
INDIVIDUALISM-COLLECTIVISM AND PERSONAL CONCEPTIONS OF INTELLIGENCE: GUIDELINES OF AN INTERVENTION PLAN IN THE ROMANIAN AND PORTUGUESE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract

In this study we analyze the relation between individualism-collectivism (IND/COL) and personal conceptions of intelligence (PCI) in Romania and Portugal. The IND/COL questionnaire – Anonymous Questionnaire of Self-Attitudes (Shulruf, Hattie, & Dixon, 2003-2007) – and the PCI questionnaire – Personal Conceptions of Intelligence Scale (Faria, 1990-2006) – were administrated to 1394 secondary school students, 758 Romanian and 591 Portuguese. On the whole, the results indicated that participants with dynamic PCI are more individualist, whereas static PCI are more characteristic of collectivist participants. Starting from the psychological and socio-cultural interpretation of the results, we proposed an intervention plan in the educational contexts of both countries.

Keywords: individualism-collectivism, personal conceptions of intelligence, educational intervention

Personal conceptions of intelligence and the individualism-collectivism cultural dimension

Personal conceptions of intelligence represent an important element of the socio-cognitive model of academic motivation developed by Dweck and

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colleagues (Bandura & Dweck, 1985; Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Diener & Dweck, 1978). In their initial studies, Bandura and Dweck (1985) noticed that there are two distinct ways of approaching one's intelligence to which pupils frequently resort.

The first approach or implicit theory of intelligence – the *static theory* – advances the idea according to which intelligence stands for an immutable and concrete entity, a global and stable trait, limited in “quantity” and uncontrollable. Individuals who adopt this theory or conception concern themselves with the demonstration and the external validation of their intellectual potential by means of fixing *performance goals* (Dweck & Elliott, 1983). In their turn, these goals lead to the endorsement of *failure-oriented achievement patterns* or *patterns of helpless behaviour* (Dweck, 1999; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Elliott & Harackiewicz, 1996).

The second implicit theory, called the *dynamic theory or conception*, gravitates around the idea that intelligence represents a dynamic system of competences which individuals can develop through personal effort and investment. Such an approach of one's intelligence promotes the endorsement of *learning goals*, which reflects „a desire to learn new skills, master new tasks, or understand new things – a desire to get smarter” (Dweck, 1999, p. 15). These goals governed by the desire of developing one's intelligence are associated to *mastery-oriented achievement patterns* or *patterns of persistent behaviour* (Dweck, 1999; Elliott & Harackiewicz, 1996).

Dweck (1999) considers that revealing and explaining the way in which beliefs that lie behind the two types of achievement goals (validation vs. development) structure themselves and strengthen over time could represent a starting point for the development of specific methods designed to increase students' motivation and orient their personal conceptions of intelligence in a more dynamic and adaptive direction.

As such, in the framework of this approach of psychological archaeology, Dweck and colleagues (Heyman, Dweck, & Cain, 1992; Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Smiley & Dweck, 1994) emphasized the fact that the type of feedback children receive from adults may orient them towards either abandonment or persistence. Specifically, criticism which aims at the child's personality is more liable to lead to the development of helpless behaviour patterns, whereas criticism that suggests the necessity of changing the strategies

used and increasing the efforts made is more liable to intensify persistent behaviour patterns.

In the same explicative key, Kamins and Dweck (1999) and Muller and Dweck (1998) show that it is not only criticism that can be oriented wrongly, but also praise, the result being the same – the development of a helpless response. The authors mention that praising children's qualities when they are meeting with success can make them vulnerable in the face of failures, since children learn that success means being a "good girl" or a "good boy", but they learn implicitly that failure means being a "bad girl" or a "bad boy". The alternative would consist in praising children's strategies and effort because, in this way, when they encounter setbacks, they will not feel incapable or "worse" than before, when they were successful, but rather they will try to make more efforts and improve their strategies.

Consequently, although it is possible that children's temperamental dispositions determine their reactions to unfamiliar situations, some having a natural tendency towards coping better with failure situations, while others are more easily frustrated (Kagan & Snidman, 1991), the studies of Dweck and colleagues pointed out that the achievement patterns of helpless and persistent behaviour which characterize the two types of personal conceptions of intelligence – static and dynamic – are influenced by the psychosocial context in which individuals function, particularly by the educational practices parents and school resort to.

In relation to this it is important to mention that such educational practices are fostered by a superior socio-cultural level, this being the reason why in the present study we aim to investigate the relationship between personal conceptions of intelligence, analyzed in the light of Dweck's model presented above, and the cultural context operationalized on the individualism-collectivism dimension which is considered to be perhaps one of the most important sources of intercultural differences (Hofstede, 1997).

Thus, our goal is to verify if dynamic PCI (which value the role of personal effort and investment, as well as the development of personal competence) characterize and are influenced by an individualist existential model which, according to Hofstede (1980), prepares the individual so that he or she would have a positive attitude towards new and unexpected situations, would learn how to *learn* and would be independent and autonomous, and if static PCI (which focus on avoiding failures and challenges, as well as on the

external validation of personal competence) characterize and are influenced by a collectivist existential model which, according to Hofstede (1980), trains the individual to learn how to *make* the necessary things for a good functioning in the in-group, personal results and attitudes becoming thus less visible and even less valued.

To this investigation approach we add two complementary ramifications which arise from the following finding. There are authors who related the static and dynamic conceptions of intelligence and of the self, in general, with the bipolar model of the self – independent *vs.* interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), two facets of the self which are illustrative of individualist and collectivist cultures respectively.

Concretely, as far as the independent self is concerned – predominant in individualist cultures –, individuals develop psychological tendencies which guide the identification of positive personal attributes followed by their expression and confirmation through specific behaviours. In this case the self represents a fixed and stable entity which significantly determines individuals' behaviour. Following this argumentative line, we intend to verify if and in what situations individualists have more static PCI.

As for the interdependent self – predominant in collectivist cultures –, this is seen as fluid and malleable, liable to be modified and developed. Starting from this perspective, we intend to verify if and in what situations collectivists have more dynamic PCI.

It is also to be mentioned the fact that, with regard to the IND/COL cultural dimension, Realo and Allik (1999) noticed a limitation of the intercultural comparisons to the use of samples proceeding prevalently from North America and East Asia considered as prototypes of individualist and collectivist cultures respectively.

Therefore, we aim to enlarge the range of the cultures which have been studied comparatively on the individualism-collectivism dimension, the cultural contexts involved in this study being Romania and Portugal, two Latin countries which have undergone a dictatorship regime – communism in Romania and fascism in Portugal –, aspect apt to have led “through specific ideological, political, cultural and social mechanisms, to the organization of a collectivist mentality” (Ciochină & Faria, 2006, p. 178).

Despite this resemblance between the two countries, if we start from the observation made by Hofstede (1980) who noticed a positive correlation

between high individualism and high Gross National Product (GNP), the GNP being associated to an economy based on individual interests, our hypothesis is that – due to the disparity that exists between the two countries, disparity which is caused, on the one hand, by the different moment when the democratic regime was introduced in the two countries (1989 in Romania and 1974 in Portugal) and, on the other hand, by their present-day political status (Romania joined the European Union in 2007, while Portugal has been a communitarian country since 1986) – the individualist life pattern with its specific norms has been assimilated by the Portuguese society to a greater extent than the Romanian one.

Objectives

Considering the above mentioned aspects, in the present study we intend to explore the similarities and the differences which exist between Romania and Portugal on this so important individualism-collectivism cultural dimension by investigating its impact in the educational context, especially as regards personal conceptions of intelligence which, as shown above, are undoubtedly influenced by the socio-cultural context to which individuals belong and in which they function.

Method

Participants

Participants were 758 Romanian and 591 Portuguese. The sample was constituted as a function of the cultural context (Romania *vs.* Portugal), school year (10th and 12th), gender (female *vs.* male) and socio-economic status – SES – (high, medium and low).

Table 1. Sample distribution by cultural context, school year, gender and socio-economic status

Context		School year			Gender			Socio-economic status			
		10	12	Total	M	F	Total	High	Medium	Low	Total
RO	<i>N</i>	368	390	758	321	437	758	226	296	223	745*
	%	48.5	51.5	100	42.3	57.7	100	29.8	39.1	29.4	98.3*
PO	<i>N</i>	286	305	591	283	308	591	199	225	164	588**
	%	48.4	51.6	100	47.9	52.1	100	33.7	38.1	27.7	99.5**

Legend: RO – Romania; PO – Portugal.

Note: * 13 omissions (1.7%) in the answers to the SES variable; **3 omissions (.5%) in the answers to the SES variable.

Instruments

The individualism-collectivism dimension was assessed with the *Anonymous Questionnaire of Self-Attitudes* (AQSA) which was constructed in the New-Zealand cultural context by Shulruf, Hattie, and Dixon (2003, 2007). The AQSA was validated for the Romanian and Portuguese contexts through studies of confirmatory factor analysis (Ciochină & Faria, 2007, 2008).

The AQSA comprises 26 items, distributed on two scales, the individualism scale (IS) with 15 items and the collectivism scale (CS) with 11 items. The IS encompasses three subscales – *uniqueness* (items 2, 12, 22 and 26), *competition* (items 1, 6, 7, 14, 21, 23 and 25) and *responsibility* (items 5, 11, 17 and 19). The CS has two subscales – *harmony* (items 4, 9, 16 and 20) and *advice* (items 3, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18 and 24) (Appendix 1).

With regard to the IS, the items of the *uniqueness* subscale refer to the definition of personal identity as being different from and independent of others; the items of the *competition* subscale aim to capture attitudes and behaviours which imply defining personal identity in terms of social comparison and competition with others, while the items of the *responsibility* subscale refer to actions realized responsibly and independently of others, as well as to communication patterns which imply clarity, therefore responsibility for the message that is being conveyed.

As concerns the CS, the items of the *harmony* subscale measure behaviours by which individuals have in view the maintenance of in-group harmony (by avoiding conflicts and by using indirect communication), as well as behaviours and attitudes which favour the interests and goals of the in-group to the prejudice of the personal ones. Finally, the items of the *advice* subscale refer to seeking advice from parents, colleagues and close friends when one is to make important decisions or undertake different actions.

The answers to the items of the AQSA are given on a frequency Likert-type scale, with six points, the frequency of individualist and collectivist attitudes and behaviours varying between *never* and *always*.

Regarding personal conceptions of intelligence, these were assessed with the *Personal Conceptions of Intelligence Scale* (PCIS), constructed and validated in the Portuguese cultural context by Faria (1990-2006) and validated for the Romanian population through studies of confirmatory factor analysis (Ciochină & Faria, 2006).

The initial version of the PCIS has 26 items, of which 15 measure the static conception (items 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22 and 25), and 11, the dynamic conception (items 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 17, 21, 23, 24 and 26). Starting from previous results obtained by Ciochină and Faria (2006), in this study we chose to use a reduced version of the PCIS with 15 items, 6 illustrative of the static conception (items 4, 5, 9, 10, 12 and 14) and 9 illustrative of the dynamic conception (items 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 15) (Appendix 2).

The answers to the items of the PCIS are given on an intensity Likert-type scale, with 6 points, the maximum score corresponding to the total agreement with the items of the dynamic scale or to the total disagreement with the items of the static scale. The quotation of the static items is inverted, the high scores indicating more dynamic or less static personal conceptions of intelligence.

Procedure and design

The same procedure regarding the translation and back-translation of the instruments was adopted in both countries. Students were provided with the AQSA and the PCIS alongside the socio-demographic questionnaire during school classes, the confidentiality and the anonymity of the answers being guaranteed.

In Romania, the data were collected in three secondary schools from Onești, one from Iași, one from Bacău and one from Comănești. In Portugal the data were collected in six secondary schools from Porto and one from Oliveira do Douro.

Presentation and interpretation of the results

As mentioned earlier, our goal was to verify if dynamic PCI (which value the role of developing one's competence) characterize and are influenced by an individualist mentality and if static PCI (which highlight the avoidance of failures and challenges, as well as the external validation of personal competence) characterize and are influenced by a collectivist mentality.

On the other hand, in the light of the theorizations which have related the static and dynamic conceptions of intelligence and of the self, in general, with the bipolar model of independent self *vs.* interdependent self (Markus &

Kitayama, 1991), we also aimed to verify in which situations individualists, who conceive the self as a stable and fixed entity, display more static PCI and in which situations collectivists, who conceive the self as being fluid and apt to be developed, display more dynamic PCI.

With a view to this, we selected the participants with extreme profiles on the personal conceptions of intelligence dimension, that is, we kept the participants of the first and the third quartiles, namely those with the most static and the most dynamic PCI. The distribution of the cases in the two cultural contexts is showed in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the participants in the 1st and 3rd quartiles for personal conceptions of intelligence

Cultural context	Personal conceptions of intelligence	
	Static	Dynamic
RO	N=175	N=183
PO	N=181	N=102

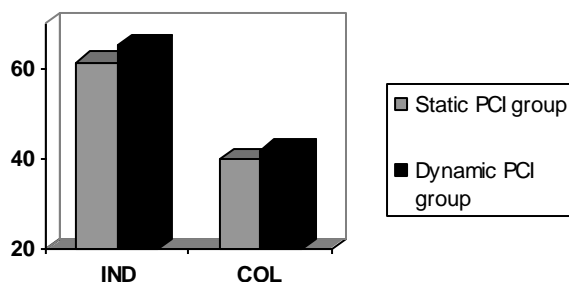
Further on we analysed the level of individualism and collectivism in these contrasting groups, in both cultural contexts.

Thus, in the Portuguese cultural context, on the individualism scale, the independent t-test showed that participants with dynamic PCI (M=64.98, SD=11.07) display a higher level of individualism than participants with static PCI [M=61.24, SD=10.62, $t(274)=-2.762$, $p=.006$]. On the collectivism scale the results showed that participants with dynamic PCI (M=41.97, SD=7.31) have a significantly higher level of collectivism than participants with static PCI [M=40.09, SD=6.89, $t(271)=-2.127$, $p=.034$]. These results are represented in Graph 1.

We notice that, in the light of the results obtained on the individualism scale, as we had predicted, dynamic PCI seem to be more illustrative of individualist attitudes and behaviours. Thus, the belief in one's own uniqueness, the responsibility for personal actions and the constructive competition appear as important factors that promote the development of personal attributes such as intelligence.

However, we must emphasize the following aspect. When we investigated the differences in the level of individualism on the corresponding subscales – *uniqueness*, *competition* and *responsibility* – we noticed, for the participants with dynamic PCI, a significantly higher level of individualism on

all subscales of IND, excepting the *competition* subscale on which there were no significant differences between participants with static PCI ($M=25.71$, $SD=7.19$) and those with dynamic PCI [$M=27.03$, $SD=8.21$, $t(270)=-1.405$, $p=.161$].



Graph 1. Differences in the level of individualism and collectivism in the groups with static and dynamic PCI in the Portuguese cultural context

These results may suggest that, in the Portuguese educational system, competition leads to proving competence to others and obtaining good grades, aspects which place the preoccupation with developing one's intelligence on a subordinate level.

With regard to the results obtained on the collectivism scale in the Portuguese cultural context, these showed that dynamic PCI are also illustrative of collectivist attitudes and behaviours. Such results provide support for the orthogonal character of the IND/COL constructs, having led us to their more thorough exploration at the level of the COL subscales.

Concretely, we noticed significant differences between participants with static and dynamic PCI but only on the *advice* subscale where participants with dynamic PCI ($M=29.13$, $SD=6.24$) seek for others' advice more than participants with static PCI [$M=27.59$, $SD=5.77$, $t(274)=-2.067$, $p=.040$]. These results suggest that seeking for others' advice does not seem to lead to a debilitation of one's ability of making decisions. On the contrary, asking for others' advice when important issues are at stake, such as those related to school, suggest the ability of diagnosing problems in one's own decision-

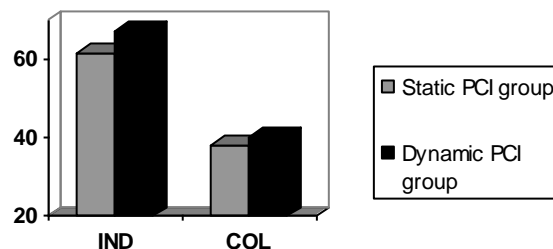
making capacity, as well as the readiness to learn, which are all important factors of personal development.

Thus, as far as intelligence is concerned, the advice-seeking behaviour appears as a measure of students' perception of the malleable nature of this psychological attribute and, implicitly, of the circumstantial nature of school tasks which sometimes may be easy and can be solved without external support, but other times may be more difficult, situation in which others' interventions could contribute to the clarification of the problem, as well as to the development of new strategies and solutions.

On the *harmony* subscale there were no significant differences between participants with static PCI ($M=12.47$, $SD=2.75$) and those with dynamic PCI [$M=12.86$, $SD=3.23$, $t(278)=-1.058$, $p=.291$].

In the Romanian cultural context, on the individualism scale, the independent *t*-test showed similar results to those obtained in the Portuguese context. Thus, the results indicated that participants with dynamic PCI ($M=67.43$, $SD=9.85$) are more individualist than participants with static PCI [$M=61.81$, $SD=10.46$, $t(349)=-5.178$, $p=.000$].

On the collectivism scale, as it was also the case in the Portuguese context, the results showed that participants with dynamic PCI ($M=40.12$, $SD=8.59$) display a higher level of collectivism than participants with static PCI [$M=38.09$, $SD=7.84$, $t(352)=-2.318$, $p=.021$]. These results are represented in Graph 2.



Graph 2. Differences in the level of individualism and collectivism in the groups with static and dynamic PCI in the Romanian cultural context

Regarding the individualism scale, unlike what was noticed in the Portuguese context, we identified differences on all three subscales – *uniqueness*, *competition* and *responsibility* – as a function of the PCI. Specifically, on the *competition* subscale, on which, in Portugal, no differences had been observed between participants with static PCI and those with dynamic PCI, the results obtained in the Romanian cultural context indicated that participants with dynamic PCI ($M=29.53$, $SD=5.91$) display a higher level of competition than participants with static PCI [$M=27.12$, $SD=6.20$, $t(355)=-3.769$, $p=.000$]. These results suggest that competition seems to have more constructive valences in the Romanian educational system, meaning *fighting to become better than others*, – not with a view to demonstrating competence and avoiding failure, but to developing one’s own intellectual competence.

As concerns the collectivism scale, the results obtained in the Romanian context, alongside their interpretation, are similar to those obtained in the Portuguese cultural context. Concretely, on the two collectivism subscales – *harmony* and *advice* – the following aspects were noticed: on the *advice* subscale participants with dynamic PCI ($M=26.79$, $SD=6.30$) seek for others’ advice in relation to school or out-of-school issues to a greater extent than participants with static PCI [$M=25.00$, $SD=6.33$, $t(353)=-2.676$, $p=.008$], whereas on the harmony subscale there were no significant differences between participants with static PCI ($M=13.09$, $SD=3.62$) and those with dynamic PCI [$M=13.32$, $SD=3.75$, $t(355)=-.595$, $p=.552$].

Conclusions

The results indicated that in both cultural contexts – Romania and Portugal – dynamic PCI are illustrative of an individualist socio-cognitive pattern which valorises the definition of personal identity in terms of uniqueness, responsibility and competition, the weak manifestation of such attributes being associated to static PCI.

Nevertheless, with regard to competition seen as an important element characteristic of individualism, we noticed that this functions differently in the two cultural contexts. Thus, in the Portuguese cultural context, competition stimulates the concern about getting better results than others, the

efforts made for developing intelligence being therefore sacrificed, while in the Romanian cultural context this desideratum is mediated by the interest in developing one's own intellectual competence.

The results further showed that dynamic PCI are also illustrative of a collectivist socio-cognitive pattern expressed at the level of advice-seeking behaviour. Indeed, seeking and accepting others' advice on school-related matters, represent important factors of change. If, for example, an error or a failure were perceived as fatal and as indicator of incompetence, students would be less liable to seek others' advice. In other words, the advice-seeking behaviour seems to be a measure of students' perception of the malleable and incremental nature of personal attributes, such as intelligence, and implicitly, of their potential to improve school performance.

Thus, the relation between the interdependent self of collectivists and dynamic PCI was verified, aspect which, in the framework of our analysis, indicated the existence of positive aspects specific to COL and relevant for the development of personal attributes, such as intelligence.

Therefore, it appears that both individualism and collectivism involve positive dimensions which are associated to dynamic PCI. Starting from this observation, we conceived an intervention plan for the educational context, through which the positive contribution of IND/COL to the orientation of PCI in a more dynamic direction could be turned into account.

Guidelines of an intervention plan in the Romanian and Portuguese educational contexts

Adhering to the humanistic approach of education, we begin by mentioning that the central goal of education should be stimulating students' self-knowledge, freedom to think on their own, creativity and personal development.

We can easily ascertain that these desiderata are but individualist values which can guarantee individuals' good functioning in the society. However, before becoming members of the society, individuals are integrant parts of their families and, later on, of the school environment so much that the dynamic relationship between the individual and the group, constructed inside the family during the first years of life, continues by developing and becoming manifest in school and then in the social context considered in its complexity.

In school this relationship is particularly visible through students' and teachers' behaviours. Regarding this aspect, Hofstede (1997) considers that in collectivist cultures, which are characterized by high power distance, the educational process tends to be teacher-focused, the bilateral communication being affected. The absence of an authentic interest in stimulating students to express their opinions is conjugated with their lack of active participation in class.

The progress of such a class – based on collectivist values, such as the respect shown to a rigid hierarchy in which the teacher represents an irrecusable authority, the treatment of students as if they were a homogeneous reflection of a group and not isolated and unique individuals, the diffusion of responsibility in the group, students' fear to make themselves visible by becoming actively involved in school activities – cannot stimulate students' ability to identify the limits of their theoretical and empirical knowledge and to make decisions with a view to their development.

Consequently, a collectivist educational pattern should be replaced by one based on individualist values, such as treating students by taking into consideration their uniqueness, stimulating the desire to learn how to cope with new situations and challenges, as well as their ability to take the responsibility of their own actions both in school and in out-of-school contexts.

As mentioned earlier when we presented the results of the present study, these individualist values, attitudes and behaviours are more liable to guarantee the development of personal conceptions of intelligence in a dynamic direction, in this case intelligence being considered an attribute which can be developed through effort, personal investment and persistence. This association between the above mentioned individualist attributes and dynamic PCI is not surprising, since the individualist approach of the learning process is more propitious to students becoming aware of the developmental stage of their personal attributes, among which intelligence. This obviously increases the probability of students making decisions about the improvement of such attributes.

At the same time, competition, as an attitudinal and behavioural dimension, should be valorised with regard to its positive aspects, that is, teachers and school, in general, should emphasize the benefits of a type of competition which is focused on the desire to become better not by fixing performance goals, that is, by trying to get better results than other students, but

by trying to accede to superior learning levels. This could enable solutions to more and more difficult problems, enhancing students' self-confidence and intellectual competence. However, as indicated by some authors (Grant & Dweck, 2003), performance goals can also determine an increase of school performance, but this is only the case when the solution of school tasks is followed by success; after setbacks, students start doubting about their own abilities, which may lead to a significant impairment in their motivation and performance.

Therefore, without trying to preach the competition with oneself, denying the benefits that social comparison has on learning motivation and achievement, we consider that teachers should stimulate students' desire to become better than *before* and not better than *others* and to make constant learning progresses.

The results of this study indicated that a dimension of collectivism, namely the *advice*, is associated to dynamic PCI. As regards students, this general tendency of collectivists towards asking advice and opinions from others may predispose them to a specific behaviour of seeking external feedback, which, in fact, is characteristic of highly motivated students. Thus, we consider that, at a level at which it does not lead to dependence on others' opinions and advice, nor to the annihilation of personal actions, this dimension of collectivism – seeking others' advice – deserves teachers' and parents' attention, this meaning that they should encourage children to make questions when they do not know how to solve a task, to ask opinions on their results and thus to become responsible for the development of their own person.

Although individualism seems to have only positive aspects whose valorisation in school can guarantee an improvement in performance, this cultural dimension also displays negative aspects which collectivism could compensate. More specifically, positive nuances of COL which are less characteristic of IND, such as sharing knowledge with the other colleagues, the ability to acquire knowledge from others who know more, the collaboration with the other colleagues and with the teacher, the maintenance of good relationships with them, represent a propitious field for the development of a kind of *collective competence* which, having the power granted by group cohesion, could lead to the perception of school tasks as more easily to surmount, to the intensification of self-confidence, to a greater ability of coping with challenges and, thus, to the improvement of school performance.

Therefore, teachers should encourage the manifestation of these positive aspects of COL, since they represent factors by which the management of the classroom seen as a cohesive group may benefit.

Finally, these guidelines of an intervention plan which aims to contribute to the improvement of students' performance through the valorisation of an optimum association pattern between positive aspects of IND/COL and dynamic PCI, are meant to also be applied to the situations in which teachers belonging to individualist societies give classes in collectivist cultural contexts and vice versa or to the situations in which teachers work with multicultural classrooms. In all these cases, in order that the educational process is not affected, teachers should be trained to cope with the differences introduced by the fact that one belongs to an individualist or a collectivist culture.

At the same time, students who are to study in schools in which the educational process develops in a different way from that in their own culture – particularly as regards individualist and collectivist attitudes and behaviours –, should be informed about the existence of possible differences and gradually accommodated to the exigencies of the new school environment. In their turn, teachers should identify, encourage and valorise the positive aspects that the new students bring on their arrival.

On the whole, we can assert that, as a function of the analysis sphere which is stressed – the individual or the group –, individuals' psychological functioning and interpersonal relationships follow different routes of manifestation and development. The results of the present research indicated that this is also true with regard to the manifestation of individualism-collectivism and its influence on the educational process, in general, and on personal conceptions of intelligence, in particular, in two Latin cultural contexts – Romania and Portugal.

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Appendix 1

Examples of items from the *Anonymous Questionnaire of Self Attitudes* (AQSA) (Shulruf, Hattie, & Dixon, 2003, 2007)

Individualism scale

Uniqueness

2. I enjoy being unique and different from others.
22. My personal identity independent of others is very important to me.

Competition

6. I believe that competition is a law of nature.
21. I try to achieve better grades than my peers.

Responsibility

5. I consult with superiors on school or work-related matters.
19. I take responsibility for my own actions.

Collectivism scale

Harmony

4. Even when I strongly disagree with my group members, I avoid an argument.
20. I do not reveal my thoughts when it might initiate a dispute.

Advice

18. I discuss job or study-related problems with my parents.
 24. I consult my family before making an important decision.
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Appendix 2

Examples of items from the *Personal Conceptions of Intelligence Scale* (PCIS) (Faria, 1990-2006)

Static conception

4. No matter how hard I try, I will never manage to change the intelligence that I have.
5. I can learn new things, but I cannot really change my intelligence.

Dynamic conception

1. I can do some things in order to change my intelligence.
2. By making efforts I can become more intelligent.