or, worse, the player is not admitted subsequently within the game. Of course, the children's education can no longer be left only to the family, but the basic training is still laid in this framework. Institutionalized education starts from what the child has acquired into the family, continues, completes, and, as appropriate, corrects the information, skills and habits, attitudes, and feelings that the child achieved.

Limiting the faith to prayers or the sign of the cross is insufficient and even harmful. The positive attitude towards the world - this is the purpose - and children are taught by their mothers not to kill anything: ant, butterfly, any other living thing, because "it is a sin", "we all are God creatures" - this is the method. The daily life habits and the holiday traditions learned within the family are penetrated by the cult of the sacred. When the child sits at the table together with his/her parents, makes the sign of the cross, when he/she gets up from the table, thanks to the Lord for the food, also making the cross; when he/she sets out on a journey, with the mother or alone, makes the cross and says: Lord, help me! or God, bless me! [1, p. 122].

The children participate in religious ceremonies and learn the appropriate behaviour for various circumstances that cause them; at the age of 6-7, they follow some dietary restrictions imposed by Lent, but they have certain facilities imposed by the condition as a child. The winter holidays, eagerly awaited by children, are a special opportunity to practice traditions. Beyond the joy of participating in groups, the attention given to them by the masters of the houses, the gifts with which they are rewarded, the carols are, in the children's minds and souls, hymns sung to God and his son Jesus Christ.

The labour symbol and land fertility, *Pluguşorul* (a Romanian New Year traditional carol) preserve its charm even if the traditional occupations and means of work have changed a lot. The children are happy to go to people's houses and wish them good luck, health and wealth for what they are rewarded. Beyond the children's enjoyment, carols and New Year's greetings are the best opportunities for their training for different Romanian customs, traditions, and occupations. In popular belief, the agrarian motifs in carols and New Year's wishes have not only the purpose to urge to work, but also attract the divine grace for the laborers [2, p. 60].

The carol "Sorcova" is considered an expression of the Romanians' union with nature, a model of health and virtues necessary for work. First of all, "Sorcova" is joyful and adorned; it marks a new hopeful start of the year. The children's wishes are rewarded with sweets. It is an opportunity to get in touch with the family.

Secondly, the children wish the host to be fruitful like the tree, tender like the rose, hard as the rock, fast like the arrow, and strong like steel.

The winter holidays folklore enjoys through its humour, optimism and good mood. The cheerful events that occur during the holiday preparations delight the carollers and the hosts, while the traditions' content is very instructive. Thus, for the "colac" (a traditional ring-shaped pleated bread) you need flour, yeast, salt and water, a sieve and an oven. If something is missing or broken, the mother calls the father, the father fixes it, but time passes ... and the New Year has come! It happens, of course, to break down the oven, but the thing must be done on time, otherwise, it may be too late when you do it. Thus, in the form of a funny story presented by the carol, the children learn how to bake bread, but all these emphasize the general idea of doing tasks on time.

As several researchers declare "there is no moral norm that does not have a common point with the attitude towards labour" [9]. In the Romanian conception, labour is the main value criterion to appreciate a person and the child must be raised in this spirit because the tree is known by the fruit, the man by deeds [9, p. 94]. The child's knowledge of the social-human labour value and the desire to work is accompanied by the early training according to the child's age in the Romanian ethno-pedagogy. Teaching the children their parent's craft, involving them in household chores – cleaning, cooking, caring for animals, caring for younger siblings are self-evident tasks for elder children as they become able to do them. The children's ability to work is favoured by age-specific activities and their desire to please adults, but it is difficult due to their limited abilities and unrealistic appreciation of the relationship between intentions and possibilities. The children intend to fulfil actions over their abilities and then spoil, instead of doing what they want.

Popular pedagogy allows the children firstly to observe and see, encourages them to try, guides them and lets them succeed, each step being rewarded. There is no lack of advice (Haste makes waste), warning (he that will not work shall not eat), but the approval or disapproval, the praise or reproach have their effect only if they are related to the concrete child's actions and not only as examples of popular wisdom. The game has a special role in preparing the child for work. The game is the answer to a child's specific activities, develops physical and moral qualities as patience, creativity, spontaneity, perseverance, sociability, the spirit of fair competition, tasks fulfilment, success, but also defeat acceptance, etc. [9, p. 84].

There is special attention given to the spiritual training of pre-schoolers, the cult of kindness is present in all folk categories. The fairy tales, myths, and legends are full of heroic deeds of their characters, who succeed in their actions because of the qualities and courage they have. Paremic productions, especially proverbs and sayings, have a rich moral significance. Their metaphorical language has a great suggestive force and makes them attractive, while the analogy with real facts makes them accessible.

Of course, the children do not always and suddenly capture the figurative meaning, which requires pertinent explanations from the adult. The sayings come to emphasize the truth contained in the expressions meant to succinctly and plastically characterize certain facts or life experiences and to increase the value of some conduct rules. They have a pronounced didactic character. The virtues contained in our folklore are the deeds done, the truth and justice vs. the lie, dishonesty and injustice.

The children's involvement in practical activities helps them to love and appreciate the labour, to be tenacious, to enjoy the results of their work. The game – the children's main activity - teaches them to be sociable and respectful. Whoever breaks the rules and cheats is eliminated from the game; whoever wants to win at all costs is avoided as a playmate; whoever does not know to lose, does not understand that there may be others better than him/her, is ridiculed. "We can say, the game is a school of dignity, respect, consciousness and character strength" [3, p. 116]. "The children's folklore, most of the potential, instrumental and textual forms of children's play, together with the folk poetry and the popular customs of the adults, show the omnipresence and polymorphism of the ancestral culture in the Romanian tradition. Honouring the forerunners is a definite response to death and evanescent time. It was a titanic battle, waged individually with the death in the name of the national eternity" [1, p. 42].

## Conclusion

The analysis of the research results allows us to state the achievement of the objective of forming the ethnic values at pre-schoolers within complementary education. The evaluation mechanism based on the elaborated criteria, which includes criteria and levels of evaluation of the implementation of the experimental work, demonstrates that the educational process of training and modelling the ethical values in pre-schoolers was carried out at a theoretical and practical level.

**Abstract:** The epistemic aspect of the folkloric educational conception and the axiological aspect, referring to the educational valences of folklore, constitute the educational aspects we need to rely on when researching folklore. The traditions passed down from generation to generation and through traditional practice are not only a proof of our people's concern for the perpetuation of the national being, but also an inexhaustible source of inspiration for modern pedagogy, as well as for ethno-cultural and inter-cultural education.

The tradition forming process itself presupposes a selective accumulation of experience, and its transmission is not only due to imitation, but to the intention that the customs and traditions shall be carried on because that's how it's good, that's how it should be, and that's how we got from the elders. The standard elements are always enriched by new contributions determined by the attitude of those who transmit the traditions.

The basic ideas of a perpetual pedagogical thinking, at first primitive and intuitive, now rational and scientific, find, in essence, their roots in what we call popular pedagogy. The traditions reflected through the literary folklore, the customs from the traditional practice are not only proof of our people's national being perpetuation, but also an inexhaustible source for the modern pedagogy. The formation of axiological orientations at pre-school age has a close correlation with native popular tales. The child notices, hear, participates and memorizes because these are repeated activities and the adults do so.

**Keywords:** education, humanity, folklore, traditions, family, values

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