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DIDACTIC PRINCIPLES FOR HARNESSING THE 4TH GRADE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK TO DEVELOP EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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The article examines the impact of the fourth-grade Romanian Language textbook on students' emotional intelligence, emphasizing the harmonization of cognitive and affective dimensions in shaping human personality through didactic approaches that transcend the mere transmission of linguistic and literary knowledge. The study advances a comprehensive perspective by delineating a coherent set of didactic principles such as fostering a positive learning mindset, active and conscious engagement, accessibility and individualization, the interdependence between sensory and logical (intuitive) knowledge, systematization of knowledge, and theory-practice interdependence, emphasizing how these principles promote meaningful student engagement and build adaptive social skills grounded in emotional intelligence. These guiding principles enable educators to design learning environments and pedagogical scenarios that enhance students' adaptability to academic demands while fostering the socio-emotional skills needed to engage effectively in broader social contexts.

Keywords: *didactic principles, Romanian Language textbook, emotional intelligence, students, primary education.*

PRINCIPII DIDACTICE PENTRU VALORIFICAREA MANUALULUI DE LIMBA ROMÂNĂ PENTRU CLASA A IV-A ÎN DEZVOLTAREA INTELIGENȚEI EMOȚIONALE ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR

Articolul examinează impactul manualului de limba română pentru clasa a IV-a asupra inteligenței emoționale a elevilor, subliniind armonizarea dimensiunilor cognitive și afective în modelarea personalității umane prin abordări didactice care transcend simpla transmitere a cunoștințelor lingvistice și literare. Studiul propune o perspectivă cuprinzătoare prin delimitarea unui set coerent de principii didactice, cum ar fi promovarea unei mentalități pozitive de învățare, implicarea activă și conștientă, accesibilitatea și individualizarea, interdependența dintre cunoașterea senzorială și cea logică (intuitivă), sistematizarea cunoștințelor și interdependența teorie-practică, subliniind modul în care aceste principii promovează o implicare semnificativă a elevilor și construiesc abilități sociale adaptive bazate pe inteligența emoțională. Aceste principii călăuzitoare permit educatorilor să proiecteze medii de învățare și scenarii pedagogice care sporesc adaptabilitatea elevilor la cerințele academice, promovând în același timp abilitățile socio-emoționale necesare pentru a se implica eficient în contexte sociale mai largi.

Cuvinte cheie: *principii didactice, manual de limba română, inteligență emoțională, elevi, învățământ primar.*

Introduction

Over the past decades, social-emotional education in primary schools has expanded considerably, reflecting the growing imperative to develop children's abilities to understand and express their emotions appropriately. Within the Romanian context, contemporary curricula increasingly emphasize the development of *communication, collaboration, and self-expression skills*, adopting a learner-centered approach that prioritizes students' expressive needs. In this context, the fourth-grade Romanian Language textbook emerges as a formative pedagogical tool, supporting the development of emotional intelligence through literary texts and associated learning activities.

Although the development of emotional competencies has been extensively theorized within the Anglophone literature, most often under the terms *emotional education* or, more prominently, *Social and Emotional Learning* (SEL), the Romanian scholar M. Cojocaru-Borozan (2010) advances a conceptually convergent yet distinct formulation: *Educația pentru dezvoltarea emoțională*. Translated into English as

Education for Emotional Development, this construct provides a theoretical framework specific to the Romanian academic context and serves as a subject of study within the Pedagogy of Emotional Culture [3, p.46]. To ensure both conceptual precision and terminological consistency, this article adopts the English version *Education for Emotional Development* as the designated term throughout the text.

Education for Emotional Development (EED) aims at cultivating and managing affective experiences, being grounded in two major dimensions: *emotional balance and emotional imbalance*. *Emotional balance* is expressed through a uniform inner tension, moderate activation, and harmony between opposing affective experiences, whether sthenic or asthenic, positive or negative. In contrast, *emotional imbalance* is reflected in states such as discomfort, sadness, discouragement, irritability, anger, aggressiveness, or other forms of intense discontent, which can negatively affect the formation and functioning of personality. The genesis of disequilibrium is contingent upon both constitutional predispositions, such as hereditary physiological sensitivities that amplify emotional reactivity, and experiential contingencies, in which biographical circumstances consolidate or trigger acquired patterns of emotional responsiveness and expression [14, p. 51].

EED can be conceptualized as a coordinated set of pedagogical actions and interventions aimed at nurturing the affective dimension of the child. It facilitates adaptive and social integration processes while providing the structural framework necessary for active and balanced participation in community life. Concurrently, this form of education fosters the cultivation of an autonomous and coherent personality, capable of responding to contemporary societal challenges with creativity and responsibility, in alignment with the current imperatives of human development [14].

Methodological choices in *Education for Emotional Development* are grounded in the psychological and social particularities of each developmental stage, since affective evolution presupposes a differentiated and flexible pedagogical approach. The formation of feelings and the development of positive attitudes toward family members, peers, and others in the immediate environment, together with the ability to recognize and express diverse emotions, are achieved within a variety of educational contexts [11].

Early school age represents a period of profound transformation in the child's emotional life, marked by the diversification and enrichment of affective experiences and by the emergence of complex changes across cognitive, emotional, and relational domains. Entering school introduces the child to a qualitatively new dimension of existence, one that signifies both an opening toward life in its social complexity and an initiation into the broader universe of knowledge [7].

The didactic principles guiding the educational process serve as instructional guidelines and are intrinsically linked to those governing the organization and planning of teaching activities. Informed by the curriculum paradigm, these principles demand coherence and relevance throughout the entirety of the educational process. They emerge from a synthesis of accumulated positive experiences in pedagogical practice, theoretical insights from influential scholars of human development, and findings from contemporary educational research. Considered as a unified system, these principles offer teachers a guiding framework that supports professional decision-making in daily classroom activities, ensuring that instruction remains balanced, coherent, and responsive to learners' developmental needs [5].

In this context, the specialized literature conceptualizes didactic principles both as discrete entities, each characterized by its own specificity and pedagogical function, and as interdependent components that collectively sustain the internal coherence of the instructional-educational process. Their effective adaptation to educational realities requires the systematic organization of all instructional dimensions, starting with curricular design, in which objectives, core content, teaching methodologies, and assessment methods are precisely aligned, and extending to the concrete implementation of teaching, learning, and evaluation activities. Simultaneously, this adaptation requires sensitivity to contextual variables, such as the organizational forms of instruction, the availability and quality of pedagogical resources, and the teacher's pedagogical orientation, managerial capacity, and teaching style. Taken together, these dimensions converge to shape an educational process that is coherent, effective, and responsive to the developmental needs of learners [5, p. 41].

Within this framework, the Romanian Language textbook emerges as a particularly significant pedagogical resource for advancing both cognitive competencies and emotional intelligence. The application of general didactic principles to fourth-grade lessons can be exemplified through six guiding principles (*see* Fig. 1).

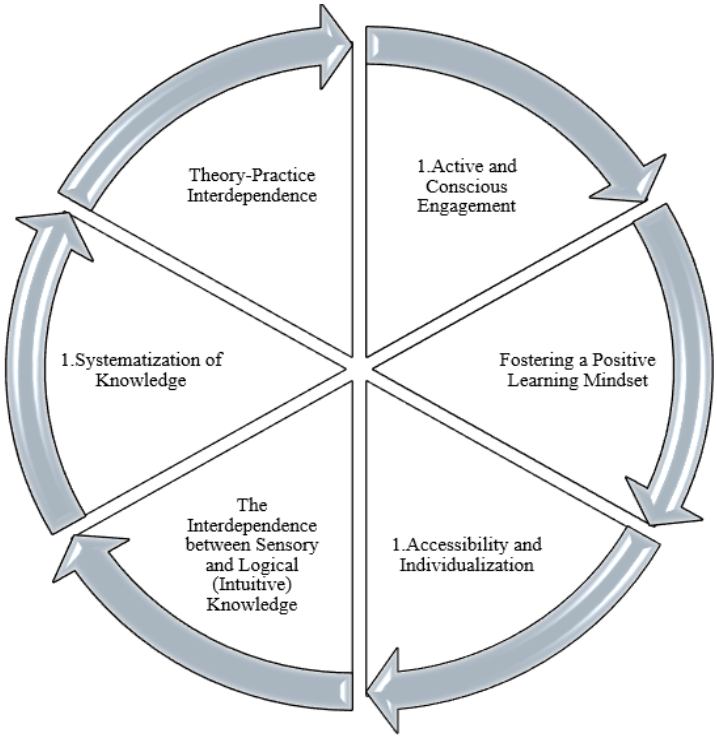

Figure 1. Harnessing the 4th Grade Romanian Language Textbook: Didactic Principles for the Development of Emotional Intelligence

a) ***The Principle of Fostering a Positive Learning Mindset*** requires that the pedagogical message be articulated through a balanced integration of subject-specific knowledge, comprising linguistic, communicative, and literary content, and its formative impact on the learner. Within the Romanian Language lessons, operationalizing this principle entails the deliberate selection and pedagogical transformation of content into knowledge structures, cognitive strategies, and skill sets that simultaneously sustain affective development. In this respect, exercises provided in the textbook are expected to stimulate philological reasoning, enhance communication competencies, and expand emotional awareness by offering students opportunities to articulate feelings, cultivate empathy, and internalize pro-social attitudes [8]. The national curriculum emphasizes the importance of an active attitude and curiosity in learning, suggesting that social interactions and exploration of the student's familiar environment form the foundation for autonomous learning experiences [10].

b) ***The Principle of Active and Conscious Engagement*** emphasizes the necessity of positioning learners as active participants in the educational process, capable of assuming responsibility for their own personal and socio-emotional development. In the context of Romanian language lessons, active participation is expressed through activities that draw on students' prior experiences, both in school and in daily life, as well as through activities that engage not only cognitive but also emotional resources. The textbook becomes a tool for stimulating affective expressiveness through oral and written communication tasks, dialogues, role-plays, and text interpretations that require students to engage with empathy, understand the characters' emotional states, and reflect on their own emotions [9].

The implementation of this principle in Romanian Language and Literature lessons involves fostering a conscious attitude toward learning, developing a spirit of independence, cultivating the desire for life-long preparedness, and enhancing the ability to manage emotions in diverse contexts. The core requirements of this principle are directly linked to the development of emotional intelligence, as they support the expression of empathy, self-control, and intrinsic motivation [1]:

- Stimulating student activity at all stages of the learning process
- Understanding the content
- Increasing awareness of one's own engagement

c) ***The Knowledge Systematization Principle*** calls for organizing the pedagogical content so that there is a consistent correlation between foundational knowledge, acquired skills, and the cognitive strategies required to solve problem-based tasks. Learning thus becomes a structured process that supports not only the cognitive dimension but also the affective, motivational, volitional, and character-related dimensions, fostering the development of complex competencies, from basic knowledge and comprehension to application, analysis, synthesis, and critical evaluation [9]. This principle requires that information be presented in a logical sequence, enabling learners to connect it with prior experiences and integrate new content into existing knowledge structures. Emphasizing continuity and progression in learning provides a foundation for developing higher-order thinking skills and a framework for cultivating reflective and self-aware attitudes toward learning.

d) ***The Accessibility and Individualization Principle*** requires that the pedagogical message be designed to align with the shared knowledge and experiences of the teacher and students, while also providing cognitive, affective, and motivational support. In the context of Romanian Language lessons, implementing this principle requires the teacher to exercise pedagogical empathy and employ instructional methods tailored to the specific classroom context, complemented by a pedagogical style that integrates instructional, managerial, and attitudinal dimensions, in line with available resources and the distinctive characteristics of the learner group. This principle acknowledges the age-related and individual particularities of primary school children, for whom variations in learning pace, cognitive style, and emotional expression are both evident and pedagogically significant [2].

The *Pedagogical Dictionary* highlights that knowledge of students is a necessary prerequisite for individualizing the teaching–learning–assessment process, defined as "the action of adapting instructional activities to the particularities of each learner, ensuring optimal holistic development and effective guidance of individual aptitudes, with the aim of fostering creative integration into community life." In the context of fourth-grade Romanian Language lessons, this perspective requires teachers to account for differences in learning pace, cognitive style, interests, and emotional readiness, while valuing each student's resources [4].

e) ***The Principle of the Interdependence between Sensory and Logical (Intuitive) Knowledge*** involves constructing the pedagogical message in accordance with the psychological resources mobilized in effective learning. From this perspective, instruction must simultaneously engage sensory and empirical experiences while also activating logical and rational processes, all within pedagogical conditions adapted to both the instructional stage and age-specific developmental features. In the fourth grade, children find themselves at a transitional stage in which direct perceptions and immediate observations constitute the basis for abstract reasoning and conceptual elaboration [5].

Implementing this principle requires the teacher to combine intuitive instructional supports, such as concrete objects, images, or stimuli drawn from everyday life, with explanatory guidance that directs learners' attention to salient features and promotes progressive cognitive elaboration. The Romanian Language textbook offers multiple opportunities for sensory and affective engagement with the content. For example, before analyzing Vasile Alecsandri's pastels, students may be invited to recount personal experiences of a particular season, eliciting visual, auditory, and emotional impressions from their environment. These experiential accounts can then be linked to the poetic representation of similar realities, allowing students to juxtapose lived perception with literary depiction. In this way, learning becomes an active process in which logical reasoning and emotional expressivity are developed simultaneously [ibid.].

f) ***The Principle of Theory–Practice Interdependence*** emphasizes that the pedagogical message must be constructed in alignment with the intrinsic connection between conceptual knowledge and its practical application across diverse contexts. Theoretical understanding emerges through the definition of concepts and the logical analysis of phenomena, whereas practice materializes in the form of problem-solving activities that involve comparison, classification, prioritization, and the identification of appropriate solutions, which are subsequently translated into experiential enactment. Within Romanian Language lessons, this interdependence represents a necessary condition for meaningful learning, as students not only acquire theoretical insights into linguistic and literary phenomena but also require opportunities to operationalize

these insights through practical application. In fourth-grade instruction, the implementation of this principle is achieved through structured opportunities for learners to exercise, practice, and apply their knowledge. The Romanian Language textbook supports this process by providing text analysis tasks, writing exercises, and oral communication activities, each of which functions as a vehicle for transforming theoretical understanding into practical competence [8].

In **conclusion**, the systematic application of the didactic principles delineated in this study positions the fourth-grade Romanian Language textbook as a pedagogical resource of considerable formative value in cultivating emotional intelligence among primary school students. Within the structure of each lesson, teachers are guided to design activities that encourage active and conscious participation, adapt content to age-related and individual particularities, differentiate learning tasks in accordance with learners' developmental profiles, and create motivational conditions through affective relevance, while also sustaining an open pedagogical dialogue on emotional experience as a means of supporting emotional regulation processes.

Viewed through the integrative lens of these principles, the fourth-grade Romanian Language textbook functions as a catalyst for developing emotional competencies and cultivating balanced, empathetic, and cooperative learners, thereby preparing primary school students for both academic achievement and effective social integration. As a comprehensive formative resource, the textbook facilitates the development of emotional intelligence through structured pedagogical engagement. The application of core didactic principles, accessibility, activation, systematization, individualization, and creativity, establishes a framework for active, participatory, and reflective learning, enabling students to exercise both cognitive and emotional competencies. Literary texts and communication exercises promote empathy, accurate recognition and expression of emotions, and the acquisition of positive relational skills. Interactive instructional strategies, including read-aloud sessions, guided discussions, dramatizations, and role-plays, harness the emotional potential of textual materials while integrating cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. When the use of textbook content is complemented by student-centered pedagogical strategies, it stimulates critical and creative thinking, self-awareness, self-regulation, and cooperative skills, all foundational elements of emotional intelligence. Empirical evidence indicates that the didactic use of the textbook, from the perspective of emotional intelligence development, exerts measurable effects on student motivation, the socio-emotional classroom climate, and academic performance, thereby aligning educational outcomes with the demands of contemporary society.

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