

## EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL COUNSELING. AXIOLOGICAL AND PRAXIOLOGICAL CONCERNS<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The educational counseling, an integral part of the pedagogical correlation between educator and student, represents an important factor in preventing difficulties that can interfere with the psycho-social development of the student. Similarly, pastoral counseling, a component of the missionary activity performed by the Church, highlights the values of Christian Morality that are shared to all growing individuals, not only, but it has the purpose to correct the behavioural deviations and lackings, both spiritual and educational. Both educational and pastoral counseling are preoccupied, in the same manner, with the valorization of human dignity and quality, of free communication of one's emotions, experiences, aspirations, both personal and professional, of the responsibility of one's decisions, of the seriousness and competence in relation to one's problems. The present study proposes a comparative analysis of the notes defining the educational counseling and pastoral counseling in axiological and praxiological terms. Also, we wanted to highlight the necessity of a real collaboration between family, school and Church, to prevent parents-children conflicts. In this regard, we want to describe a case of educational and pastoral intervention.*

**Keywords:** *counseling, educational counseling, pastoral counseling, partnership Family-School-Church*

### 1. Introduction

In a society under the impetus of rapid development, in which things experience unprecedented dynamics, the individual is forced to adapt to new working and living conditions, which is not without personal consequences. The deficiencies they can develop are shortcomings of educational, emotional, socio-professional, spiritual, and not only. In this context, we consider the educational counseling and pastoral counseling activities undertaken at a family, school and Church level. The present study does not propose a quantitative research. It proposes a comparative analysis of the notes defining the educational counseling and pastoral counseling in axiological and

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praxiological terms. Also, we wanted to highlight the necessity of a real collaboration between family, school and Church, to prevent parents-children conflicts.

Prior to the comparative analysis of the axiological and praxiological aspects of educational and pastoral counseling, it is necessary to specify some defining notices of counseling.

- counseling describes the inter-human relationship of help and communication between a specialized person, the counselor, and the person or group requesting specialized assistance, the counselee; the essential aspects of the counseling relationship are: confidentiality, sincerity and mutual respect;

- counseling is an indispensable tool for the psychologist, the teacher, the priest, the social worker and any specialist in human resources;

- counseling is a complex process that includes a very wide range of interventions - support, information, training, orientation, facilitation, motivation, listening - requiring specialized professional training;

- counseling is a special communication and search experience.

An essential component of the educational process, educational counseling integrates and capitalizes on the concepts and principles of humanistic psychology. At its center lies "the man and his problems, his personal and relational life ..." (Zlate, 2000, p. 104). Individual expression, experience, choice, creativity, freedom, dignity and human quality are the main values of humanistic theory and practice. According to humanist psychology, awareness of certain availabilities and cultivation of the desire to be free, creative, spontaneous leads to personal and professional satisfaction.

Educational counseling involves the inter-human relationship of assistance and psycho-pedagogical support between the counselor teacher and the pupil/group of pupils in the process of personality development. It presents "two dimensions": "psychological dimension" and "pedagogical dimension" (Dumitru, 2008, p. 53). "Psychological dimension" seeks optimal psycho-social adaptation "by congruence between cognitions, emotions, attitudes and own behaviors". "Pedagogical/educational dimension" aims at "provoking voluntary changes in people's cognitions, attitudes and behaviors by engaging them in specific educational and training activities" that allow for adaptation to the demands of reality (Dumitru, 2008, p. 53).

Through the educational counseling action, the student is helped to explore his thoughts, emotions and behaviors, to identify his personal resources for optimal bio-psycho-social functioning. Through the psycho-educational milestones they offer to students and their parents, educational counseling facilitates self-knowledge, development and maturation, as an important factor in preventing learning and socio-educational adaptation issues. Aware of his vocation, the teacher has to ensure through the school and extra-curricular activities the optimal inter and intra-relational communication framework, emotional expression, learning and problem solving.

In turn, pastoral counseling, a component of the Church's missionary activity, highlights the values of Christian morals shared by all those in training and not only aiming at an authentic moral conduct centered on education/inner/ spiritual/spiritual life, preventing and correcting behavioral deviations and spiritual, educational, and social deficiencies. Pastoral counseling began with the first catechesis that benefited the

new Christians and those who wanted to enter the ranks of those baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. A testimony in this regard is given by the *Didacchia* or the *Teachings of the Twelve Apostles* (although discovered late in the nineteenth century and dated as a manuscript in the 11th century, it advertises through content and approach the contemporaneity with the Gospels according to Luke and Matthew, which places the origin in the first and second centuries) (Coman, 2000, p.33).

In pastoral counseling, priests are mindful of a Christian social model linked to the realities and needs of our day, while taking care that the concerns and tendencies of today's society do not express themselves beyond Christian morality. In other words, there is a need for recognition and adaptation to the contemporary man in the context of identifying his shortcomings and finding new elements, strategies and collaborations to help him overcome the challenges and challenges that his life proposes in an axiological Christian context. Starting from The Christian Tradition of the theologian Jaroslav Pelikan, Cornelia Marie-Jeanne Stoian, emphasizes that "the realities of the modern European Christian world can not be ignored when we want to present the believer as a social model" (Stoian, 2007, pp. 44-45).

Starting from the works of the Holy Fathers and the Christ model, the Church promotes models of conduct complementary to those proposed by educational counseling. In its approach to counseling, the Church will always depart from the Christ model, "the moral model through excellence of humanity" (Nechita, 2008, p. 123). Father Professor Vasile Nechita, evoking Nicholas Steinhardt (Monk Nicholas of Rohia), shows that *the Decalogue* and *the Blessings* represent unparalleled religious values and the essence of the moral Christian approach (Nechita, 2008, p. 123).

The Church needs to step up its efforts to identify the new challenges that current reality proposes, but also work partners at the socio-educational level. It is necessary to achieve a wider openness to interdisciplinarity, by capitalizing on the psychological, pedagogical and not the psychotherapeutic valences of the activities undertaken (in a spiritual setting where the confessor becomes a therapist). In this sense, we consider the educational partnership action the Church is doing with family and school.

## **2. Objectives**

The present study proposes two objectives:

Objective 1: comparative analysis of the notes defining the educational counseling and pastoral counseling in axiological and praxiological terms.

Objective 2: highlighting the necessity of a real collaboration between family, school and Church, to prevent parents-children conflicts (descriptive case study).

## **3. Methods**

The methods used are the comparative analysis and descriptive case study.

The comparative analysis followed the description of the notes that define the educational counseling and pastoral counseling in axiological and praxiological terms.

The descriptive case study involved the description of the educational and pastoral counseling activities out to prevent the parents-family conflicts.

#### 4. Results

**Objective 1:** comparative analysis of the notes defining the educational counseling and pastoral counseling in axiological and praxiological terms.

The analysis criteria were as follows: habilitated personnel, place, beneficiaries, objectives, values and attitudes, problematics, approaches, evaluation.

Table 1

*Comparative analysis of educational counseling and pastoral counseling*

	<b>Educational counseling</b>	<b>Pastoral counseling</b>
<b>HABILITATED PERSONNEL</b>	Pre-school teacher, primary school teacher, teacher-headmaster, school counselor	Priest
<b>PLACE</b>	School, as part of the <i>Personal Development, Counseling and Vocational Guidance, Dirigation</i>	- Church - preach, catechesis - School - at the time of Religion - Cultural places where events related to the teaching of the Orthodox Church. - Home (liturgical services)
<b>BENEFICIARIES</b>	Class of students, parents	Believers (children, adolescents, young people, adults)
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitating learning</li> <li>- practicing some desirable behaviors from a psycho-social point of view</li> <li>- crisis prevention</li> <li>- communication and effective networking</li> <li>- problem solving and decision making</li> <li>- developing sensitivity for the needs of others</li> <li>- formulating goals</li> <li>- identifying, organizing, planning and allocating resources</li> <li>- obtaining and using information</li> <li>- personal and career planning, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-knowledge</li> <li>- spiritual training and development</li> <li>- promoting spiritual health by assimilating moral-religious values and an authentic Christian conduct line - living in accordance with the dogmas and canons of the Orthodox Church.</li> <li>- crisis prevention</li> <li>- remedy</li> </ul>
<b>VALUES AND ATTITUDES</b>	- respect for self and others, recognition of the uniqueness of each person, receptivity to the emotions of others, valorisation of interpersonal relations, critical and selective valorisation of information, adaptation and openness to new types of learning, motivation and flexibility in developing their own educational path professional etc.	faith, love, tolerance

Table 1

*Comparative analysis of educational counseling and pastoral counseling*

	<b>Educational counseling</b>	<b>Pastoral counseling</b>
<b>PROBLEMATICS</b>	Self-knowledge and personal development Communication and social skills Information and learning management Career Planning The quality of lifestyle	- Counseling on existential issues (personal, family, educational, professional, religious, etc.) - Prevention of anxiety, depression, aggression, suicide, abortion, violence of any kind - Intervention in crisis situations (divorce, illness, death, abandonment). - Informing and training believers on topics of genuine Christian living, based on love, forgiveness and good deeds
<b>APPROACHES</b>	interactive work strategies: brainstorming, debate, problem-solving, role-playing, simulation, case study, critical thinking techniques, metaphorical exercises, art-creative methods, etc.	Promoting the Christ model among the faithful, confession, debate, problem-solving, case study, critical analysis
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Self - evaluation, interest and skills questionnaires, observation, individual and group projects	In the confession or by studying the behavior of the subjects

Axiological and praxiological similarities and differences between educational counseling and pastoral counseling:

- educational and pastoral counseling are equally concerned with the valorization of human dignity and quality, the freedom of communication of one's own emotions, experiences, aspirations, in one word, the uniqueness of the person.

- educational and pastoral counseling offer the possibility of personal, professional, social and spiritual exploration, personality development and maturity, promoting another type of learning - *existential learning* - learning to be honest, creative, spontaneous, authentic, balanced, good, responsible, etc.

- educational and pastoral counseling contribute to the development of the attitude-value dimension of personality, optimizing communication and interpersonal relationships, reflection, problem solving, critical use of information, decision making, setting realistic goals, active participation in community life, prevention in different situations of socio-educational and spiritual crisis and, implicitly, improvement of the quality of life;

- there are not differences than for the specialists who perform the educational and pastoral counseling and location.

**Objective 2:** highlighting the necessity of a real collaboration between family, school and Church, to prevent parents-children conflicts (descriptive case study).

Research has demonstrated the positive relationship between the existence and effective functioning of educational partnerships and the success of students in the

academic, social, behavioral and emotional spheres. The most common theories that support the need for educational partnerships are the following: the social networking paradigm (Barnes, 1972; Leinhart, 1977); social capital theory (Coleman, 1987); the theory of intersection of spheres of influence (Epstein, 1990).

Family, school and community influence children's growth and development at the same time. "The main reason for creating such partnerships is the desire to help students succeed in school and later in life. When parents, students, and other members of the community consider each other as partners in education, a support community is set up around the pupils that are starting to function" (Agabrian, 2006, p. 7). Through the educational and pastoral counseling activities involved, the whole family dynamics is directed towards a process of learning, developing and optimizing the relationship with the child and adolescent, knowledge and development of their personal characteristics, identifying the difficulties behavioral, social-emotional and learning, providing the necessary support in accordance with specific psycho-pedagogical requirements and needs, exercising and developing appropriate behaviors and attitudes etc.

Through the parental models they offer, the family exerts a particular formative influence on the moral behavior of children. In this regard, St. John Chrysostom claimed that "the primary purpose of education is the formation of the adult man" (Mada, 2008, p. 89). The family is the primary factor of the child's formation and socialization. Parents are the primary source for children and the most powerful learning, affective support and security.

In turn, the school, through the values and attitudes it promotes in the various fields of scientific, aesthetic, moral-religious, technological, psycho-physical knowledge, is actively involved in the harmonious development of the personality of children and adolescents, its goal being to integrate and adapt its socio-professional adaptation to the demands of an information society that is constantly changing and redefining.

In the synergistic work Family-School-Church, the basic principle must be complementarity. Designing the family, the school and the Church as institutions capable of responding effectively to the child's psycho-social needs, providing the optimal framework for the formation and development of the personality, is vital in contemporary society. In the present context, only good collaboration between family, school and the Church can generate the appropriate framework for authentic communication between educator and educated. Parents, teachers and priests are thus responsible for initiating a coherent program of educational and spiritual experiences, in which the promotion of the quality of life, the perennial values of humanity is a constant of their mission.

Recommendations on family educational and pastoral counseling: educational and pastoral programs for parents and children to prevent domestic violence and school violence; developing programs that involve parents in working with their children to develop specific skills; developing the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members (training courses for teachers, auxiliary teaching staff, school managers).

In this respect, we consider it appropriate to present a case study on the collaboration between the educational counselor and the priest as a pastoral counselor in order to prevent the parents-children conflicts:

### **Context**

October 1, the first day of the academic year. J. settled in the student hostels and received room accommodation with colleagues from older college years. Parents

rejoiced because J. could learn more about student life, about his duties and at the same time learn and acquire courses and materials from older colleagues, so the situation seemed to turn into an advantage. Being a young teacher, I was appointed as a tutor for the first year, where J. was also enrolled. At the opening ceremony, J. and his family particularly attracted attention: although the parents seemed more like grandparents (the difference in age was very large), all three were dressed very neat, sober but with chromatic unity and attention to detail, which made them remarked. After the first six weeks, I learned that J. no longer attends courses and didactic activities, neglects hygiene and develops conflicts with roommates. This led me to contact their parents and invite them to college for discussion. It took a week of delay, waiting for them to collect the pensions to move, for everything that they managed to save was demanded by J., who invoked all sorts of untrue reasons (attending paid auxiliary courses, the need for professional equipment required at college, huge costs for specialized books). J. lied to his colleagues and threatened them systematically with the position of his father, who in reality was a poor retiree, a worthy man who, together with his wife, did everything so that J. could only study. The mother of J. confessed to me that she could not have children and adopted J. at three weeks of her life, the child being abandoned in the hospital by her own mother. Both parents, former teachers and Christian practitioners have testified that they grew him in love, in the spirit of mankind, and that his behavior surprised him that J. did not live or saw anything inappropriate in their family, and that their expectations were with everything else. J. was overweight, lazy, and believed that everything was right to him. He knew the story, and instead of appreciating the toils of the adoptive parents, he answered them inappropriately and argued that they had not struggled more, that he needed expensive and luxurious things, threatening to commit suicide.

### **Solutions**

Parents have indicated their intention to address a psychologist and priest in the community. Because in the "Ovidius" University of Constanta there is a Center for Educational and Professional Counseling, but also the Faculty of Theology, with priests-teachers qualified for such an activity, I have noticed that J. needs psycho-pedagogical counseling, doubled by pastoral counseling.

### **Results**

Both the educational and pastoral counselor understood the shortcomings of J. Working together to solve the conflict with their parents, they noticed that lies and emotional blackmail are based on lack of self-confidence because of physical appearance. Moreover, knowing that he was beloved by adoptive parents, J. believed that he could refute any shortcoming by arguing with them. During several meetings with counselor and teacher-father, J. realized where he was wrong in his relationship with his parents. He developed assertive behavior, assuming his economic condition. Later, he got hired in a supermarket, and today sends money to his parents to help. In turn, the parents, encouraged to change their attitude towards him, have understood that they need to give the boy more confidence, emotional security and understanding. From the time of his transformation, J. has never resorted to lying to be accepted into

certain social groups. For his sincerity, but also for the support he gave to his foster parents, J. was sought and respected.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The two counselors were complementary and explained to J. the role of the family, the respect, the gratitude and the joys that they bring, explained to him what nobility is and what he much do to be a real man. They unilaterally condemned the lie and pointed out the negative effects that this may have on the psychosocial and spiritual evolution of the person.

#### **5. Conclusions**

As mentioned above, our study proposed a comparative analysis of the notes defining the educational and pastoral counseling as well as the axiological and praxiological concerns of the two. Also, our aim was to highlight the need for real collaboration between family, school and the Church in practicing desirable psychosocial behaviors. In this respect, we presented a case of educational and pastoral intervention that was addressed in order to prevent the parents-children conflicts. The study highlighted the importance of the active, conscious and responsible involvement of the educational counselor and the priest in the educational, social and spiritual support of the person. It has also shown that the effectiveness of educational and pastoral counseling depends largely on the quality of the counseling relationship. It must be an alliance, participation and collaboration, based on mutual trust, empathy, mutual respect, objective appreciation, authenticity, etc. The positive valorization of personal resources, the stimulation of the attitude-value dimension of the personality represent the priority directions of the educational and pastoral counseling activity.

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