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Promoting cultural diversity through education: a synergistic approach to family-school collaboration[2]

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world characterized by increased mobility, contact with different cultures has become a constant of everyday life. Contemporary societies are in a continuous process of cultural transformation, in which ethnic, linguistic, religious and social diversity intersect within fundamental institutions, among which the school occupies a central place. In this context, intercultural education is no longer an optional concept, but a pressing necessity for the formation of active, empathetic citizens capable of peaceful coexistence in pluralistic social spaces.

Promoting *cultural diversity* through education thus becomes a strategic pillar in cultivating democratic values, in preventing discrimination and in strengthening an inclusive social identity. The relevance of this approach is supported by numerous international initiatives (UNESCO, Council of Europe), which advocate for the integration of the principles of interculturality

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in school curricula and in national educational policies. In this process, the partnership between family and school takes on particular importance. Collaboration between these two entities can enhance an educational environment favorable to inclusion, dialogue, and the valorization of cultural differences.

However, despite normative discourses, the concrete implementation of diversity-focused education faces numerous obstacles: from the lack of initial training of teachers in the field of interculturality, to the families' reluctance toward cultural differences or to the absence of effective collaboration strategies between school and community. Under these conditions, a reconfiguration of the school-family relationship is necessary, based on a synergistic approach, in which each educational actor assumes an active role in promoting a culture of openness and mutual respect.

This article aims to explore the collaborative dimension of promoting cultural diversity through education, from a theoretical and applied perspective, highlighting the complementary role of the family and the school in building an inclusive educational community.

The objectives pursued are:
– analyzing the concept of cultural diversity in education;
– highlighting the importance of school-family collaboration in an intercultural context;
– identifying the main barriers and opportunities in implementing diversity-sensitive educational practices;
– making practical recommendations for concrete action in support of the educational partnership for inclusion.

Starting from these premises, we seek to address the following research questions:

How does the educational partnership between family and school influence the promotion of cultural diversity in the educational environment?
– What are the optimal conditions for developing a synergistic approach in intercultural education?
– What types of participatory practices can facilitate effective collaboration between educational actors in multicultural contexts?
– Through this investigation, we aim to contribute to the shaping of an inclusive educational model, in which respect for otherness becomes a reality assumed and supported through joint, reflective and participatory effort.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

Promoting cultural diversity through education requires a nuanced understanding of several fundamental concepts: *cultural diversity, multiculturalism, pluralism* and *interculturality.* Although they are frequently used interchangeably, these concepts have distinct origins, meanings and pedagogical implications, each contributing in a particular way to the foundation of an inclusive and democratic education.

Cultural diversity

The term "*cultural diversity*" reflects the existence of a variety of cultures within a society or between different societies. According to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), cultural diversity is the "*common heritage of humanity,*" which includes not only ethnic and linguistic manifestations, but also value systems, ways of life, beliefs and symbolic practices.

According to the author Petru Bejan (2008), cultural diversity is "*the visible expression of the spiritual and axiological pluralism specific to postmodern humanity*." While Lilia Sârbu (2020) emphasizes the role of education in valuing diversity through "*training intercultural skills among students from ethnically diverse contexts,*" especially in regions with multiethnic cohabitation.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a political theory and a societal model that recognizes and supports the existence of multiple cultures within the same society. It emerged in the North American space (Canada, USA) in the 1970s as a response to minority pressures for cultural recognition.

According to Will Kymlicka (1995), multiculturalism implies collective rights for minority groups and policies to ensure the preservation of cultural identity. Romanian author Lazăr Vlăsceanu (2002) defines multiculturalism as "*a form of institutionalized tolerance, which implies the official recognition of cultural differences and the assurance of equality between groups.*"

From an educational perspective, Adrian Neculau (2004) warns, however, that multiculturalism, in the absence of dialogue, may remain a simple parallel coexistence between cultures, without real interaction. The author from the Republic of Moldova, Nina Cernencu (2015), observes that multiculturalism is more of a state of affairs than a coherent policy, being reflected in ethnic diversity (Romanians, Russians, Gagauz, Ukrainians), but with an often segregated educational participation.

Cultural Pluralism

Pluralism is a broader concept than multiculturalism and implies the harmonious and equitable coexistence of different cultures within the same society, as well as the dialogue and active participation of these cultures in public life. As Charles Taylor (1994) states, pluralism involves not only passive recognition, but also the reconciliation of common values with distinct cultural identities. The Romanian author, Mihaela Frunză (2009) argues that pluralism "*creates the framework for an ethos of tolerance and dialogue between differences.*"

While the Bessarabian author Aurelia Hanganu (2021) approaches cultural pluralism as "*a fundamental democratic value that must be cultivated from early education to prevent cultural radicalization.*"

Interculturality

Interculturality is considered the most advanced concept of the four, being centered on active, balanced and reflective interaction between cultures. According to UNESCO (2006), intercultural education involves "*the development of attitudes of openness, empathy and cooperation in relation to other cultures.*" In pedagogical terms, Milton Bennett (mai intai prenumele, dupa asta numele in engleza) (1993) introduces the model of developing intercultural sensitivity, stating that "*interculturality is not just an educational strategy, but a personal and social transformation.*" Liliana Romaniuc (2013) promotes intercultural education as a cross-curricular component, oriented towards "*the formation of civic and cultural competences for coexistence in a diverse world,*" and Maria Vremiș (2018) considers interculturality "a necessary framework for the development of empathetic communication skills, essential in a multiethnic state."

Tab 1. Conceptual differentiation

Concept	Key characteristics	Risks / limitations
Cultural diversity	Describes the variety of cultures	May be referenced without genuine engagement
Multiculturalism	Coexistence of cultures, identity-based policies	Cultural isolation, lack of interaction
Pluralism	Coexistence + active participation in public life	May fail without inclusion mechanisms
Interculturality	Dialogue, interaction, cooperation between cultures	Requires constant educational effort

Source: Own research.

These concepts underlie the theoretical foundation of an educational model that values difference, encourages dialogue and prevents exclusion. In the context of promoting cultural diversity through education, the intercultural approach offers the most promising framework for effective collaboration between school and family, transforming cultural differences into pedagogical resources.

Research methodology

The proposed study has an applied nature and combines qualitative and quantitative methods, in a mixed approach, to ensure a complex understanding of how the family and the school contribute together to the promotion of cultural diversity in education. This methodological choice allows not only to quantify the opinions and attitudes of the actors involved, but also to explore in depth their motivations and perceptions.

The research instrument used was the semi-structured questionnaire, which included 20 items distributed across three dimensions:

1. Perception of cultural diversity in school.
2. Educational practices applied in a multicultural context.
3. Level of family-school collaboration regarding the promotion of interculturality.

The items were formulated in both closed (multiple choice) and open versions, to allow for qualitative additions.

The validation of the questionnaire was carried out by consulting two experts in the field of Educational Sciences.

Target group

The study was applied to a sample of 86 participants, including:

- 48 teachers from primary and secondary education;
- 38 parents of students attending schools with a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous population.

Participants were selected from 4 educational institutions in urban and rural areas. The research was conducted over two months, in March–April 2025, in two secondary schools and two theoretical high schools in Chisinau municipality and Basarabeasca district (southern Moldova), where there is a significant representation of ethnic minorities (Ukrainians – 5–6%, Russians – 8.5%, Gagauzians – 7–8%, Bulgarians – 5%).

The questionnaires were distributed in digital format (Google Forms) and physically (during information sessions organized by the teacher and parent councils).

All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and signed a consent form for the anonymous processing of data. The study complies with the ethical research standards and data protection regulations.

Results and interpretation

The data obtained from the application of the questionnaires were analyzed statistically (for quantitative items) and thematically (for qualitative responses), providing a complex picture of the perceptions and practices of the educational actors involved.

Perception of cultural diversity in school

To the question "Do you consider that the school where you work/your child studies reflects the cultural diversity of the community?," the answers were as follows:

Response	Teacher (%)	Parents (%)
Yes, to a large extent	45,8%	42,1%
Partially	39,6%	44,7%
Very little	14,6%	13,2%

Therefore, most respondents recognize the existence of cultural diversity, but only a part considers that it is consistently reflected in school practice. This fact suggests a need for deeper integration of the intercultural dimension in the educational process.

Educational practices in multicultural contexts

When asked whether they use/receive specific intercultural education activities from the school (e.g. multicultural celebrations, dedicated classes, thematic clubs), only 32% of teachers and 27% of parents answered in the affirmative. Example of an open-ended answer (teacher):

"We organized an activity for the European Day of Languages, but there is a lack of systemic continuity."

So, the lack of consistent and integrated practices in the real curriculum indicates an untapped potential in intercultural education. Initiatives are rather isolated, dependent on the personal initiative of teachers.

Collaboration between family and school on diversity

Asked if there is an active partnership between family and school in promoting intercultural values, only 21% of parents and 35% of teachers answered in the affirmative.

Evaluated aspect	Strongly agree (teachers)	Stronglyagree (parents)
Communication is open and ongoing	52%	47%
We collaborate in organizing activities	29%	22%
Families contribute their own cultural input	18%	16%

The results indicate limited collaboration, with low involvement of families in educational actions that promote interculturality. Causes may include the lack of an institutionalized framework, communication barriers or lack of training of parents and teachers in this regard.

Attitude towards intercultural education

To the statement: "I believe that intercultural education should be an integral part of the education of students, regardless of the ethnic composition of the class," 87% of teachers and 81% of parents expressed their total or partial agreement.

We thus affirm that although practical implementation is limited, the expression of positive attitudes towards intercultural education represents a favorable premise for the development of a synergistic educational partnership.

Suggestions proposed by respondents (qualitative extracts):
– "Introducing optional intercultural education modules for students and parents"
– "Organizing joint parent-student-teacher workshops on cultural traditions and values"
– "Continuous training for teachers on intercultural approaches."

Thus, following the study conducted, we can reflect the results in the following table:

Tab 2. General comparative table: perceptions and practices regarding cultural diversity

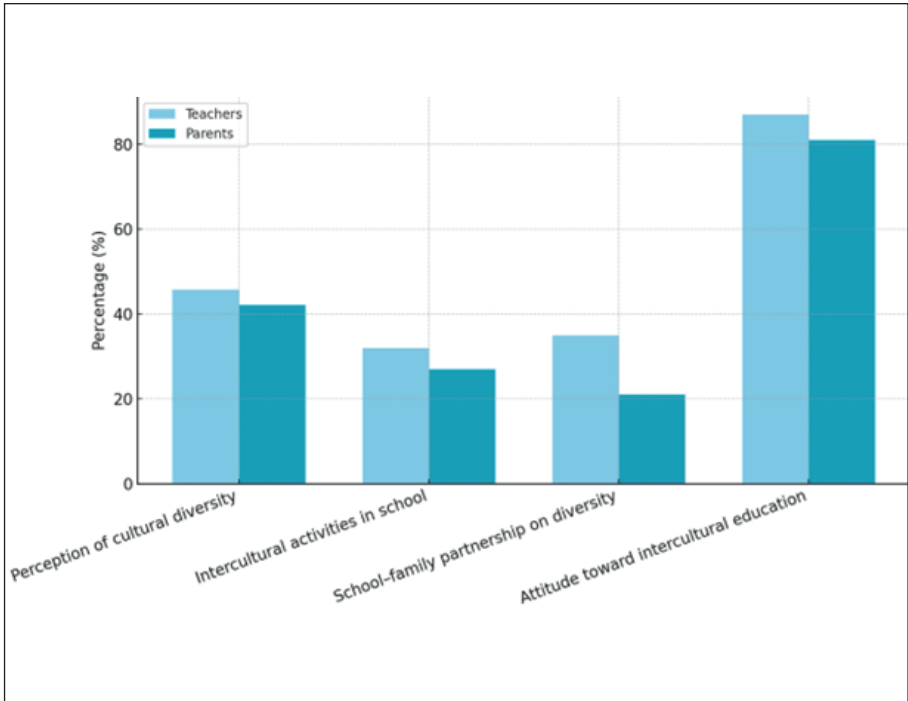| Evaluated dimension	Teachers (%)	Parents (%)
Perception of diversity in school	45.8	42.1
Intercultural activities in school	32.0	27.0
School-family partnership in diversity	35.0	21.0
Attitude toward intercultural education	87.0	81.0

Figure 1. Perceptions and practices regarding cultural diversity

T he collected data reflect a moderate level of awareness of the importance of cultural diversity, but also significant gaps in terms of concrete action and real partnership between family and school. The presence of stated openness constitutes a valuable foundation, but it is necessary to develop clear institutional and educational mechanisms to strengthen collaboration in order to promote interculturality.

Results and discussions

The contribution of the family and the school to promoting cultural diversity

The results of the study show that both teachers and parents recognize the importance of intercultural education, but the actual level of involvement and cooperation is low. 87% of teachers and 81% of parents agree that cultural diversity should be an integrated component of education, but only 32% of teachers and 27% of parents stated that concrete activities in this regard are organized in their school.

This discrepancy between positive declarative attitudes and effective educational practices highlights the existence of untapped potential. Families are rarely formally involved in the educational process related to diversity, with collaboration remaining sporadic and often limited to specific initiatives.

Examples of good practices identified

Questionnaires and qualitative responses revealed several isolated but valuable initiatives:
  – "Multicultural Day," organized by a school in Chisinau, where students and parents presented their own cultural customs, costumes and traditions.
  – Traditional family cooking workshops, held with the participation of parents from different cultural backgrounds.
  – Extracurricular educational projects ("A world – many cultures") in which parents were invited to contribute to the creation of posters, exhibitions and stories about the family's cultural heritage.
  – These practices demonstrated that when collaboration is facilitated, authentic learning and mutual respect can be fostered.

Analysis of barriers to school-family collaboration

The responses provided by the participants highlighted several obstacles:
  – Lack of an institutional strategy for integrating intercultural education into the managerial and curricular plan;
  – Deficit in training teachers in the field of intercultural competences;
  – Formal communication, focused on administrative aspects, to the detriment of an authentic, open relationship centered on educational partnership;

– Cultural fears or reservations of some parents, including beliefs about the superiority of their own culture or lack of trust in the educational system.
– These barriers indicate that without an organizational culture of inclusion and openness, school-family collaboration remains superficial.

The role of education in preventing discrimination and cultural stereotypes

Intercultural education is not limited to tolerance or passive knowledge of differences, but involves transforming attitudes and behaviors through dialogue, critical reflection and empathy. Survey participants confirmed that students exposed to appropriately managed multicultural contexts develop:
– better adaptability
– a deeper understanding of social justice
– and a reduced level of prejudice.
Conversely, the lack of intercultural education favors the consolidation of stereotypes, social exclusion and discriminatory attitudes. As Bennett (1993) states, "difference is not a problem to be solved, but an opportunity for learning." This view is also found in the opinions of respondents who call for the systematic introduction of intercultural themes in the curriculum and in the continuous training of teachers.

The collaboration between family and school in promoting cultural diversity is still fragmented and dependent on individual initiatives, but there are encouraging foundations: the openness of educational actors, the availability for dialogue and the recognition of the value of diversity. It is necessary to move from intention to action, through clear policies, sustained training and real mechanisms of participatory involvement.

Conclusions and recommendations

The applied study conducted among teachers and parents highlighted a broad consensus on the importance of promoting cultural diversity through education, but also a series of significant discrepancies between declared values and implemented practices. Despite a high level of openness and theoretical support for intercultural education, concrete activities are few, and collaboration between family and school is still limited and not systematically regulated.

The study confirms that school remains the main formal setting in which intercultural interventions can be initiated, but their success depends essentially on the active involvement of the family, the development

of intercultural competences of teachers and the existence of a clear institutional and curricular framework.

Recommendations

Systematic integration of intercultural education into the curriculum

- Introduction of transdisciplinary modules and activities dedicated to cultural diversity, starting from primary education;
- Adaptation of curricular contents to reflect the values of pluralism and respect for difference.

Strengthening the educational partnership with the family

- Development of participatory parent-teacher collaboration strategies (e.g. intercultural clubs, thematic workshops, multicultural evenings);
- Creation of support structures (parent committees with multicultural representation).

Continuous teacher training in intercultural competence

- Inclusion of intercultural pedagogy modules in initial and continuous training programs;
- Organization of mentoring sessions and exchanges of good practices between schools from multicultural environments.

Preventing discrimination through reflective and empathetic education

- Promoting an inclusive school culture, through non-discriminatory language, participatory practices and the development of empathy;
- Implementing anti-bullying and anti-stereotype policies, with a focus on ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Continuous research and monitoring the impact of intercultural interventions

- Creating tools to assess perceptions and attitudes towards diversity;
- Periodic data collection and analysis to adapt educational strategies to changing cultural realities.

Future research directions

- – Comparative analysis between urban and rural schools regarding intercultural approaches.
- – Study of the impact of intercultural extracurricular programs on social cohesion in school.
- – Investigating how media and technology can be integrated into education for diversity.

This research confirms that cultural diversity is not a challenge, but an educational opportunity that can only be capitalized on through joint, assumed and coherent efforts between school, family and community.

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Streszczenie

W kontekście rosnącej różnorodności kulturowej w środowiskach edukacyjnych, wspieranie efektywnego partnerstwa między szkołami a rodzinami jawi się jako kluczowy czynnik promocji edukacji inkluzywnej i międzykulturowej. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje synergiczną dynamikę współpracy szkoła-rodzina we wspieraniu kompetencji międzykulturowych uczniów oraz instytucjonalizacji różnorodności kulturowej jako wartości edukacyjnej. Opierając się na badaniu metodami mieszanymi przeprowadzonym w mołdawskich szkołach o zróżnicowanej etnicznie populacji, badania analizują percepcję, praktyki i postawy nauczycieli i rodziców wobec zaangażowania międzykulturowego. Wyniki wskazują na pozytywne, deklaratywne nastawienie do edukacji międzykulturowej, ale ograniczoną jej praktyczną realizację, co wskazuje na istotną lukę między świadomością a działaniem. Pojedyncze przykłady dobrych praktyk wskazują na potencjał podejść partycypacyjnych, podczas gdy bariery strukturalne i postawowe – takie jak niewystarczające szkolenie nauczycieli i brak ram instytucjonalnych – utrudniają stałe zaangażowanie rodzin. W artykule postuluje się systemową integrację edukacji międzykulturowej z programami nauczania, strategiczne mechanizmy współpracy szkoła-rodzina oraz zrównoważone programy rozwoju nauczycieli. Są to niezbędne kroki, które mają zapewnić, że edukacja stanie się przestrzenią transformacyjną, w której różnice kulturowe nie tylko będą uznawane, ale także aktywnie cenione.

Abstract

In the context of increasing cultural diversity in educational settings, fostering an effective partnership between schools and families emerges as a critical factor for the promotion of inclusive and intercultural education. This article explores the synergistic dynamics of family-school collaboration in supporting students' intercultural competence and the institutionalization of cultural diversity as an educational value. Drawing on a mixed-method study conducted in Moldovan schools with ethnically heterogeneous populations, the research investigates educators' and parents' perceptions, practices, and attitudes towards intercultural engagement. Findings reveal a positive declarative orientation toward intercultural education but limited practical implementation, indicating a significant gap between awareness and action. Isolated examples of good practice demonstrate the potential for participatory approaches, while structural and attitudinal barriers—such as insufficient teacher training and lack of institutional frameworks—hinder consistent family involvement. The article advocates for systemic integration of intercultural education into curricula, strategic family-school collaboration mechanisms, and sustained teacher development programs. These are essential steps to ensure education becomes a transformative space where cultural difference is not only acknowledged, but actively valued.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja międzykulturowa, różnorodność kulturowa, współpraca szkoła-rodzina, integracja, kompetencje międzykulturowe, praktyki edukacyjne, spójność społeczna, wzajemny szacunek.

Keywords: intercultural education, cultural diversity, family-school collaboration, inclusion, intercultural competences, educational practices, social cohesion, mutual respect.