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Exercising Citizenship in the European Union

Nadia Laura SERDENCUC¹

Abstract

This study aims to outline some points of reference related to the process of exercising citizenship in the European Union and to identify a few characteristics regarding educational contexts responsible for development of social and civic competences that underpin the exercising of citizenship. The process of building identity in the contemporary context, the relationship between identity and citizenship, the citizenship approach between tradition and modernity, the issue of European citizenship, the civic dimension in the process of education and the educational landmarks in the process of developing social and civic competences are the coordinates that shape the analysis of citizenship exercising in the European Union. The potential of cultural diversity in the plural society determines the need for consistency and coherency at the level of personal and community development as well as recognition, valorisation and respect for identity and its exercising. An authentic civic conduct is a result of convergence between knowledge, skills and attitudes that link citizenship values to social expectations, in terms of principles, norms and practices according to the needs of a democratic society functioning. Formal, non-formal or informal educational contexts sustain the process of identity development and structure coordinates for exercising citizenship through different learning experiences built in an active, free, open and reflexive perspective, preparing the individual for integration into the social life.

Keywords: Identity, citizenship, European citizenship, social and civic competences, lifelong learning.

1. The process of building identity in the contemporary context

The interaction of the individual with the physical and social reality sustains his personal development and sets the coordinates of his identity construction. The whole human existence is an alternation of defining and redefining one's self in the context of variables that place the internal changes in relation to the external stimuli, allowing him to activate some features that, on one side, validate his belonging to the multiple social categories or, on the other side, delineate the specific personal coordinates in the relationship: self - the others. The interpretation of the reality in relation

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to the group of belonging is a result of the social world internalization by an individual and this allows him to experiment a variety of roles without any alteration of the individual consistency and continuity.

The variety and the flexibility of the contemporary coordinates is transferred at the level of the identity building process and the individual acts like an *open system* with a unique combination of cognitions, emotions and behaviors that differentiate him from the others. Ferguson (2009) states that in the context of the identity building there are three categories of processes: identification of similarities, specification of differences and empathy. When we consider an individual or a group, we identify a plurality of identities constructed according to the following dimensions: similarity and differentiation, reality and appearance, permanence and change. Validating these dimensions in an interrogating context, the individual finds the answer to the question: *Who am I*, experiencing the feeling of belonging to the different social categories, defining its uniqueness in the context of this membership and behaving according his cognitions and experiences. His actions and interactions in the social area are the subject for external validations (the feed-back from the *significant others* adds to the positive or to the negative reinforcements from representatives of various social categories) that strengthen the feeling of belonging or trigger a new stage of identity redefining. The individual gradually becomes aware of his body identity, the name identity, identity related to his genealogy tree, rights and obligations identity, his statuses and roles (Mânzat, 2000) and fits into the social dynamics anchoring himself, at the same time, in the political, economic and cultural landmarks.

If the traditional social context offered more stability regarding the landmarks provided in order to substantiate the process of the identity building, according to the features of the community built in relation to the territorial coordinates, the contemporaneity offers a different perspective, much wider and more flexible that allows the access to more varied landmarks, and, the same time, launches challenges that increase the complexity of the identity building process.

The cultural landmarks prove to be a source of diversity and involve social actors in respecting and promoting *the right to the difference*, making also necessary a legal guarantee of non-discriminatory social-practices. Redefining the pluricultural social space according to the globalization coordinates and increasing the level of interaction with the others generate the necessity of an adaptation strategy that ensures both the consistency and coherency at the individual level as well as recognition, valorization and respect at the level of the belonging group.

2. Identity and citizenship

In order to understand better the mechanisms that sustain the process of the identity building, we find it interesting to analyze a series of correspondences that are established between the internal coordinates of one's self defining and the external reference systems that the individual uses as anchors in the context of his social expansion, as he consolidates the perception of himself and chooses ways to affirm the sense of belonging to the different social categories. We have chosen the relationship between *identity* and *citizenship* in the context of the individual-collective dynamics, which generates the option for the specific identity markers.

The concept of citizenship makes possible the junction between the individual and the collective dimension, expressing, at the same time, a common quality of all the members of a society and a sum of individual behaviors that express their sense of belonging. The status and links of the individual with the social community are also explained by citizenship, involving the dimension of rights and identity, plus the totality of motives for inclusion or exclusion from the community (Zolo, apud G. Procacci, 2004).

Citizenship is a complex concept that generate a variety of social, economic and political processes (Lister, 2008). An analysis of the term from a historical perspective offers an added significance to the collective life that integrates a sum of individualities, starting from assuming and practicing civil and political rights in the context of affirming the feeling of belonging to a community.

Citizenship is a result of the intention to emancipate the individuals and societies as a response to the fragmentation of the collective life in the medieval period, regarding the particular rights of certain communities, by introducing more general categories of rights, applying for several communities within one society (Procacci, 2004, p. 343).

The process of nation-states development has promoted the tendency of the society homogeneity, from the perspective: "a people, a culture, a nation, a history" (Bennett apud M. Luciak, 2010). The attempts to theorize the term of culture in the social sphere have often begun with the concepts of nationality and ethnicity (the nation representing that community which, in political terms, tries to develop state-owned mechanisms, while, in case of defining ethnicity, the political dimension is absent). S.L. Croucher (2004) states that when an ethnic group reaches a level of politically self-consciousness, we can speak of a nation. In the case of nation- states, citizenship is viewed as a dimension of the identity that, at the same time, subordinates and coordinates all the other identity structures

(the family of belonging, ethnicity, gender, region) in the context of a common body of laws (Holston & Apadurai, 1996, p. 187). Concerning the relationship between nationality and citizenship, G. Procacci (2004) emphasizes that the term nationality links the concept of *national identity* with the concept of *state* from a political perspective, while the concept of citizenship separates society from the political expression.

3. Citizenship between tradition and modernity

From a traditional perspective, being a citizen means being a right holder in the context of a nation- state, in reference to certain territorial coordinates. In the view of the contemporaneity, the nation-state is no longer the unique reference structure defining citizenship, and it builds itself in the context of the global-local dynamics, involving various forms of political organization, ethical foundations as components of cultural identity, in a construction that reflects the globalization trends manifested on the labour market, the capital movement and the expansion of the communication structures. (Holston & Apadurai, 1996, pp. 187-188). Marshall (apud J. Painter, 1998) considers that defining *citizenship* only in terms of civil and political rights is a limited perspective and leads to the exclusion of many individuals from the possibility of the full exercising these rights, in case they face the lack of resources in supporting the implementation of citizens' rights. A. Ong (1999, p. 113) states that if the conventional perspective on *citizenship* is based on the political rights and participation by reference to a sovereign state, globalization makes the concept of *citizenship* more flexible and associates it with the human capital, in the context of the various forms of migration that are registered at the level of the nation-states. This perspective, although economically advantageous (the nation-states being concerned about the redefinition of the legislative framework in order to facilitate the insertion of immigrants into the labour market) makes difficult the approach on the *ethnicity* as a component of the identity in the process of exercising the citizens' rights.

Y.N. Soysal (2004, p. 334) identifies two fundamental principles that characterize the concept of *citizenship* by reference to the nation state: on the one hand, the congruence between a territory and a national community, on the other hand, the national-belonging as a source of rights and duties for the individual and the community. The author affirms that even the rights exercising was associated with the belonging to a nation-state. The global speech, continues Soysal, proposes an extended perspective on the rights, as a universal category. In a way we are witnessing a "diffusion" of power by

reference to different types of authority, which generates a multi-level policy and leaves the other social actors the possibility to enter the scene in their struggle for resources in order to propose different opportunities and organizational strategies to support the exercising of the citizens' rights.

Many definitions given to citizenship make reference to the association between the territorial landmarks and particular communities, meeting thus the needs of the administrative practices and the functioning of some public institutions, but without reflecting the complexity of the social and political relations that underpin the structuring of communities (Painter, 1998).

Y. N. Soysal (2004) considers that the authority of the discourse on human rights separates the concept of citizenship from the territorial coordinates and allows the crystallization of post-national forms of citizenship. The author provides as examples: long-term immigrants who do not have the citizenship of the host state but benefit from a wide range rights and privileges (civil, social and political rights), the holders of dual citizenship, citizens of the European Union (referring to the supranational landmarks) and citizens of some administrative or cultural autonomous regions (Basque Country, Catalonia, Scotland). Defining the citizenship, R. Asen (2004) brings to attention the term of public subjectivity. Referring to the subjectivity of interaction with others, the author focuses on the configuration of a multi-level public self that allows activating various components of personality in the presence of certain conditions, which makes possible the practicing of citizenship in a sequential manner rather than in the full-time mode (the last alternative making us think about some nationalist tendencies). Individuals are not obliged to allocate an indefinite amount of time and energy in the context of exercising citizens' rights and citizenship duties and, in this sense, the meaning of citizenship is being built on a democratic perspective. Asen insists that democracy does not abuse individuals energetically and cognitively, but requires a creative participation from their part, the essence of democracy consisting in the freedom of choice between acting and not acting. A specificity for the post-national forms of citizenship is the distinction between rights and identity, considers Y.N. Soysal (2004): individuals enjoy rights and protection in states they do not belong to, the rights generated by a transnational discourse and established by the structures concerned about the respect for human rights as a principle of organization at the international level.

M. Lister (2008) affirms that *citizenship* can be analysed in terms of values: on the one hand, values that are generated and sustained by the citizenship itself and, on the other hand, values to which individuals should adhere so that they could be considered citizens. Analysing T.H. Marshall

theory on citizenship, G. Procacci (2004) differentiates the concept in question from the fact of belonging to a community, stressing on the active dimension of citizenship at the level of exercising such a membership, and emphasizes that the analysis should be done in terms of *doing* and not in terms of *being*.

Proposing the concept of *post-national forms of citizenship*, Y.N. Soysal (2004) has not the intention to delineate an unitary status from a legal point of view, but aims to build a sociological category without any association to the cosmopolitan ideologies (these promoting some sort of universalism at the level of the individual and identity) and without being concerned of building links between communities (according to some cultural and ethnic references). The author emphasizes on the interdependencies developed in the public area and brings to attention the increasing efforts of theorising and discursive valuation of the human rights, beyond the borders of a nation-state, founded on universal references.

From a discursive perspective, R. Asen (2004) affirms that citizenship can be approached as a way of expressing the public commitment, a view that transfers the emphasis from *the meaning* of citizenship to HOW it is practiced, bringing together different ways of acting with the action itself. The author states that this kind of the citizenship approach doesn't limit its exercising at the level of the civil society or at the level of the political institutions, but offers an extended area for action, integrating social, cultural and political sectors. The specificity of this way for expressing the public commitment lies in the fact that it does not obey certain rules and sometimes generates tension in relations with authorities and institutions, having a "fluid" consistency and determining a multitude of possibilities for materialization, being difficult to anticipate its specific form of expression.

J. Painter (1998) differentiates two levels of the citizenship analysis: by reference to state organization - in terms of establishing a formal relationship between an individual and a state that is based on a sum of procedural rights and duties, and by reference to the cultural identity - involving a sense of belonging to "an imaginary community". Cultural identity, in the vision of C. Carpentier (2008, p. 209), "escapes history" as a timeless essence from which "the individual draws his roots." This change of perspective is also sustained by the intensification of the migration phenomenon, which determines the heterogeneous social structure, triggering other types of approaches in the context of identity policies, the affirmation of diversity generating the need for another type of citizenship that does not relate to formal territorial and national coordinates (Holston & Apadurai, p. 195). In the context of the citizenship approach from a

historical perspective, any hierarchies or local privileges are cancelled in behalf of the contractual relations based on the principle of equality of rights at the level of a national type jurisdiction (Holston & Apadurai, 1996, p. 187).

J. Painter (1998) points out the affective dimension of identity, added from a contemporary perspective and that can be appreciated in two ways: to feel as part of society and to be accepted as a member of society. The author points out that when there is no correspondence between these plans, an individual finds it hard to exercise his citizen's rights.

4. European citizenship

Any person who is a citizen of a Member State of the European Union has the status of EU citizen, as mentioned in the Article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty (Council of the European Communities, Commission of the European Communities, 1992). The law and the law institutions can be considered as reactive forces and proactive forces, generating the institutional change, but, at the same time, they undergo some changes as a result of the political pressure, responsible for building the legal political area (Shaw, 2008).

J. Painter (1998) considers that the formal delimitation of EU citizenship by a regulatory context (through a set of specific rights) paves the way for the construction of a transnational type of citizenship, that is a first step towards a transnational democracy. Such a supranational level structure puts into question, from the perspective of the author, the difficulty of associating it with a unitary image, given the presence of cultural diversity as a reality, which leads to the possibility of multi-dimensional structuring of citizenship by reference to at least three levels of the analysis: continental, national and regional. The identity of each nation-state that is a part of the European construction defines a field of political prerogatives and sovereignty that should be considered in the context of building the European identity (Carpentier, 2008).

Maas (apud M. Lister, 2008) sees a transformative potential of the European citizenship: it goes beyond the boundaries of the national model and sustains the creation of a community of expectations and of civic engagement in the context of which the political structures are aware of the presence of difference and, at the same time, are interested in the inclusion issue. Analysing the implications of the European construction on the identity issues, C. Carpentier (2005) speaks of an identity mutation process that traces the sense of identity belonging beyond the national landmarks, on

the criteria of a "common faith in ethnic life". According to the provisions of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012), the European citizenship does not replace the national citizenship, but it is additional (Article 20, paragraph 1). The rights and obligations of the citizens of the European Union are stipulated in the treaties. They add to the set of rights and duties deriving from the national citizenship. The legal reaffirmation of the fundamental rights of the citizens in the European Union is also achieved through the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2010). Ensuring human dignity is based on: the right to life, the right to the integrity of the person, the prohibition of torture, of inhuman and degrading treatment, the prohibition of slavery and forced labour. The freedoms enjoyed by citizens of the European Union are embodied in: the right to liberty and security, the respect for private and family life, the protection of personal data, the right to marry and the right to found a family, the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and information, the right of association, the freedom of the arts and sciences, the right to education, the right to work, the freedom to do business, the right to property, the right of asylum. The Charter also guarantees the equality of citizens and their non-discrimination, irrespective of their cultural, religious, linguistic, gender and age affiliation, affirming also the integrity of people with disabilities. The collective life is based on the principle of solidarity. EU citizens have the right to vote and stand for election to the European institutions, have the right of free movement and residence, the right to the people's advocate and the right to diplomatic and consular protection, the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence and the right to defence. The Charter thus synthesises the rights resulting from the constitutional traditions, the international obligations of the Member States, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Social Charters adopted by the Union and the Council of Europe, the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights "(Militaru, 2011, p.68).

5. The civic dimension in the process of education- a prerequisite for exercising citizenship

The exercise of citizenship is conditioned by the existence of competences that support the conduct of individuals in accordance with the rights and obligations deriving from the European citizen status. The civic component is associated with the social one, and it is based on a specific

reference context: either related to the nation-state or regarding a supra-state structure represented by the European Union. In the set of key competences for lifelong learning proposed by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (2006), we identify the category of social and civic competences that include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competences that form the basis of all behaviors through which individuals participate effectively in the social life and in the professional activity in the context of a plurally structured society. Participation in civic life is based on understanding social and political concepts and structures, on the individuals' commitment towards an active and democratic participation. The European document presents, in a descriptive manner, the three components of the social competences: knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable individuals to relate in an authentic manner to other individuals, to social groups, to social institutions, based on equality and non-discrimination principles, on understanding the multicultural and socio-economic dimensions that characterize the European society. It also mentions that it is necessary to understand the relationship between the national identity and the European identity. To this cognitive component, the following skills are added: the ability to communicate in a constructive manner in different environments, the ability to manifest tolerance, the ability to express and understand different points of view, the ability to negotiate and build trust in a relationship with others, the empathic capacities. Individuals must be able to distinguish between personal and professional life and at the same time develop mechanisms for managing stress and frustration. The attitudinal component that is embodied in social competences is reflected in the context of collaboration, assertiveness and integrity. Overcoming prejudices, respect for others, valuing cultural diversity, showing interest in the socio-economic development and for intercultural communication, all these complete the affective-attitudinal dimension by reference to the social space functioning. As regards civic competences, they are based on the knowledge of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, civil rights concepts (according to the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in line with the international agreements and with the modalities of their implementation by different institutions operating at a local, regional, national, European or international level). The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the key competences for lifelong learning (2006) stresses on the importance of knowing the contemporary events but also on knowing some of the historic moments of reference regarding the national, European and global framework. The additional components are represented by the need to raise the awareness on the goals, values and social policies in general, as well as understanding the

objectives and values underpinning the European integration process and sustaining the functioning of European structures, in the context of cultural identities affirmation, in an European plural structure. The European document also highlights the skills that are embodied in civic competences: the ability to publicly demonstrate commitment in cooperation with others, the capacity to manifest solidarity and interest in problems solving in a local or extended context, the ability to participate constructively in community life, and within the decision-making process at different levels, the ability to reflect critically and to display a creative approach of the situations in the community life. A positive attitude on the value systems of different religious and ethnic groups, respect for human rights, behaviour materialising the sense of belonging to the local, national, European and global community, desire to be involved in decision-making at different levels, sense of responsibility, understanding and respect for shared values (in order to sustain social cohesion), respect for the principles of democracy, also add to the components of civic competences. The exercise of civic competences also implies sustaining social diversity, cohesion, sustainable development, willingness to respect the values and the privacy of others in the context of a constructive participation in civic life.

6. Educational landmarks in the process of developing social and civic competences

The development of civic and social skills can be achieved in formal, non-formal or informal educational contexts. For each situation, the responsibilities of the teachers are different, the proposed activities respect a specific typology or receive different degrees of freedom in organizing, gaining convergence at the level of the goals pursued. Restructuring learning content taking into account the civic component of education, in an explicit or implicit manner (when the specificity of the content permits it), is a benchmark for anchoring the compulsory education graduate's profile in the community life and increases the chances of its genuine integration into society.

The curriculum, which draws the coordinates for structuring the learning experiences in a formal context, is gradually making place for some study subjects generated by the intention of educational systems to respond the challenges of the contemporary world (new educations: peace education, education for respecting the fundamental rights of human education, ecological education, education for participation and democracy,

demographic education, media and communication education etc.), with the status of mandatory or optional subjects.

The new content learning, at the level of distinct subjects, is complemented by the enrichment of the curricula for traditional subjects of study with thematic units corresponding to new educations. However, the teacher has the freedom to establish links between the taught content and new educations, sometimes opting for choosing an infused approach of the content proposed to students in the context of learning experiences without being conditioned by a change in school curriculum or by the introduction of a new discipline in the educational plan.

This allows an interdisciplinary or a transdisciplinary approach and sustains the development of social and civic competences through all study subjects. In the Romanian education system, the curricular area that explicitly includes the civic component of training is Man and Society. The presence of the component representing values and attitudes in the curriculum documents, that concretize learning experiences of all study subjects, suggests the existence of an implicit dimension of transdisciplinary social and civic formation that goes beyond the study of a specific subject.

If in the primary school for the subject Civic Education is allocated one hour per week (in 3rd and in 4th grade), the new gymnasium education plan, approved in 2016, hosts a wider range of study subjects (under the heading Social Education) aiming to develop social and civic competences: Critical Thinking and Human Rights (5th grade), Intercultural Education (6th grade), Education for Democratic Citizenship (7th grade) and Economic-financial Education (8th grade). The integration of these study subjects in the context of the general training framework confirms the importance given to the social and civic component in the compulsory education graduate profile.

The Civic Education study subject in the primary education has as general purpose the integration of pupils into the community based on the understanding of the relationships between an individual and others, by reference to the context of belonging. The authors of the curriculum for Civic Education consider that the process of social integration should be based on a moral-civic literacy process, on the development of positive attitudes towards own person and towards other members of society, the valuing of age-specific experiences, in a positive affective context, on practicing moral-civic behaviours in an active, free, responsible, tolerant, open, communicative, reflexive and self-evaluating perspective.

The curriculum for Civic Education (for the 3rd and 4th grade), approved in 2014, focuses on the following general competences development: ability to apply rules of conduct in everyday life; ability to use

habits of moral-civic behaviour in the contexts of life in the known environment; ability to work with others to solve simple tasks, showing availability. These are reflected in a sum of specific competencies to be formed during each year of study. If the issue of applying the norms of conduct in everyday life starts from the exploration of individual as a person in relation to himself and with the groups in the community - as studied during the third grade, in the fourth grade the exploration of individual is made by reference to the places and to the community of belonging. The ability to use habits of moral-civic behaviour in contexts of life in known environment focuses on the exploration of attitudes in the social environment (during 3rd grade), on the distinction between prosocial and antisocial behaviours as well as on identification of the universal rights of the child (during 4th grade). The cooperation dimension is developed through team- work solving problems and in the context of engaging in actions and projects, with moral-civic content emphasizing on the positive relationship and the assumption of rights and duties, in the context of the optional involvement in actions carried out in the classroom, in the school, in the local community during the third grade, while in the 4th grade the emphasis is on the positive relationship in the context of participation in activities promoting the universal rights of the child. The curriculum authors state that the proposed actions are in line with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on the key Competences in the perspective of lifelong learning (2006).

The curriculum of the study subjects under the heading - Social Education for the 5th and 8th grades (approved in 2017) is based on a series of European and international documents, facilitating, according to the author's statements, the development of abilities: creativity, critical and systemic thinking, communication skills and collaboration, adaptability, responsibility, team spirit.

This study subject aims to develop three general competences:

A. Ability to approach critically the facts, events, ideas, processes of personal life and of various groups and communities, by using specific social acquisitions;

B. Ability to cooperate and to investigate specific issues of different groups and communities by assuming social and civic values and norms;

C. Responsible participation in the decision-making process through the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, using a social, civic and economically active behaviour.

The study subject Critical Thinking and Child Rights Discipline (5th grade) aims to concretize these general competences in the context of specific competencies having the intention to express interest in asking

questions about own rights and responsibilities, formulating opinions, explanations and arguments in order to promote own rights and responsibilities, a critical approach of the other people's opinions in the context of debates on sustaining and promoting human rights.

As regards the competency that concerns the cooperation, the specific competencies that concretize it focus on the capacity of formulating problems related to the rights of the child, on the identification, based on team-work, of the possible actions for the intervention in cases of children's rights violations, on the ability to cooperate in the process of elaborating a project on the promotion of children's rights. The responsible participation to the decision-making process focuses on the following specific competences: exercising rights and responsibilities in making personal and group decisions, participation in group decisions on the involvement in promotion and defence of their own rights.

The study subject *Intercultural Education* (6th grade) aims to develop a critical approach on events and processes from personal and community life by stimulating the following specific competences: the correct use of specific terms of intercultural education with reference to facts, events, processes in the contemporary society, the identification of own cultural identity landmarks, the analysis of some situations in agreement/disagreement with the values and principles of contemporary society. The cooperation dimension is developed through specific competences focused on the team-work for elaboration of an intercultural project regarding specific intercultural problems, participation in problem-solving in community, promoting intercultural dialogue, the solving in pairs or teams of tasks regarding life in pluricultural society. The responsible participation in the decision-making process will concretize in specific competences as: showing a positive attitude towards one's self and the others, towards own cultural identity and the identity of those who belong to different cultures, participation in community problem-solving based on cultural empathy, in relationship with persons belonging to different cultures.

The study subject *Education for democratic citizenship* (7th grade) aims to develop the following specific competences: the correct use of the specific terms of education for democratic citizenship, the analysis of problematic situations caused by the deviation from the values, principles and practices of the democratic society, building an argumentation for respecting the values, principles, norms and practices specific to a democratic society and the rule of law, elaboration of a project on the problems of the educational/local community, participation in solving the problems of educational and local community, the solving of work-tasks related to life in a democratic society, the manifestation of availability for civic participation

and the exercise of citizenship, the application of democratic values, norms and principles in specific situations involving decision and action.

The study subject *Economic and Financial Education* (8th grade) aims, in addition to the proper use of the specific terms of economic and financial education, to sustain the conduct of pupil as a well-informed consumer of financial goods and services, the expression of interest in identifying ways of saving and reducing the wastage of financial resources, drawing up a monthly budget with the purpose of exercising good quality income management, participating in the investigation of the specific issues of groups and communities of belonging, through an economic and financial project, developing a personal action plan demonstrating initiative and responsibility, choosing responsible savings /credit products and means of payment by comparing their benefits and risks.

In high school education, Civic Education is not found among the study subjects of the curriculum (Ulrich, Voicu, Manasia & Pârvan, 2011). The results of a study carried out in several schools and high schools in Bucharest, Dolj, Neamț and Ialomița (having as subjects pupils, teachers and school inspectors) showed that the study subjects that have an implicit role in the formation of pupils' social and civic competences are: History, Geography, Romanian Language and Literature, Logic and Argumentation, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, as well as other disciplines used as optional (Family Sociology, European Integration, Media Competences etc.) within humanist profiles. The study subjects have stated that if humanities are more generous with optional study subjects that sustain the civic skills development, in technological profiles there are no optional study subjects focused on developing civic competences, the only study subjects responsible with developing proactive skills and attitudes are *Economy* and *Entrepreneurship Education*. The results of the study also show that the profiles characterized by exact sciences focus on the acquirement of the general culture and on the development of pupils from the perspective of the disciplines corresponding to the nature of the profile, thus the civic formation acquires a peripheral character, although the high school is considered "the most opportune moment for exercising civic spirit and interaction models related to the democratic citizenship" (Ulrich, Voicu, Manasia & Pârvan, 2011, p.39).

The development of extracurricular activities in high school education and the involvement of pupils in projects with local, regional, national or international impact is the way for developing social and civic competences of the high school students, but this issue also raises the continuity question, having the intention to ensure a consistency of civic education in accordance with other educational cycles.

Beyond the explicit way of shaping the social and civic competences through formal, study subjects, through modular or infused teaching approaches, teachers also have at their disposal the non-formal context where the issues related to human rights, to the involvement in the community life and to the processes regarding democratic citizenship can generate activities of great interest, in which the emphasis is on *doing*, on practicing behaviours subordinated to an authentic civic conduct.

Starting from a literature analysis, A.Osler, H.Starkey (2006) outlines a number of key themes in the context of education for democratic citizenship: *diversity and unity* (this topic brings to attention exercising citizenship in the context of a plural society through the preoccupation to identify shared values, considering that the potential of diversity and its experiencing is as a resource that underlies human experience, and that choosing pluralism is convergent with the equity principle), *global and cosmopolitan citizenship* (this perspective is based on a re-conceptualization of education for citizenship that integrates three perspectives: local, national and global, with the intention of developing those skills that enable the individual to participate in all levels of action), *children as citizens* (related to this approach there are specific types of relationship with other children or with adults), *democratic schooling* (starting from the idea that democracy is a dynamic process that generates a lifestyle, schools have to integrate the principles of democracy into their own ethos to support pupils' participation in the school and community life in order to value diversity and promote equity), *pupils' perception on citizenship and democracy* (exploring the intention, the availability and the level of the civic engagement in the context of the local-global dynamics), *the complementarity between school and community* (based on the interrelationships established between the two educational contexts, that exercise the social capital), *European citizenship* (starting from the understanding of the relationship between the national citizenship and the European citizenship).

A concentric perspective on learning content, by gradually extending the reference concepts, and by widening the area for their exercising in the context of the individual-community relationship dynamics, provides an appropriate framework which underpins the cognitive mechanisms in order to sustain development of the social and civic competences. The link between knowledge and the affective-attitudinal domain, focusing on a positive approach of the relation with oneself and with the others, is a prerequisite for exercising the social and civic competences in the context of national and European citizenship affirmation.

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