**International Journal of Educational Theory and Practice (IJETP)**
**Volume 8/ Issue 15/ 2021**

# THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS IN SCHOOLS (WEAVING WITH VEGETABLE FIBERS IN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND ROMANIA AS PART OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM)

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**Abstract**

The research aims to highlight some hours or manual work activities in schools, as a method of enhancing students' creativity through a recreational activity for them.

An important part of the research is the interviewing of specialists in the field with reference to the importance, practice and hanging of students towards this occupation. Thus, it was found that the working techniques of these handicrafts have undergone changes due to the fact that more and more students find it a very pleasant activity that helps them to spend their time and develop their creativity.

In conclusion, we can say that traditional manual work activities, even with certain difficulties, are an inexhaustible source of inspiration for children, providing a fruitful basis for education in modern schools. The rebirth of folk traditions and crafts, but especially the involvement of students in their promotion, contributes to the formation of the qualities of active citizens, inspired and dedicated to useful things.

**Keywords:** traditional crafts; school activities; abilities; creativity development; handcrafts; modern education.

## Introduction

### The actuality of the subject.

The interweaving of vegetable fibers is an old occupation, even before the appearance of the tissues. The interweaving products from the vegetable fibers keep the authenticity of folk art pieces and the value of the manufacturing of these useful objects and decorative at the same time so appreciated today therefore we consider it as a very good reason to use it in schools. It

can develop creativity and, at the same time, help the pupils to take a rest from theoretical learning during the school classes.

We consider that traditional braids are an unstoppable source of inspiration for children, providing, like other fields of folk art, a fruitful basis for relaxation, creativity and social interaction. Therefore, for kids it could be a very good way to express themselves by practicing these crafts in schools. Although the times and the activities change, the vital and aesthetic-creative needs of the human being to communicate and create the beautiful and useful always remain the same. To their satisfaction the human being, beginning from the school, must possess practical, beautiful and profitable activities. This craft is used as a raw material agricultural vegetable fibers, being an accessible raw material, quite widespread in the area of the Republic of Moldova, being a product of first necessity, renewable, pure-ecological and biodegradable, easy to process, having different shades of colors and gloss natural.

The presented topic is currently important in the context of the return to the traditions and to the valorization of the cultural heritage by teaching the kids the importance of these crafts and also by encouraging them to experiment their creativity and imagination in a fun way. It could help the children to understand that the education also can be funny and it could be practiced in a relaxed way, finding the school as a relaxed environment.

**Assumption**

Highlighting the importance and usefulness of maize leaves, which are not just mere elements of vegetation, but elements from which the school can be turned in a pleasant and relaxed environment for the pupils, this is the purpose we have proposed in the elaboration of the work.

To research the theme we set the following objectives:

- presentation of tools and methods of braiding which can be used by pupils at school
- realization of the comparative aspect between the working techniques and their influence on developing the creativity during the school years
- ensuring the reliability and continuity of the traditional crafts as a part of contemporain education

**Research structure.**

The research includes an introduction, two basic chapters, conclusions/ recommendations and bibliography. The first chapter is based on the theoretical analysis of the craft (and its importance in schools) and also aims at comparative analysis of the working techniques for children. The second chapter assumes the practical part and highlights the beauty

and uniqueness of this art through the working methods and techniques used to develop the creativity of pupils and to teach them what a healthy concurrence means. It also includes interviewing the teachers Burlacu Nicolae and Opinca Tudor (teachers who promote this art), to emphasize the role of this craft as a school subject.

**Research methodology.**

The basic method of our research is the comparative analysis of the working techniques for children, but also the importance of this subject as a part of an educational development for pupils. In order to gather the necessary information we have resorted to researching the bibliographic sources and interviewing the specialists in the field to find out details regarding this craft and its importance in children's education.

**Novelty**

The formal component of education is increasingly felt in modern teaching techniques, so it is necessary to have an impetus and as many ideas as possible to give education a more positive role in the development and appreciation of children as unique personalities, with ideas, aspirations and imagination. Less information and more educational training - this is what we want to suggest through this article. This seems to be the motto of new school teachers.

Through an interview with teachers who already know how to implement these activities in the school curriculum, we are going to demonstrate their usefulness and importance in the child's development during school hours.

**Utility**

This paper can serve as a support for technology education classes in the primary, general and high school cycle, and can also be useful information to help those who wish to find a useful and beautiful occupation, which in the future could provide them with an income in order to open their miraculous mysteries of the plaiting of maize leaves and, the last but not the least, to cultivate interest in self-development and to find a way to get rid of the stress and the use of logic and fantasy.

**The importance of traditional crafts subjects in school education**

The schoolchildren benefit from such activities, but it is the role of the teacher to ensure that they take place in a harmonious and, most importantly: safe way, therefore, this kind of activities with traditional crafts can assure the teacher that it is the best option in this case. Manual work has various benefits that are hard to ignore, and only a few of them would be:

- It unites the whole group of children and ensures that "quality time" that any school group needs
- It offers the child alternatives of fun and without games on the computer / tablet
- Encourage the little one's creativity
- Develop imagination and curiosity (the desire to explore)
- Improves the child's dexterity and motor skills, as well as hand-eye coordination
- It contributes to the education process - either through language development, the association of images with abstract concepts, the identification of numbers, colors of these craft activities.
- It shows the child what "teamwork" means, while giving him the freedom to be independent and to express his personality.
- It has important connotations on the work-reward process (pride in having done something on your own, from scratch, etc.)
- Children learn to practice logic, to be responsible, to use or to develop their skills
- Contributes to the development of self-confidence.

First of all, the first thing to consider is how accessible the work tools are to the child. As we already mentioned, vegetable fibers are easy to obtain, which also offers an alternative for the development of the child's responsibility (he must think ahead of time, gather the raw material, take care to keep it together dry and protected). Many theories regarding the development of the little ones' personality reveal that they are innate "creators", with a natural tendency towards fantasy, experimentation and exploration of the psychic and conceptual environment. Also, not once have we heard the expression "School limits the child, does not value creativity, etc." Therefore, these activities in school education are extremely welcome, because first of all they emphasize the creativity and social interaction of the child, and being a practical activity, children have the opportunity to relax and detach from theoretical lessons, which predominates in school education today.

According to Carrie Barron, psychiatrist and co-author of The Creativity Cure: *How to Build Happiness with Your Own Two Hands*, creating something with your own hands makes you feel satisfied and satisfying, which has mental health benefits. He states that when you do something, you feel productive, and the involvement, commitment and perseverance, which are born of this creative activity, contribute to accelerating all cognitive processes, as well as improving mood. In this paper, the authors mention that manual work is the ideal way of self-

expression, allowing us to get rid of negative thoughts and the effects of unpleasant experiences. Manual work and creative activity thus become the way to achieve emotional catharsis, purification and reinforcement.

At school, children are subjected to certain types of assessments, presentations, training that stress them, although we do not always realize it, but they are more and more tense, worried, stressed, which is why, in the educational process, there must be such activities, to help them get rid of stress and less pleasant moments in the educational process.

The philosopher Anaxagoras said, *"With hands, man becomes the most intelligent of animals."* In other words, self-expression increases brain activity, and when the child starts creating, the areas in the motor cortex are somatosensory stimulated, and this process of stimulation enhances the creation of connections between different parts of the brain. In this context, it is stated that intelligence is closely related to the number of brain connections, and does not depend on the size of the brain. Therefore, the more they create and master, the more connections are established at the brain level, and… (that's right!). The smarter, healthier and relaxed they will be. This is the reason why manual work is a suitable and recommended activity for children, to start brain training at different ages.

**Interview with teachers of technological education**

| **Question** | **Opinca Tudor** | **Nicolae Burlacu** |
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| **1. How long have you been practicing this craft?** | The first attempts to find out about this working method were like a miracle, until there were the first attempts to touch with my hands the plant fibers. The firsts articles made seemed at the moment some primitive masterpieces, but, trying new working methods, which were inspired by the popular artisans heard, being publicized, the working technique I found improved, | I have been practicing this craft for 15 years. It all started with simple glances, and then I thought I might try it, then this task started to call my attention more and more, especially since I had competitors in this field, and we all know that healthy competition can stimulate us to do our best. |

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| | being the articles executed more qualitatively, from the aesthetic and domestic point of view better. Many of the works were appreciated at multiple local and district exhibitions, motivating me to promote this popular craft among the younger generations. | |
| **2.What motivated you to choose this subject?** | As a student at the "Alexandru Plămădeală" (Repina) College of Arts, I studied craftsmanship with the works related to plant fibers and clay. I was impressed by the vegetable fiber works that gave an impetus to practice such a craft and being a teacher of technological education I practice this working technique, being a promoter and evaluator of the regional competition for technological education, and the leading positions occupied motivate me to return to this chapter every year. | Once, participating in an international festival "In the shadow of the oak tree" I was impressed by the beauty and charm of an exhibition of works made of gloves. From that moment I decided to implement this module in the hours of technological education, especially, that the raw material should not be purchased. |
| **3. What do students/pupils think about this module?** | Having promulgated the curriculum in technological education and having new modules, we chose the plant fibers, a compartment available from the point of | The students are passionate about this craft, they show an interest and a proper attitude towards this module, they present at the lesson with pleasure and responsibility. I |

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| | view of raw materials and working techniques for both girls and boys. I was the first teacher that introduced this working technique, the students had a great passion and executed many works with new elements, invented by themselves. | am glad that there are students who are looking forward to coming back again and again to this mode, they come up with new ideas for realization/ making some items. |
| **4. Have you ever participated in exhibitions or fairs with glove objects?** | The works performed with the students, over the years, oblige me year after year, in the decade of technological education, to expose the articles made from vegetable fibers with the generic "By craft we will keep a nation". Through partnership with the Culture House in the locality, we participate in various local and regional exhibitions (Annex1), having rewarding places. | We participated in an exhibition of works made of wood and gloves during the holidays "Wine Day" and "International Children's Day" in our country. In the decade of technological education we also organize different exhibitions to appreciate the best of the best (Annex 2). |
| **5. Do you consider that this craft can contribute to the development of the creative spirit during their time in school?** | From the experience of the specialized readings, I can say that this has a considerable impact on the creative development of children, especially those with mental deficiencies, who are isolated from society. As an example, we have the experiment that was carried out at the boarding | This craft develops the creative spirit for sure. During the work with the gloves the pupils develop several capacities: imagination, thinking, creativity, etc., not in vain, the works made of gloves are called creations. Obviously, this craft has a great contribution to the |

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| | school in Cinişeuţi village, Rezina, according to which, for 2 months, the children were having the task of making maize articles, being permanently monitored by specialists in the field with a special program. As a result, there have been changes in the process of executing many tasks, the children showing the mastery of work in this field according to their abilities. | development of the creative spirit, and this is observed even in the pupils, each improvising in its own way, manifesting in this way the improvisation and creativity. |
| **6. What do you think about the future of this craft?** | I try to believe that this work will contribute to the promotion and development of our cultural heritage. I hope that the young generations will assume the responsibility of promoting this craft and beyond the borders of our country, in order to enjoy this wealth, for generations. | This craft will prosper, because the articles made of gloves are useful, decorative, ecological and have an aesthetic exterior appearance. The craft can be promoted by organizing exhibitions and fairs with objects made of gloves, organizing and conducting the most interesting and captivating teaching activities, hiring qualified teachers in schools in this field, providing institutions with special workshops equipped for this craft. |

**Conclusions and recommendations:**

Lately, it is observed that our education system does not always focus on the development of a systemic, critical, collateral or at least contextual way of thinking. Our education system

focuses on the development of linear thinking and short-term memory, which in the long run can have negative consequences to the highest degree.

It is difficult to come up with ideas that can solve the problem at the level of a generation, but we know for sure what we can do to improve performance in the real world, at the individual level. A unique and interactive way to develop the child's contextual thinking, language, creativity, social relationships, emotional and even physical part, is to participate with him in creative and personal development workshops for children. Creativity is a multidimensional and multidisciplinary concept that can be seen as an effect of positive brain reorganization.The introduction in schools of practical activities, manual work, with vegetable fibers or other types of materials stimulates creativity and free expression, meant to develop and improve the child-child, student-teacher relationship.

On the other hand, it aims to develop certain skills such as: imagination, concentration, emotional intelligence, language, cognition, social component, practical skills and artistic sense, with the help of games, stories, personal and emotional development techniques and dialogue during the realization of these objects / activities. Based on the examples offered by teachers, who already use these techniques, we can realize that all the theories presented above are really effective, that children love these activities and have very good results at school after these occupations.

That is why we consider that this subject is very important and must be considered an alternative to provide a better education to children and increase the development of the creative side.

Annex 1

Annex 2

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