



A brief history of family life education in Romania

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the state of conceptual diversity, semantic ambiguity, and poor connection of family life education practices to current policies and theoretical models in Romania, our study aims at understanding the underlying meanings of these issues by recourse to the history of approaches in the field. To this purpose, we carried out a qualitative historical research, based on the thematic analysis of a set of educational works produced between the sixteenth century, when the first Romanian texts were written, and the present time. Primary historical sources are supplemented with reliable secondary sources, while the criteria used for the selection of texts were their relevance to family life education (FLE), and the notoriety of the works in the corresponding historical periods. As in western countries, the concept of FLE was coined in Romania at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the family education discourse was outlined, but the roots of the field can be traced even in the first printed texts. Although marked by strong moral and religious emphases during pre-modernity, FLE has entered the slow process of secularisation and evolved from the perspective of political, social, and moral reconstruction goals of modern Romania. However, FLE's goals and contents were redefined during Communism, and the discrepancies between discourses, practices, and realities compromised the functionality of the pedagogical model promoted at the time. A unitary definition of FLE in relation to Romanian contemporary families' needs requires reconciliation with historical, cultural, and educational premises, as well as a careful contextualisation of western models and practices.

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Introduction

Family life education (FLE) informally begins within the family; it is a lifelong process and may be considered a historical constant throughout societies. Although the premises of this domain are much older, formal and informal FLE interventions crystallised during the first half of the twentieth century, in particular in the North American states.¹ FLE emerged as an answer to families' dynamic needs, shaped by searches and tensions triggered by the

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¹Margaret Arcus, "Family Life Education: Toward the 21st Century," *Family Relations* 41, no. 4 (1992): 390–4; Jane Thomas and Margaret Arcus, "Family Life Education," *Family Relations* 41, no. 1 (1992): 3–8.

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changing social conditions derived from urban development and industrialisation, and changes in women's social roles.² Based on the North American theoretical reflections and practices of FLE, Thomas and Arcus³ set out the concept boundaries, outlining its goals: "to strengthen and to enrich individual and family well-being".⁴ Arcus⁵ anticipated a number of FLE highlights in the perspective of the twenty-first century, with a focus on parental, marital, and sex education programmes as content areas in this field, as well as some emerging directions such as ageing, elderly education, elder abuse, and celebration of family diversity. More recent contributions to the field⁶ confirm to a great extent these expectations, and emphasise new coordinates of interest in the context of globalisation, such as the balance between work and family life, diversification of family types, migration and transnational family relations, family and health. The professionalisation efforts in the field of FLE can be identified almost exclusively in the North American region,⁷ but the public interest in the family and its educational support is nowadays global. The specific elements of FLE derive from the social, economic, and cultural context, while the eclecticism of its contents is mainly determined by these peculiarities.⁸

In Romania, the meanings of FLE are currently reflected in the content of non-formal education programmes, yet rarely mirrored in the school curriculum. In contrast with the diversity of educational practices, the Romanian academic perspective on FLE is diffuse and lacks systematisation. Analysing contemporary family policies in the Eastern European countries, including Romania, Robila mentions the low number of academic programmes focusing on family from an interdisciplinary perspective, resulting in a shortage of family scholars and practitioners.⁹ In her opinion, FLE programmes centred on gender equality, conflict management strategies, marital life, and parenthood should be organised in various formal and non-formal settings, i.e. schools, universities, hospitals, and community centres, to meet the needs of contemporary families in Eastern Europe.¹⁰ In post-communist Romania, the fragmentary academic vision of family life seems to have rather benefited psychological¹¹ and sociological¹² perspectives. Despite the absence of a consistent theoretical

²Arcus, "Family Life Education"; Margaret Arcus, "Advances in Family Life Education: Past, Present and Future," *Family Relations* 44, no. 4 (1995): 336–44.

³Thomas and Arcus, "Family Life Education".

⁴Ibid., 4.

⁵Arcus, "Advances in Family Life Education".

⁶See Sharon M. Ballard and Michael Lane Morris, "The Family Life Education Needs of Midlife and Older Adults," *Family Relations* 52, no. 2 (2003): 129–36; Carol A. Darling, Michael W.M. Flemming, and Dawn Cassidy, "Professionalization of Family Life Education: Defining the Field," *Family Relations* 58, no. 3 (2009): 330–45.

⁷See Arcus, "Family Life Education"; Arcus, "Advances in Family Life Education"; Darling et al., "Professionalization of Family Life Education".

⁸Carol A. Darling and Kaija Turkki, "Global Family Concerns and the Role of Family Life Education: An Ecosystemic Analysis," *Family Relations* 58, no. 1 (2009): 14–27; Carmen Orte-Socias and Joan Amer-Fernández, "Las adaptaciones culturales del Strengthening Families Program en Europa. Un ejemplo de programa de educación familiar basado en evidencia" [The cultural adaptations of Strengthening Families Program in Europe. An example of a family education program based on evidence], *Estudios Sobre Educación* 26 (2014): 175–95.

⁹Mihaela Robila, "Family Policies in Eastern Europe: A Focus on Parental Leave," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 21 (2010): 32–41.

¹⁰Ibid., 34.

¹¹See, for example, the following works: Iolanda Mitrofan and Nicolae Mitrofan, *Elemente de psihologie a cuplului* [Elements of couple psychology] (București: Casa de Editură și Presă "Sansa" SRL, 1994); Iolanda Mitrofan and Cristian Ciupercă, *Psihologia vietii de cuplu: între iluzie și realitate* [The psychology of couple life: between illusion and reality] (București: Editura SPER, 2002); Maria Nicoleta Turliuc, *Psihologia cuplului și a familiei* [Couple and family psychology] (Iași: Editura Performantica, 2004).

¹²See, for example, the following works: Elisabeta Stănculescu, *Sociologia educației familiale, Volumul I Strategii educative ale familiilor contemporane* [Sociology of family education. Educational strategies of contemporary families] (Iași: Polirom, 1997); Elisabeta Stănculescu, *Sociologia educației familiale, Volumul II Familie și educație în societatea românească: o istorie critică a intervenționismului utopic* [Family and education in Romanian society. A critical history of utopian interventionism] (Iași: Polirom, 1998).

FLE framework, the educational approach to family became more visible through the multiplication of practices, most of them western in origin.

This study proposes an integrative perspective of FLE, grounded in the semantics of the concept discussed above, but also considering the particularities of contemporary Romanian educational practices, which will be further detailed in a distinct section of this article. More specifically, in this contribution we approach FLE as an educational endeavour to support the family and/or its members to improve and enrich their family life. FLE addresses various categories of people (children, youth, adults, elderly) and meets their educational needs related to future roles as family members in their prospective families.

The rationale of the present contribution resides in clarifying and systemising FLE's finalities and content in the Romanian context; the study aims at shaping the premises of contemporary approaches and conceptual roots by means of historical research on a selection of educational works elaborated between the sixteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Methodology

Considering the purpose of the study – the understanding of FLE's conceptual and practical meanings in the contemporary Romanian context, by recourse to the history of the field – our analysis aims at integrating: a) the *descriptive perspective* oriented towards establishing FLE's peculiarities in Romania since the early days of written culture until the present time; b) the *explanatory perspective* centred on interpreting FLE's peculiarities in relation to political, social, and cultural coordinates; and c) the *critical perspective* that materialises in setting out the relevance of FLE traditions and historical fundamentals to contemporary conceptualisations and practices.

The paper reports on qualitative historical research, consisting of the thematic analysis of a set of Romanian written documents and texts published between the sixteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, selected in compliance with the FLE working definition. The study begins with the analysis of some works belonging to the seventeenth century, when the first texts were printed in the Romanian territory. These texts were written in the Slavonic language and had a religious content. The evolution of ideas and practices regarding FLE in the Romanian context is divided into periods in relation to the historical stages of the Romanian state evolution and the sociocultural dominants. Thus, in the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (mediaeval and pre-modern Romania), FLE is approached from a religious–laic perspective; in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (modern Romania), FLE is connected to national ideals and the effort to build a national educational system; in the second half of the twentieth century (communist Romania), FLE relates to the family ideal perverted by communist propaganda; at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century (post-communist Romania), FLE practices and discourse are redefined in relation to western educational models and family life dynamics.

For the analysis of texts written between the sixteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century (until 1830), we consulted the translation of their copies included by Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoş in *Bibliografie românească veche* [Early Romanian bibliography] (BRV), volume I (published in 1903), volume II (published in 1910), and volume III (published in 1912). The Romanian exegesis and historiography show that the authors of

these primary sources of historical information were prominent figures of the communities they represented or from which they originated: rulers of the pre-modern Romanian states; ministers, mayors of the relevant modern cities; and members of teaching and academic staff.¹³ The texts written between the second half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century and the papers dating back to the first decades of this century have also been selected based on their authors' reputation and reflection of FLE's theoretical and practical perspectives.

In addition, the corpus also includes several relevant legislative documents regarding family life and educational matters,¹⁴ and secondary sources including monographs, lexicographic, historiographic, and history works of Romanian pedagogy.¹⁵

Religion and laicism in shaping FLE in mediaeval and pre-modern Romanian society

At the beginning of the sixteenth century there were three principalities on the current territory of Romania: Wallachia, Moldavia (autonomous states, under Ottoman sovereignty), and Transylvania (principality subordinated to the Hungarian Kingdom). At the end of the century, the three Romanian states were united for a short period (1599–1600) by Mihai Viteazul, but awareness of common interests and expectations, as well as recognition of a unitary language occurred over two centuries later. The political process involving the establishment and consolidation of Moldova and Wallachia was closely followed by the development and consolidation of the church.¹⁶ Transylvania was under the rule of the Hungarian kings, as the status of the province only changed in 1699 when Hungary passed under the authority of Austria. These political and cultural realities explain the predominance of the Slavonic language, recognised as the official language for the church and state in Moldavia and Wallachia, while in Transylvania Latin was used for official texts and religious services.¹⁷

¹³We are aware that the authors' upper-class status associated with formal power structures may limit the historical research, yet these are the only sources of written texts on social life and educational practices at specific times in Romania. See also Lawrence W. Neuman's statement in *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3rd ed. (New York: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 405: "a frequent criticism of written sources is that they were largely written by elites or those in official organizations; thus, the views of illiterate, the poor, or those outside official social institutions may be overlooked".

¹⁴Law on Public Education, promulgated by Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 1864; Spiru Haret's laws on secondary and tertiary education, from 1889 and vocational education from 1899; Law of Primary Education from 1924; Social Service Law, promulgated by Dimitrie Gusti, 1939; Education Reform Act 1948; Education Act 1968; Education Law of 1978; Annex to Ministerial Order No. 4496 / 11.08.2004 approving curricula for optional health education programme approved by Ministerial Order No. 4496 / 11.08.2004.

¹⁵Nicolae Iorga, *Contribuții la istoria învățământului în țară și în străinătate. 1780–1830* [Contribution to the history of education in the country and abroad] (București: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Gobl, 1906); Iorga Nicolae, *Istoria învățământului românesc* [History of Romanian instruction], ediție îngrijită, studiu introductiv și note de Ilie Popescu Teiușan (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1971); Ștefan Bărsănescu, *Istoria pedagogiei românești* [History of the Romanian pedagogy] (București: Societatea Română de Filozofie, 1941); Ștefan Bărsănescu and Florela Bărsănescu, *Educația, învățământul, gândirea pedagogică în România* [Education, instruction and Romanian pedagogical thinking] (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978); Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *Bibliografie românească veche* [Early Romanian bibliography] vol. I (București: Socec, 1903); Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *Bibliografie românească veche* [Early Romanian bibliography] vol. II (București: Socec, 1910); Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *Bibliografie românească veche* [Early Romanian bibliography] vol. III (București: Socec, 1912).

¹⁶Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria bisericii ortodoxe române* [The history of the Romanian orthodox church] (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al B.O.R., 2006).

¹⁷A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană. Ediția a III-a. Primii domni și vechile așezăminte (1290–1457)* [History of the Romanian people in Dacia Traiana. First kings and old settlement. 1290–1457] vol. III. (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1925).

The first texts revealing major aspects of the Romanian cultural model of FLE were printed in the sixteenth century and were written by ecclesiastical representatives. The purpose of the analysis of such works in terms of FLE is to identify the historical roots of this concept, as premises for understanding the current studies and practices of family life in the Romanian cultural space.

The religious papers written during the pre-modern period are genuine collections of educational precepts for parents, consisting of advice on how to choose children's first names, and norms and conduct related to the baptism of future Christians. The *Evangheliarul lui Macarie* [Gospel book of Macarie] published in 1512 represents an explicit guideline that streamlines families towards a more responsible assumption of beliefs and religious conduct, addressing all generations: "I pray the youth, adults and the elderly to better themselves!"¹⁸ The motifs are complex and often centred on the relationship between knowledge, moral conduct, and national identity. According to *Evanghelia învățătoare* [The teaching gospel], printed in 1644 at Dealu Monastery, Romania's evolution as a nation depends on understanding the Scriptures, not simply on reading them,¹⁹ and, in speech terms, the learning process may be associated with phrases like "improvement", "follow the light (A./N. of knowledge)", and "having the skills of Scriptures".

Although the state started to take responsibility for disseminating written works and educating the people, particularly by the end of this stage, religious and laic content continued to coexist until the nineteenth century, with the prevalence of the former. Most of the representative texts that comprise FLE elements and have a major impact on culture and educational practices were produced in the sixteenth century in monastic schools. Royal chanceries, carefully coordinated by the rulers or princes of Romanian principalities, also started to assume the responsibility for prints. The central educational work of this century is considered *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său, Teodosie* [The teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son, Teodosie], supposedly written by Neagoe Basarab,²⁰ the ruler of Wallachia between 1512 and 1521.²¹ The core idea of the text is the sacrifice made by parents, the mother in particular,²² in order to provide Neagoe, the future ruler, with a good education. The same idea of making families accountable for their children's education is also present in *Ceasornicul domnilor* [The dial of princes], a text written by Antonio Guevara and translated by Nicolae Costin.²³ While providing "genuine old parental education norms [...] full of wisdom, and piously lectured nowadays",²⁴ the text also presents FLE practices from the perspective of parents' sociocultural status. The text emphasises the major educational input of social morality, pointing out the difference between the "ploughmen", whose

¹⁸Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoș published copies of texts printed between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: *Bibliografie românească veche 1508–1830* (BRV I), Tomul I [Early Romanian bibliography] vol I (București: Ediția Academiei Române, 1903), 47.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Contemporary with the great European thinkers and ethicists like Erasmus from Rotterdam, Luther, and Machiavelli, Neagoe Basarab seems to have written these lessons from 1513 to 1521, in Slavonic, for his personal use. The Romanian version was translated in the middle of the eighteenth century.

²¹G. Mihăilă and Dan Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)* [Early Romanian literature] vol. 1 (București: Editura Tineretului), 141.

²²Nicolae Iorga, *Contribuții la istoria învățământului în țară și în străinătate: 1780–1830* [Contribution to the history of education in the country and abroad] (București: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1906), 17.

²³Nicolae Iorga, in *Istoria literaturii române vechi, Vol. I, Dela origini până la epoca lui Matei Basarab și Vasile Lupu* [History of early Romanian literature. From the origins to Matei Basarab and Vasile Lupu times] (București: Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă "Regele Carol II"), 47, considers that the text had been translated by Nicolae Costin between 1710 and 1712.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 44.

children “wear loose clothing, ragged coats, eat and sleep right onto the ground, and yet in very good health”²⁵ and the social class made of “the great and highly educated ones”, whose parenting practices are incriminated due to their lack of life order, work discipline, and ethical life habits.²⁶

Descriptio Moldaviae, written by Dimitrie Cantemir, ruler of Moldavia between 1714 and 1716, is another representative text for understanding the role assumed by the royal chanceries in presenting, explaining, and writing down Romanian parenting practices. The book is considered to be the first document presenting a relatively coherent model for the analysis of parental relationships and the role of the family in education,²⁷ but it also criticises, similar to Nicolae Costin, the social hierarchy of those times and, most of all, the negative parenting practices associated with each social category. Cantemir provides a critical analysis of the culture of family education in the cultural and historical context of Moldavia at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He emphasises poor parents’ lack of interest in education, resulting from their own lack of education and interest in learning, often limiting children’s education to writing, reading, name recognition, and recording the household domestic animals.²⁸ According to some exegetes, the criticism towards the Moldavian small merchants and peasants is unfair,²⁹ as their social and political conditions were utterly unfavourable. Yet, Cantemir admits that education expanded throughout the eighteenth century due to the newly established schools, despite the fact that these were only attended by the children of nobles.

Bianu and Hodoş note the appearance, in 1777, of a printed version of the text entitled *Ducere de mână către cinste* [Guide to honesty] written by an anonymous author, whose headlines indicate the directions of a FLE strongly connected to the socio-religious morality of those times:

Part I: What apprentices need to acquire from their parents in order to learn and behave properly at school; Part II: About good habits, or equity, or man’s honour, his thoughts, actions, and conduct; Part III: To those getting married, and how to be honest and appreciated by others; Part IV: About households, and what you need to do and know as a good host; Part V: The wellbeing of peasants, and what they need to do to preserve it.³⁰

The church and literate priests played a major part in parental education and the promotion of the family’s social and cultural values between the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Transylvania, the national, social, and cultural movement of the Transylvanian School, started by a group of scholars within the Greek Catholic Church following the union with the Church of Rome around 1700, reached its climax at the beginning of the nineteenth century, thus contributing significantly to the development of schools providing instruction in Romanian, as well as to the dissemination of national culture. Ştefan Bârsănescu

²⁵Ibid., 73.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Elisabeta Stănculescu, *Sociologia educației familiale, Volumul II Familie și educație în societatea românească: o istorie critică a intervenționismului utopic* [Family and education in Romanian society. A critical history of utopian interventionism] (Iași: Polirom, 1998), 35.

²⁸Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descriptio Moldaviae* [Description of Moldavia] (București: Litera, [1769] 2001), 178.

²⁹G. Mihăilă, Dan Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche, 1402–1647* [Early Romanian literature] vol. 1 (București: Editura Tineretului), 117.

³⁰Ibid., 22.

appreciates the sociocultural activity of the Transylvanian School representatives as the beginning of the national pedagogy in Romania.³¹ Between 1787 and 1794, Gheorghe Șincai, the principal of all united Romanian schools in Transylvania, translated into Romanian the guidelines written by the German H. Helmuth, under the title *Învățătura firească spre surparea superstițiilor neamului* [Natural teachings for eliminating the superstitions of the people]. This work was produced at a time when the society recorded high infant mortality rates caused by parents' ignorance and excessive belief in superstitions and religious dogmas. The text, as stated in its Preface, is the testimony of times when the lights of reasoning struggled to remove the Middle Ages prejudgements, when knowledge struggled to destroy ignorance and superstitions, and the gradual process of secularisation worked hand in hand with the scientific findings. Through its contents, the manuscript mainly addressed the peasants, and not the intellectuals who were familiar to the debates of those times.³²

At the same time, Gheorghe Lazăr, a school teacher, founder of the first school providing instruction in Romanian (in 1818 in Wallachia), wrote *Scrisorile pentru părinți* [Letters to parents].³³ The text, printed nearly one century later, in 1912, consists of teachers' answers included in letters to parents, and approaches topics such as compliance with institutional rules, teachers' support for parents in reading school content, and conduct rules. In 1809, Petru Maior, another representative of this cultural movement, signed the *Propovedanii la îngropăciunea oamenilor morți* [Funeral sermons] and *Didahiile, adevă învățături pentru creșterea fiilor* [Preachings or teachings on child raising], emphasising the fundamental issues of the Romanian society and family of those times and particularly the relation between infant mortality and the lack of parental education. Lectured during sermons by priests who had been assigned the major role in parental education, Maior's works set the bases of family and adults' pedagogy in Romania in the early nineteenth century.³⁴

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, although FLE content continued to be marked by religious and moral views and remained dependent on churches and religious schools, they slowly entered the secularisation process and evolved in the perspective of firm national political and cultural ideals, strongly connected to the establishment of the national education system.

Family and FLE during the construction and development of the national education system in modern Romania

The nineteenth century started with the need for establishing an ideological, political, and cultural system for the rational Romanian society, in line with European ideas and cultural values.³⁵ The establishment of modern Romania coincided with the beginning of the

³¹Ștefan Bârsănescu, *Istoria pedagogiei românești* [History of Romanian pedagogy] (București: Societatea Română de Filozofie, 1941).

³²Gheorghe Șincai, *Învățătura firească spre surparea superstițiilor norodului* [Natural teachings for eliminating the superstitions of the people] (București: Editura Științifică, [1787–1794] 1964), 35.

³³Gheorghe Lazăr, *Scrisori pentru părinți* [Letters to parents] (București).

³⁴Bârsănescu, *Istoria pedagogiei românești*, 58.

³⁵In a favourable European context, Moldova and Wallachia were united in 1859 by the election of the same ruler, Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The Union of the Romanian Principalities was completed in January 1862, when Moldova and Wallachia formed a unitary state that officially adopted the name of Romania, with its capital city in Bucharest and a single assembly and government. The national component is a constant reference in the pedagogical language and action to the historical background of winning state independence and the transformation of modern Romania into a Kingdom, ruled by the Royal House of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. These events prepared the way for the Great Union achieved in 1918, after the end of the First World War. During the interwar period, the administrative unification efforts were extremely important as they were reflected in significant changes to the education system. The monarchy crisis, the ascension of the nationalist movement, and the establishment of the Communist Party were the interwar events that marked Romania's destiny during and after the Second World War.

national education system throughout the nineteenth century, and its development during the first half of the twentieth century. The nineteenth century was marked by the establishment of elementary schools, gymnasiums, colleges, as well as the first modern universities: Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași (1860) and the University of Bucharest (1864). Moreover, the legislative framework for the organisation and functioning of the entire system was created, including Public Instruction Law in 1864, and Haret's legislation to support the national education reforms at the end of the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the following century. Despite these achievements, education still addressed the "elites", while access to basic and higher education was restricted by parents' mentality and poor families' financial status, particularly in rural areas.³⁶

Aspects of FLE can scarcely be identified in the texts produced by prominent figures of the times – high public servants or school representatives – who were rather interested in the general social issues. This is the case with *Opere complete* [Complete works], written in 1857 by Costache Negruzzi.³⁷ The author depicts and explains many of the difficulties faced by families, emphasising the need to make them assume their parental roles. Husband/wife status inequity had a major impact on the roles assumed in the transfer of a family model to the next generation. This model was still hermetical and focused on the delivery and natural growth of children. The father was regarded as the only person capable of making important decisions because he was the only one "working", while the mother was seen as the one who "only takes care of things, and has the obligation to love, honour and obey her husband".³⁸

In the context of stating and strengthening national identity in Romania, two texts representative for FLE reflect the genuine openness of local intellectuals to the developing European pedagogy. These are *Compendiu de pedagogie pentru părinți, educatori, învățători și toți bărbaiții de școală* [Compendium of pedagogy for parents, teachers and all schoolmen] by Ion Popescu, from 1876, and *Ionel. Educațiunea unui bun copil* [Ionel. The education of a good child] by Vasile Borgovan, professor of pedagogy at "Sfântul Sava" High School, Bucharest, written in 1900. Regarding the family as "the first educational institution",³⁹ Ion Popescu launches the idea of "lifelong education"⁴⁰ and integrates FLE in an axiological system centred on the development of child morality through "love, empathy, devotion, and obedience".⁴¹ The reviewed version of the *Compendium* was published, post mortem, by Ștefan Velovan, under the title of *Pedagogia lucrată pe bazele psihologice și etice ale realismului herbartian* [Pedagogy based on psychological and ethical grounds of Herbartian realism] (1892). Vasile Borgovan details the educational norms in conjunction with the paradigm of tailored education for children set out by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile ou De l'éducation*. Ionel, the main character of Borgovan's work, starts his early education within the family, and continues it throughout his entire life. Ionel's preparation for the family life can be noticed in his curriculum, in content such as home hygiene and household economy, while the moral, religious, and national dimensions are the most important features of the character's profile.⁴²

³⁶Iorga, *Istoria învățământului românesc*, 67.

³⁷Mayor of Iași, capital city of Moldavia.

³⁸Costache Negruzzi, *Opere complete* [Complete works] vol. 1 (București: Minerva, [1857] 1905), 367.

³⁹Ion Popescu, *Compendiu de pedagogie pentru părinți, educatori și toți bărbaiții de școală* [Compendium of pedagogy for parents, teachers and all schoolmen] (Sibiu: Tipografia lui S. Filtsch, 1876), 135.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 137.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²Vasile Borgovan, *Ionel. Educațiunea unui bun copil, Carte pentru părinți și alți educatori. Principiile morale și creștinești de care trebuie să se conducă părinții în educațiunea lor* [Ionel. The education of a good child. Book for parents and teachers. Morals and religious norms for parents and their education] (Gherla: Aurora, 1900), 479.

Around the year 1900, an important change is recorded in the evolution of Romanian pedagogical thinking: the prescriptive and moralising discourse centred on personality development and education for social and family life from the moral and religious perspective is gradually abandoned in favour of a descriptive and explanatory pedagogical discourse or even a technical-legislative terminology that places the education of individuals for daily life in the axiological and normative context of the modern universal culture. The legislative activities of Spiru Haret developed in order to reform the Romanian education system and to establish the first school for adults, the extended monographic research actions in Romanian villages, initiated by Dimitrie Gusti who coordinated the student teams of the “Prince Carol” Royal Foundation, or the campaigns designed to make scientific knowledge more available in the rural environment coordinated by Virgil Bărbat⁴³ represent some of the most significant landmarks in the evolution of generalised education aimed at extending access to education, with a major impact on the evolution of family life.

Family lifestyle is strongly influenced by living environment and parents’ level of education. At the end of the nineteenth century, most of the population lived in rural areas, with an illiteracy level of 78% in men and 92.5% in women, placing Romania in second position among the European countries with the highest illiteracy rates. Consequently, the major concern of Romanian intellectuals was the overall alphabetisation of the population.⁴⁴ Between the start of the First and Second World Wars (1918–1939), Romanian society crossed a time of deep segregation, due to radical differences between various population segments, determined by their living areas. Thus, two social realities emerged – the urban and the rural – with fundamentally different mentalities, and social and family lifestyles. The former, with a low representation in terms of number, includes the population connected to the western and modern world, as the life of urban citizens is strongly influenced by industrial development. The latter, representing the majority, includes people that live according to the traditions and habits shaped by previous generations. According to the Census in 1930,⁴⁵ peasants represented approximately 80% of the total population of the country. In order to support the intensive alphabetisation policy, the Education Law in 1924 increased the duration of compulsory elementary education from four to seven years and stipulated severe sanctions for parents who refused to send their children to school.⁴⁶

A significant moment for the academic research of FLE problems in Romanian society was the publication of *Educația familială în România* [Family education in Romania] in 1930, written by Iosif Gabrea, professor at the University of Bucharest. The paper represents a real monograph of the educational role of the Romanian family. The author had presented the same topic at the 4th Family Education Convention in Liege, in August 1930, when the International Institute for Family Pedagogy was also established. Two years later, Gabrea signs the paper *Tineret, tradiție, ideal* [Youth, tradition, ideal], where he pleads for a reconciliation between generations through a “needed” consensus between “tradition” (the hermetical village world, belonging to the parents) and “idealism” (the city, modern

⁴³Virgil Bărbat, “Exproprierea culturii” [The culture expropriation], *Buletinul extensiunii universitare din Cluj* III (1926): 13.

⁴⁴Dimitrie Gusti, *Enciclopedia României* [Romanian encyclopaedia] vol. I (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 134.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Legea învățământului primar al statului și învățământului normal-primar, 1924, derivată din Constituția din 1923 [The Law of Primary and Normal-Primary Education, 1924, derived from the Romanian Constitution, 1923].

world, belonging the young people). The author justifies the traditional approach of the rural family with historical arguments related to the “adverse conditions” that determined it to defend its language, belief, habits, and costumes.⁴⁷ Tradition provides identity, yet its value results solely from the perspective of a national, social, and cultural ideal.⁴⁸

Dimitrie Gusti, sociologist and the Minister of Public Instruction, Cults and Arts between 1932 and 1933, initiated extended actions of monographic research of Romanian villages, starting from the idea that a nation could not evolve from a social and cultural perspective without “a deep knowledge of its authentic life”.⁴⁹ In 1945, Xenia Costa-Foru published her book entitled *Cercetarea monografică a familiei* [Monographic research on the family]. The author, a member of the Sociology Seminar run by Dimitrie Gusti, participated in the sociological monograph campaigns developed between 1927 and 1931, being thus able to capture some aspects related to the social organisation of families, together with educational elements for family life, both in the urban and rural environments. According to the author, the major purposes of the family – reproduction, raising and socialising its members⁵⁰ – remain constant, a fact that changes the educational perspective on these aspects depending on evolutions outside the social domain. According to Xenia Costa-Foru, the various organisational forms of the family and its educational functions are directly related to the characteristics of the social life environment, the major separation criterion of the Romanian families being the habitation environment. Romanian villages tend to have an autarchic organisation, the rural family being extremely interdependent, with each person’s life strictly connected to the life of his/her family members.⁵¹ By contrast, in the modern urban society the family “ceases to be a nucleus, a small state within a state”.⁵² Consequently, in the rural environment FLE is strictly connected to compliance with popular traditions, with very low state authority, whereas in the urban environment public authority is directly involved in family life. The intervention of the state through public schools covers certain needs such as family health education by recommending the hygiene measures needed to raise children, along with other aspects of children’s social and moral education that are sometimes enforced, despite parents’ rigid mentality.⁵³

In the first half of the twentieth century, FLE was mostly designed from a social perspective, being subordinated to certain ideals related to the social and moral reconstruction of the society, in a historical context severely affected by the involvement of Romania in the two World Wars, with devastating consequences upon daily life.

⁴⁷Iosif I. Gabrea, *Tineret, tradiție, ideal* [Youth, tradition, ideal] (București: Editura Institutului Pedagogic Român, 1930), 20.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Gusti, *Enciclopedia României*, vol. VIII.

⁵⁰Xenia Costa-Foru, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei* [Monographic research on the family] (București: Fundația Regelui Mihai I, [1932] 1945), 30.

⁵¹Ibid., 33.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 50.

The ideological confiscation of the family and FLE in communist Romania

The family was a central topic in the propaganda of the communist regime installed in Romania after the Second World War,⁵⁴ and FLE was just a construction tool of the “new man” and of the “new society”, a mere pretext for the forced intervention of the state in the private area. Analysis of the relevant aspects of family life in Romania during the totalitarian communist regime should be understood in the context of the ambitious political and pedagogical project of the new regime designed to radically transform the society by creating the “new man”⁵⁵ and building a new social identity that cancels any individual and group identities.⁵⁶ Officially, the family was the “basic unit” of the society, with all the related consequences at the level of social, economic, and educational policies; in fact, the family underwent a process of ideological redefinition, against an apparently democratic political and social background.

Asociația Română pentru Strângerea Legăturilor cu Uniunea Sovietică/The Romanian Association for Stronger Connections with the Soviet Union (ARLUS) was founded in 1944. The objectives of the new structure were mirrored by an editorial project that was to be constantly issued until 1989, significantly entitled *Veac Nou* [New century]. A “new century” means a “new society” and a “new family”, designed to follow closely the Soviet model. Soviet literature was intensely disseminated and used across the Romanian territory from the very first years of the communist period. *Cartea pentru părinți* [Book for parents] published by Anton Makarenko in the Soviet Union, in 1937, and translated into Romanian at Editura de Stat [The State Publishing House] in 1950, became the work of reference on family issues in Romanian literature. The distance between the public and the private space was gradually annulled. The family no longer belonged to itself, as the “new” family model prescribed in Makarenko’s *Book* appears obsessively in the pages of *Veacul Nou*: the father resembles the Stakhanovist⁵⁷ worker, while the mother and the child comply with the Soviet model. The profile of the Soviet woman, who has equal rights to the man, has a manifold symbolic value: she is a mother, a soldier, and a worker. Her role had been well defined since 1945, in an article entitled “Valoarea socială a științei” [The social value of science], by C.I. Parhon and published in *Veac Nou*: “Soviet women work together with men

⁵⁴The end of the Second World War led to the institution of the communist regime in Romania, through a Stalinisation policy that started with Soviet military occupation and continued with the institution of a government controlled by the communists, the liquidation of historical parties, the forced abdication of King Mihai I in 1947, and the proclamation of the Romanian’s People Republic as a communist state. In the context of the Soviet troops’ withdrawal in 1958, the Romanian communist government initiated several emancipation measures in relation to the USSR. In 1965, Nicolae Ceaușescu became the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, and he was also the country’s head of state from 1967 to the revolution in 1989. The positive public image of the dictator in the 1970s, fuelled by its relatively open approach towards western culture and his somehow dissident and disengaging attitude towards the Soviet Union, but also by the triumphalist propaganda of the party, was met with severe foreign criticism and domestic opposition movements, crushed by various forms of political oppression. From an economic viewpoint, after a quick growth based on external loans oriented towards forced industrialisation and urbanisation, Romania endured a period of deep recession, reflected in the dramatic degradation of daily life, with many privations and austerity, especially at the end of the 1980s.

⁵⁵Mariana Momanu, *Educație și ideologie. O analiză pedagogică a sistemului totalitar comunist* [Education and ideology. A pedagogical analysis of the totalitarian communist system] (Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2005).

⁵⁶Adrian Neculau, “Introduction: La construction d’une nouvelle identité sociale,” in *La vie quotidienne en Roumanie sous le communisme*, ed. Adrian Neculau (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008), 9–24.

⁵⁷The Stakhanovite movement appears in Petre Nemoianu’s story, “Trei luni la Moscova” [Three months in Moscow], published in *Veac Nou* [New century], in 1945. Alexey Stakhanov proposes a model for productive work, managing, surprisingly, to increase coal production. In order to reward him for his devotion, the first National Conference of “Stakhanovists” in the Soviet Union is organised in the Kremlin with Stalin attending, where the worker is handed his party membership book and receives a medal. In the following years this profile constantly appeared in the pages of *Veac Nou*.

in all fields, from street maintenance to institutions of culture”.⁵⁸ In the same publication, Maria Constantinescu signs an article entitled “Mama eroină” [Hero mother], in which she portrays an iconic mother by relating to a real-life event: “Mother-of-ten Victoria enjoys particular consideration from the State, being invited to the Kremlin where she is awarded the *Hero Mother Order*”. The Soviet child is given equal consideration, being portrayed as

a new type of child, shaped by the special care provided by the Soviet State. She is a symbol of the future, of that generation who will grow under the flag of the country, passing the new ideas to the generations to come.⁵⁹

Contemporary publications along with survivors’ memories indicate beyond any doubt that the educational function of the family was practically cancelled under political pressure, being completely confiscated by the state. The memoirs of a survivor, Annie Bentoiu, are very eloquent in this respect. In *Timpul ce ni s-a dat* [The time we were given] (vols I and II), the author describes family dramas built on situations in which children denounced their parents on behalf of their responsibilities resulting from their relationship with the state.⁶⁰

The first stage of the communist regime in Romania started with a family crisis. The two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by the drought in 1946–47 and the radical change of the political regime put the Romanian family in difficulty, due to the many privations that led to an abrupt decrease in birth rate, increased conflicts, and an increase in the divorce rate.⁶¹ This crisis should be understood in the context of the fundamental changes in Romanian society (agricultural collectivisation, accelerated industrialisation, forced urbanisation, and rural exodus), but also as an element of an ideological control policy through the destruction of the family’s traditional values, perceived as an important anti-communist resistance factor.⁶² According to the historian Zoe Petre, the new regime viewed the traditional postwar family as a “fortress” that had to be torn apart, an allusion to the suggestive title of a very successful play by the playwright Horia Lovinescu, published in 1955.⁶³ The liberalisation of abortion in 1957, after a long-lasting prohibition and punishment policy starting with the Family Code in 1865, failed to follow the natural emancipation process of women, but it rather followed a Soviet policy that envisaged, on the one hand, to undermine and break the traditional family through the forced secularisation of legal and social practices,⁶⁴ and, on the other, to lay off the female workforce in order to use it in the forced industrialisation process.⁶⁵ Women’s socialist emancipation and gender equality reflect a hypocritical policy⁶⁶ that in fact generated a paradoxical situation of a double vassalage.⁶⁷ Women were caught dramatically between both the daily concerns of

⁵⁸C.I. Parhon, “Valoarea socială a științei” [Social Value of the Science], *Veac Nou* [New Century] I, no. 23, (May, 1945): 6.

⁵⁹Maria Constantinescu, “Femeia în Uniunea Sovietică” [Women in the Soviet Union], *Veac Nou* [New Century] I, no. 15 (March 1945): 1.

⁶⁰Annie Bentoiu, *Timpul ce ni s-a dat. Memorii 1944–1947* [The time we were given. Memoirs 1944–1947], vol. I (București: Humanitas, 2007); Annie Bentoiu, *Timpul ce ni s-a dat. Memorii 1947–1959* [The time we were given. Memoirs 1947–1959], vol. II (București: Humanitas, 2009).

⁶¹Luminița Dumănescu, *Familia românească în comunism* [Romanian family during communism] (Cluj Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012).

⁶²Georgeta Ghebre, *Regim social-politic și viață privată. Familia și politica familială în România* [Social-political regime and private life. Family and family policy in Romania] (București: Editura Universității din București, 2000).

⁶³Zoe Petre, “Promovarea femeii sau despre destructurarea sexului feminin” [Promoting women or destroying female sex], in *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The myths of the Romanian communism], ed. Lucian Boia (București: Nemira, 1998), 255–71.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Ghebre, *Regim social-politic și viață privată*.

⁶⁶Lavinia Betea, “Interzicerea avorturilor (1966–1989) ca fapt de memorie socială” [Abortion prohibition as a fact of social memory], in *Viața cotidiană în comunism* [Everyday life in communism], ed. Adrian Neculau (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 244–64.

⁶⁷Petre, “Promovarea femeii”.

family life, with their traditional obligations as parents and spouses, and the exceptional labour-related issues, resulting in new responsibilities derived from their social and professional lives and from the “comrade” status as equal life and work partners of men. In fact, women’s traditional roles were hidden behind an egalitarian demagogical discourse, enthusiastically dedicated to a new form of nationalism. The blatant promotion of women in all the social and political fields of life belonged to a “model of mechanical gender equality” that led to identity confusion and the destructuralisation of the female sex.⁶⁸

The year 1966 has a special significance for family life in communist Romania. Decree No. 770 issued that autumn prohibited and punished abortion, opening a completely new stage in the construction of family life in the second part of the Romanian communism period.⁶⁹ The exploitation of women’s reproduction potential, in the context of several real and serious demographic problems for Romanian society, was promoted by the president of the country, Nicolae Ceaușescu, to the rank of a state policy, during the second major part of the communist regime.⁷⁰ Demographic studies on this radical policy emphasise, on the one hand, the need for some measures designed to encourage the birth rate, and, on the other, the regime’s preference for the most brutal and abusive option, that considers only the economic constraints while completely ignoring its moral consequences for the population.⁷¹ The pro-natalist policy of Ceaușescu’s regime is intensely debated in the present historical, demographical, sociological, and psycho-sociological literature, where its severe impact on the Romanian family and society are revealed, including: maternal and infant mortality; increase of physical and psychological trauma of the family due to the frequent use of practices specific to illegal abortion; child abandonment; and institutionalisation.⁷²

The assumption of parental roles, as a distinctive element of both state and party policy, was integrated in a nationalist-patriotic vision that took over the traditionalist discourse on the idea of parental sacrifice within the family (a historical constant of the Romanian

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Decree No. 770 from 1966 that prohibits and punishes abortion.

⁷⁰Adriana Băban, “Construcția socială a sexualității masculine” [Social construction of male sexuality], in *Direcții și teme de cercetare în studiile de gen din România* [Research trends and topics in gender studies in Romania], ed. Ionela Baluta and Ioana Cirstocea (București: Colegiul Noua Europa, 2003), 179.

⁷¹Florin S. Soare, “Ceausescu’s Population Policy: A Moral or an Economic Choice between Compulsory and Voluntary Incentivised Motherhood?,” *European Journal of Government and Economics* 2, no. 1 (2013): 59–78.

⁷²Brooke R. Johnson, Mihai Horga, and Laurentia Andronache, “Contraception and Abortion in Romania,” *The Lancet* 341 (1993): 875–8; Gail Kligman, “When Abortion is Banned: The Politics of Reproduction in Ceausescu’s Romania, and After,” National Council for Soviet and East European Research, <https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/1992-805-14-Kligman.pdf>, (accessed April 2016); Henry P. David and Adriana Băban, “Women’s Health and Reproductive Rights: Romanian Experience,” *Patient Education and Counselling* 28 (1996): 235–45; Adriana Băban and Henry P. David, “The Impact of Body Politics on Women’s Bodies,” in *Women and Men in East European Transition*, ed. M. Feischmidt, E. Magyari-Vincze, and V. Zentai (Cluj Napoca: Editura Fundatiei pentru Studii Europene, 1997), 156–70; Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu’s Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Adrian Cioroianu, “Ceausescu, decretul 770/1966 și generația ‘decrețelor’. Generația și decretul care au schimbat România” [Ceausescu, decree 770/1966 and the generations of the ‘decrees’. The generation and the decree that changed Romania], *Geopolitikon* (2008), <https://geopolitikon.wordpress.com/2008/10/29/ceausescu-decretul-7701966-si-generatia-decreteilor/> (accessed April 2016); Corina Pălășan, “Caracterul profund restrictiv al politicii nataliste românești” [The profoundly restrictive character of the Romanian natalist policy], in *Transformarea socialistă. Politici ale regimului comunist între ideologie și administrație* [Socialist change. Policies of the communist regime between ideology and administration], ed. Ruxandra Ivan (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 148–73; Elena Bărbulescu, “Femeia și avortul în perioada 1966–1989” [Women and abortion during 1966–1989], *Anuarul de Istorie Orală* [Oral history yearbook] 1 (1998): 177–93; Adriana Baban, “Women’s Sexuality and Reproductive Behaviour in Post-Ceausescu Romania: A Psychological Approach,” in *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life under Socialism*, ed. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 225–56; Lavinia Beta, “Interzicerea avorturilor ca fapt de memorie socială” [Abortion prohibition as a fact of social memory], in Neculau, ed., *Viața cotidiană în comunism*, 244–64; Dobos Corina, Luciana M. Jinga, and Florin S. Soare, eds., *Politica Pronatalistă a regimului Ceaușescu 1966–1989. O perspectivă comparativă* [The pronatalist politics of the Ceausescu Regime 1966–1989. A comparative approach] (Iași: Polirom, 2010); Soare, “Ceausescu’s Population Policy”.

lifestyle), related to civic duties and “devotion to the country and people, to the party and to the socialist cause”.⁷³ These aspects are indicated by *Codul principiilor și normelor muncii și vieții comuniștilor, al eticii și echității socialiste* [Code of principles and norms of communists’ work and life, of socialist ethics and equity], a brochure published in 1974 after the 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party. In the first stages of Romanian communism, the dominant image was that of a hero-woman engaged in socialist labour, strongly involved in the industrialisation process and in the collectivisation of agriculture. After 1966, the socialist woman’s heroism was inseparably connected to procreation and motherhood. The hero-woman of the new stage was the mother and the educator, whose major responsibility was to give birth and raise children, a reality understood as an “objective necessity to respect the natural laws”.⁷⁴ The obvious difference between the mother and the father in undertaking the parental roles is scientifically and historically backed up, as it is interpreted from a naturalist-evolutionist perspective and related to the historical purpose and responsibility of women. The deceiving and purposefully confusing perspective that accompanied the communist discourse on women’s emancipation excluded the idea of a communist feminism, since in fact communism was a “state-run patriarchy” that did not allow any alternative “ism”: citizens’ autonomy was confiscated by the only allowed ideology – that of the state-party.⁷⁵

One can notice an apparently paradoxical situation with regard to family evolution during the communist period. On the one hand, the separation from the traditional model and the creation of some real premises for family modernisation, beyond any ideological interests, are obvious. In spite of the difficulties generated by the ideological control of all levels of daily life, the process of separation of the traditional family was paralleled by a reconstruction process, including the legislative and institutional modernisation of the family. On the other hand, the use of the “modern family” collocation is risky and somehow unfit, if we consider several defining elements of modern features of family life, such as birth control and family planning, that were absolutely absent from the pro-natal policy in communist Romania.⁷⁶ Despite all these contradictions, the evolution generated by the legislative measures, the social protection and family policies, as well as the educational programmes aimed at mothers and children help them emerge from communism somehow strengthened.⁷⁷

The literature on FLE during this period is either explicitly ideological, or ideological and compliant, at least at a declarative level, to the political ideals of the regime. The party documents are the starting point and the supreme criterion considered when issuing statements and recommending practices on family life, in all fields, from the legal to the academic and educational sectors. The legal measures designed to strengthen the family are doubled by intensive *pro familia* propaganda, through institutions that explicitly assume parents’ education, especially that of mothers, for family life according to the new values: the Women’s National Council established in 1957 organised reading clubs for mothers and disseminated publications on “the joy of being a parent” and “the moral and social responsibility of the parents”⁷⁸; libraries created bibliographies for parents; and the media and academic

⁷³*Codul principiilor și normelor muncii și vieții comuniștilor, al eticii și echității socialiste* [The code of principles and rules of communist life, socialist ethics and equity] (Bucharest, 1974), 23.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁵Mihaela Miroiu, “Communism Was a State Patriarchy Not State Feminism,” *Aspasia* 1 (2007): 197–201.

⁷⁶Dumănescu, *Familia românească în comunism*.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Women’s National Council from RSR, *Responsabilitatea moral-socială a părinților în societatea socialistă* [Parents’ moral and social responsibility in the socialist society] (București, 1965).

publishing houses in the fields of philosophy, sociology and pedagogy published books and papers on and for families.⁷⁹ Parental education in the communist period was based on the ethos of duty and responsibility of the family in front of the society. Children's education within the family and the family's interest in the school education of children were thus turned into profoundly ideological social obligations.⁸⁰ Another important dimension of FLE over the last two decades of communism was the formal and non-formal education of children and youth in the spirit of labour and communist moral values, both in school and in the family, but especially in the children and youth organisations established during these years (*The Patriotic Hawks, Organisation of Pioneers, The Communist Youth Union*).⁸¹

The scientific discourse on FLE follows closely the ideological interest reflected by legislative measures. This is how we explain the "explosion" of scientific literature on family education topics around 1970 and its approach from various complementary scientific perspectives: pedagogy, psychology, sociology, medical sciences, legal sciences, etc., followed by a relative "blackout" and the revival of this topic during the second half of the 1980s.⁸² The existence of an interdisciplinary discourse is augmented by "the need for a scientific construction of socialism, for which a young family's work and devotion towards the party qualify as the most important values",⁸³ according to the authors of a text entitled *Tineretul și familia. Coordonate principale ale pregătirii tineretului pentru viața de familie* [Youth and family. The main coordinates for youth training for family life]. Moreover, the authors propose stages for family life training, such as:

I. The stage of creating the affective image on the family life, the skill of integrating to the parental family life; II. The stage of cultural and professional orientation, corresponding to a conceptualised integration of the family; III. The stage of strengthening personal independence in the cultural and professional orientation and the conclusion of the moral and sexual education or the pre-marriage stage; and finally, IV. The marriage stage, when the new family is formed.⁸⁴

Children's education was no longer a private family matter, but first and foremost a social obligation, considering that "parents must be aware, at all times, of the enormous responsibility they have towards the state, consisting in the education of a new citizen, devoted to his/her country".⁸⁵ In the work by Emilia Bătrănu, *Educația în familie* [Education within the family], the discussion is centred around a pedagogy of the family that has to consider the transformations governing this institution "in the present stage of Socialist development

⁷⁹Stănculescu, *Sociologia educației familiale*, vol. II, 151.

⁸⁰Luminița Ghivirigă and Mioara Dulfu, *Sistemul activității școlii cu familia* [Activities between school and family] (București: E.D.P., 1963); Mihai Ghivirigă, *Ritmuri zilnice (organizarea regimului de viață în familiile cu mai mulți copii)* [Every day rhythms (life in families with more children)] (București: E.D.P., 1967); Petre Bărbulescu, Costin Ștefănescu, and Leon Țopa, *Tineretul și familia. Coordonate principale ale pregătirii tineretului pentru viața de familie* [Youth and family. Main coordinates for youth training for family life] (București: Editura Politică, 1970); Dumitru Salade, *Familia – problemă socială a contemporaneității* [Family – social problem of the present] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1972); Emilia Bătrănu, *Educația în familie* [Education within the family] (București: Editura Politică, 1980); Silvia Dumitrașcu, "Familia și educația elevilor" [Family and pupils' education], in *Pedagogie. Ghid pentru profesori, Ediția a II-a revăzută și îmbogățită* [Pedagogy. A guide for teachers], 2nd ed., ed. George Văideanu (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 1986).

⁸¹Ana Tuciov-Bogdan, Silvestru Pațița and Nicolae Radu, *Activitatea educativă pionerească* [Educational activity of the pioneers] (București: Editura Politică, 1969); Petre Bărbulescu, *Bazele psihopedagogice ale activității pionierești* [Psychopedagogical basis of the pioneering activity] (București: Editura Politică, 1970); *Statutul Organizației "Șoimii Patriei"* [The status of the organisation "The Patriotic Hawks"] (București: Editura Politică, 1976).

⁸²*Ibid.*, 152.

⁸³Petre Bărbulescu et al., *Tineretul și familia*, 39.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

of the country”.⁸⁶ According to the author, school is “the family’s first educator”, its role being “to exercise the pedagogical propaganda and to influence it through educative methods such as authority, examples and work, derived from the documents of the Romanian Communist Party”; the use of authority as the main education method within the family intended that the child became gradually accustomed to the discipline imposed by the socialist collectivity.⁸⁷

The scientific discourse on family topics consolidates the ideology, while the explanatory function of academia combines with the prescriptive-normative one, generating norms and imperatives for the family life of children, youth, and adults, from the perspective of the family roles of each category. Basically, the scientific discourse and educational practices are prone to answer an ideological order that reflects the political imperatives related to the construction of the new regime, as opposed to the real educational needs for family life and subsequently, for private life.

Family and the reactive configuration of FLE in the Romanian post-communist context

Guaranteeing freedom of speech and the revocation of certain regulations that were considered intrusive to family life (i.e. prohibition of contraception and abortion) were among the first decisions of the post-communist political leadership. In the 1990s, Romania fell into a deep economic crisis, characterised by the dismantling of national industry, high unemployment rates, and abrupt inflation, phenomena that led to increased poverty and caused the first economic migration waves⁸⁸ with an impact on family life.⁸⁹ In this context, the scientific discourse on the family reconnected to the international trends. This process is more visible in the fields of sociology, psychology, and pedagogy, all affected by abnormal prohibitions and administrative measures in the academic environment imposed in the late 1970s. Many of the significant Romanian academic works on the family try to gradually reduce the gaps,⁹⁰ but the associated social problems faced alert dynamics, which are vaguely captured in the academic cross-disciplinary context. Thus, at the end of the 1990s, Romania faced a very high abortion rate (almost 1 million, according to official data quoted in various studies⁹¹), changes in the early fertility model, i.e. a significant increase in the average age

⁸⁶Emilia Bătrănu, *Educația în familie*, 7.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 102.

⁸⁸Cristina Boboc, Emilia Țițan, and Daniela Todose, “Romanian Labour Market: Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerabilities,” *Romanian Statistical Review* 5 (2011): 55–68.

⁸⁹The transition process from a centralised economy to a functional market economy was paralleled by the socio-political transition from totalitarianism to democracy, with implications in the perception of the individual, family, and community, but also the public–private binomial from the perspective of personal autonomy as opposed to implicit and explicit social norms. The social costs of economic transition processes were especially tough for disadvantaged families, while the polarisation and (slow) improvement of social services still has an impact on the entire Romanian society. In the second decade of this century we can observe an ascending economic trend, tempered by the 2009–2010 crisis that affected both social services and the somewhat fragile support mechanisms for vulnerable families.

⁹⁰See psychological and sociological works previously referenced, as well as: Iolanda Mitrofan and Nicolae Mitrofan, *Familia de la A-Z. Mic dicționar al vieții de familie* [Family from A to Z. Little dictionary of family life] (București: Editura Științifică, 1991); Petru Iluț, *Familia-cunoaștere și asistență* [Family, knowledge and support] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 1995); F. Druță, *Psihosociologia familiei* [Family psychosociology] (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1998); Raluca Popescu, *Introducere în sociologia familiei. Familia Românească în societatea contemporană* [Introduction to family sociology. The Romanian family in contemporary society] (Iași: Polirom, 2009).

⁹¹See Lucia Ciochină and Constantin Iftime, *O viziune asupra vieții* [A vision on life] (București: Provita Media, 2003, <http://www.provitabucuresti.ro/docs/biblio/ProVita%20Media%20-%20O%20viziune%20asupra%20vietii.pdf> (accessed April, 2016).

of women having their first child,⁹² an increase in the divorce rate,⁹³ and an increase in the age of young people who decided to start a family.

The social and educational impact of these transformations, determined by the socio-economic circumstances and poorly designed family policies, generated a fast multiplication of formal and non-formal programmes centred on sexual education and parenting. The educational programmes organised by both governmental and non-governmental structures and supported by international organisations⁹⁴ have anticipated a potential comprehensive perspective on FLE. Between 1992 and 1993, the first National Resource Centre for Parents was established, as a component of the PETAS project (focused on the early development of children on stimulation areas), implemented by the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF. In Bucharest, between 1994 and 2000, the first Parent Information, Counselling, and Orientation Centres were opened. In 2001, a *Family Life Education Manual* was published, as a result of the cooperation between the Center for Development and Population Activities, Youth for Youth Foundation, and UNICEF Romania, focusing on sexual education and the prevention of drug consumption among young people. The content of the same non-formal programme was also integrated into the school curriculum, in the optional subject-matter Education for Health,⁹⁵ as a module entitled “Reproduction and Family Health”. Over the same period, additional content focusing on interpersonal relations, family functions, and communication were inserted into the school curriculum for the discipline Counselling and Orientation in primary and secondary education. In 2007, the UNICEF representative in Romania, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth and the Romanian Association for Education and Development, published *Educația viitorilor părinți, Ghid al profesorului – Disciplină opțională pentru clasele IX–XII* [Parenthood education, teacher’s guide – optional subject for classes IX–XII].⁹⁶ The new content designed from a cross-disciplinary perspective, with an increased practical approach, resulted in the development of students’ family skills, encouraged responsibility when making the decision to start their family, and raised their awareness of the complex condition of becoming a member of a new family. Therefore, even in the absence of a clear conceptual framework, the school curriculum and the non-formal educational offer integrated a set of goals and contents of FLE, thus answering the educational needs generated by changes in Romanian family life.

The interest in FLE is also reflected in the diversity of topics covered by publications and the perspective on marriage education and parenting: the public space is practically invaded

⁹²See Romanian Ministry of Health, “Studiul sănătății reproducerii România, 2004” [The state of reproductive health in Romania, 2004], http://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/Studiul_Sanatati_Reproducerii.pdf (accessed April, 2016).

⁹³Ghebre, *Regim social-politic și viață privată*.

⁹⁴See UNICEF Programs and Development and Population Activities Center in the United States.

⁹⁵The *Education for Health* initiative is part of the national programme “Education for Health in Romanian Schools”; it aims at “promoting accurate knowledge on various aspects of health and at training skills and attitudes necessary for a responsible and healthy conduct” (p. 2, Annex to the Minister’s Order No. 4496 / 11.08.2004), <http://www.edu.ro/download/edsan112.pdf> (accessed April, 2016). Although the name of this module inspired by the Youth for Youth Programme involves goals and content associated with sex education, in fact it also covers other elements of family life skills: gender and family roles; the feeling of love and attachment to the family; factors that determine the involvement/lack of involvement in interpersonal relations; domestic violence; communication and responsibility in family life; and parenting, etc.

⁹⁶The paper by Mihaela Ionescu, Simona Velea, Laura Grunberg, Steliana Fumărel, and Laura Ciolan, discusses topics related to the family and child laws, gender messages, rules for raising and caring for children aged between zero and seven or eight years, the role of games in a child’s life, parents’ status and roles, family crisis/conflicting situations, and household economy.

by texts that plead for the need of approaching FLE from a Christian perspective,⁹⁷ texts that suggest some moral behaviour norms in family and society,⁹⁸ and works that promote cross-generation communication and relations through new technologies.⁹⁹ Moreover, there were multiple topics on parents' education treated in "guidelines" for adults, mostly translated, containing norms and behavioural examples of parents' roles, by means of conflict resolution, stimulation of creativity, development of critical thinking, or emotional intelligence. In addition, the non-formal educational offer was rich in parenting programmes, organised either by schools or non-governmental organisations,¹⁰⁰ while family coaching programmes were increasingly popular for the prevention and resolution of family tensions and crisis.

Nevertheless, we have to note the reluctance of Romanian schools and family towards embracing the FLE elements, mostly generated by preconceptions and stereotypes specific to a traditional, incompletely reformed family model, characterised by asymmetric roles and gender relations. The real partnership between genders remains a challenge, as the social transition seems to fuel in Romania and in other post-communist countries a return to traditional and religious values, to ritual forms of family life, a phenomenon labelled by Kligman in 1994 as "re-traditionalization".¹⁰¹ Miroiu terms this non-critical nostalgia for that time of "balance" with a concept based on the analysis of ideological and political trends of the post-communist period – "the backward-looking society", where almost opposed trends and beliefs coexist in a "cocktail of conservatism".¹⁰²

Under the pressure of constant search, contradiction, and subsequent educational reform, the contemporary theoretical approaches of FLE in Romania are characterised by heterogeneity and the lack of a unified perspective. Thus, family pedagogy is mentioned in professional Romanian works among the specialised pedagogical secondary fields,¹⁰³ treating only sequentially the FLE problems. The definitions refer to family education and education within the family, emphasising the role of the family as an educational point of reference and its educational functions, family education styles, parental education and the need for a school–family partnership. Within the same conceptual umbrella, some works also approach other topics associated with FLE as it is currently conceptualised,¹⁰⁴ such as the education of children as parents-to-be in and outside the school system, communication, and conflict resolution inside the family. Nevertheless, there is a serious lack of articulation of the educational discourse on the present Romanian practices of FLE. In our opinion,

⁹⁷See Adrian Lemeni, ed., *Repere ale educației creștine în teologia Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur, actualizate în relația Bisericii-Familie-Școală din contextul contemporan* [Highlights of a Christian education in the theology of Saint John Chrysostom updated in the church–family–school relationship in the contemporary context] (București: Basilica, 2015).

⁹⁸Stere Stavrositu, *Familia: arta decenței în familie și societate, arta de aranjare și servire a meselor, arta gastronomică de familie* [Family. The art of family decency, the art of arranging and serving meals, family gourmet art] (Constanța: Fundația Arta Serviciilor în Turism, 2008).

⁹⁹See Emilia Săulescu, *Bune practici pentru învățarea în familie prin intermediul Web 2.0* [Good practices for learning within the family with Web 2.0] (Iași: PIM, 2010).

¹⁰⁰For a review, see Ștefan Cojocaru and Daniela Cojocaru, *Educația parentală în România* [Parental education in Romania] (UNICEF & Holt Romania (Buzău: Alpha MDN, 2011).

¹⁰¹Gail Kligman, "The Social Legacy of Communism: Women, Children, and the Feminization of Poverty," in *The Social Legacy of Communism*, ed. James Millar and Sharon Wolchik (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center and Cambridge University Press, 1994), 252–70.

¹⁰²Mihaela Miroiu, *Societatea retro* [The retro society] (București: Editura Trei, 1999).

¹⁰³See Ioan Bontaș, *Tratat de pedagogie* [Treaty of pedagogy] (București: Editura All, 2008); Constantin Cucos, *Pedagogie* [Pedagogy], 3rd ed. (Iași: Polirom, 2014).

¹⁰⁴See Mihaela Ionescu and Elisabeta Negreanu, eds., *Educația în familie. Repere și practici actuale* [Education in family. Current landmarks and practices] (București: Institutul de Științe ale Educației, Editura Cartea Universitară, 2006).

this gap has historical roots in the tensions between the family and other institutions, but also in the traditional functionality of the Romanian family, that is still far from harmonising cross-generation normative landmarks, western reference points, and contemporary mutations within society.

Conclusions

When referring to the conceptual area of FLE and to the Romanian cultural and family models shaped in various historical contexts, we identify a constant representation of topics on parents' education, with a focus on the maternal role. Contrary to a certain type of historical determinism that we may anticipate, the role of the mother in the Romanian family as the main social actor in charge of raising, caring for, and educating children, has not undergone any major structural changes. The stability of parental roles in the Romanian family is explained by the cross-generation preservation of certain values and behaviours of the rural family. Moreover, analysis of the contemporary Romanian family unveils behavioural conservatism and a preference for traditional gender roles, explained by the incomplete secularisation of the Romanian society or the influence of religious factors, by a deficient capital of relationships that narrows down the social areas and interactions, but also by the significant proportion of the rural population in the demographic structure of the country.¹⁰⁵ Attachment to the patriarchal family model, deeply rooted in the rural area, has been constantly noticed in the history of the Romanian family; the communist period strengthened the stereotyped images of feminism and masculinity, as well as the appropriate behavioural norms. The forced industrialisation process during the communist years and the internal migration from rural areas to the cities had an important role in slowing down change in the Romanian family, as they led rather to the ruralisation of the city, than to the urbanisation of the village.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the coordinates of the rural family model have not only been transferred into the urban environment, but they were also multiplied by their reproduction of a generation of daughters who became wives and mothers.¹⁰⁷ The ideologisation of the family and the over-emphasis on women's role imposed by egalitarian rhetoric unrelated to social practices and responsibilities assumed in daily life, according to the accepted family model, may have influenced the decision of young women on matters such as marriage, divorce, and birth control during the communist period. Although we can discuss FLE in communist Romania, even in its most similar form to the conceptualisation in the international professional literature, the gaps between the discourses, practices, and realities, in the light of the present day behavioural analysis, allow us to express doubts regarding the functionality of the model described in the pedagogical literature and equally prescribed to both school and family.¹⁰⁸

The early occurrence of non-formal programmes in sexual education in the Romanian post-communist context reveals another FLE constant over the last 25 years. The development

¹⁰⁵Raluca Popescu, *Introducere în sociologia familiei. Familia românească în societatea contemporană* [Introduction in Romanian sociology. Romanian family in the contemporary society] (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 102.

¹⁰⁶Trond Gilberg, "Rural Transformation in Romania," in *The Peasantry of Eastern Europe*, vol. II, *20th Century Developments*, ed. Ivan Volgyes (New York: Pergamon, 1979), 72–122.

¹⁰⁷Adriana Băban, "Construcția socială a sexualității masculine," 179–203.

¹⁰⁸See the FLE content explicitly named by Ion Holban – "raising children, household organisation and fulfilment of obligations" – in the study of "Domeniul educației permanente" [Lifelong education fields], Stanciu Stoian, *Domenii ale pedagogiei* [Pedagogy fields] (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1983), 107.

of such programmes was both a reaction to the interdictions, confusions, and preconceptions about sexuality and sexual education in the family, school, and community during the communist period, and a structured answer to social health and education problems, already installed or anticipated (for example, changes in the risk behaviours). Beyond the statistics regarding the number of beneficiaries, the impact of such programmes was never assessed. However, their transfer to the formal education area, even if significantly delayed, stresses the importance of this topic, at least in the context of policies on health and family. The reluctance of the school and the difficulties of the family in structuring sexual education initiatives can be explained by the borrowed cultural approaches, but also by the mentalities and cultural stereotypes tributary to the model of the Romanian rural family placed in an urban environment. This may well be the reason for which certain foreign researchers consider that in the specific context of Romania, FLE is nothing but camouflage, or acceptable packaging for sexual education.¹⁰⁹

In order to build a consistent vision of FLE and coherent educational policies that would support existing and emerging practices, it is necessary to provide a realistic connection to both Romanian mentalities and cultural models, and western values and educational practices. The presence of alternative concepts that practically define FLE and the incipient emergence of some definitions determine the absence of a valid connection with policies and practices that reflect the Romanian context. Comprehensive conceptual approaches of FLE that also include the formal and non-formal dimension in addition to the informal educational influence from the family cannot be found before the beginning of the twentieth century.

Defining the purpose and content of FLE, and distinguishing the field from other types of approaches to family issues (psychological, therapeutic, and assistance-related) could be determinative for its more credible presence in the Romanian educational scientific discourse. From a historical perspective, Romania ironically faces an imminent demographic crisis, related to the decrease in the fertility rate, resulting in accelerated ageing and the reduction of an active population, with potentially serious consequences. FLE may be a significant complementary approach to support the family and its members.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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¹⁰⁹E. Ketting and C. Winkelmann, "New Approaches to Sexuality Education and Underlying Paradigms," *Bundesgesundheitsblatt, Gesundheitsforschung, Gesundheitsschutz* 56, no. 2 (2013): 250–5.

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