

EUROPEAN DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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We are living in a society in constant evolution and change, therefore, the purpose of the educational system must be in continuous concordance with them. Only that way we can shape the individual that our society needs. The article aims to capture the relationship between the new curriculum and the new goals of the national education policies in the spirit of European citizenship. The research emphasizes the materialization of the necessary changes in the Romanian education system: the formation of competences with large transfer possibilities, adapting the curriculum to the knowledge society, to change, to post modernity, improving efficiency of emotional learning to achieve an increased EQ, for the social and emotional education of the European citizen, moving from the academic culture of theoretical type to functional culture, from monoculture to intercultural and multicultural approach, from theoretical education to pragmatism, to emphasizing the applied character of learning, from the instructive/informative character to the formative one.

Keywords: curriculum, dimensions of education, postmodern education, quality of education, constructivism, deconstruction

In the current socio-economic circumstances of Romania, the issue relating to the quality of instruction and education constitutes a national priority. That happened especially since the dozens of so-called education reforms have determined a worrying decline of the quality of the educational-instructional process and, consequently, weaker results obtained in education. Since 1978 Romania has introduced a new national curriculum for pre-university education, in 2007 there were constituted the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance on Pre-university Education (ARACIP), respectively the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). Practically, since 2000 Romania has concluded accession to the EU in education, since 2004, by law, Romania has been included in the European area of education and has been a member of the European Union since 2007.

In 2011 a new National Education Law (NEL, Law no.1/2011) was promulgated. The new law emphasizes a new educational philosophy through a performing education management. We believe that first of all we should target a new curriculum and new finalities of national education policies in a proper spirit of European citizenship, in a globalized knowledge-based society. The greatest problems are referring to the paradox situation in which we ask education for European finalities on the basis of an outdated content.

Research methodology

Our departments' main activity is to form and train the teachers, throughout their whole career, therefore, our research was based, first of all, on the analysis of the documents of educational policies, supporting the reform of the Romanian system within a European context: National Education Law, National Curriculum Framework, school curriculums, guidelines for the application of curriculum.

But, all of these aspects of the reform can bring a new quality of the education only if they are well known, understood, accepted and applied. Our direct activity within schools, as members of the evaluation commissions for 1st degree qualification for teachers and many other activities and events organized in cooperation with both pre-university and university education institutions (conferences, scientific sessions, European projects, trainings, etc.) have proven to us that they are little applied during the day-to-day activity in schools. The absence of a coherent training strategy for teachers, through which these aspects should be known, understood and applied in practice, created confusion and dissatisfaction about the Education Ministry's policies. The political will to change as much as possible in a very short period of time, created barriers in accepting the changes. All these things lead to a negative perception about the education reform and its results, both within the actors directly involved and the public opinion.

Specific studies and researches in Romania consider that in order to effectively achieve a new quality of the educational-instructional process we have to address, particularly, the following aspects:

- Correct understanding and application of the principles of democracy in education; we are all equal; everyone should have equal opportunities; there should be education for all and a school for each (cf. Scientific Conference, University of Oradea, TTD).
- Promoting change, developing creativity through heuristic and active participative learning. Particular attention is given to the strategies of teaching and of assessment centered on the students, on their possibilities and predispositions.
- Increasing the responsibility of teachers and students as European citizens. The teacher, in particular, but also the student should be prepared and made aware to take responsibility for results obtained in the educational-instructional cohabitation.
- A package of didactic and management measures is necessary in order to become aware of the social, economic and cultural diversity and unity of the European space. We must consider ourselves Europeans, we must live and prepare / work as such. Only through a joint effort in Europe the quality of life for all can and must be improved, according to the political declarations to that effect.

- We must, at all costs and by all means, promote the principles of learning/education for all and for life. Changes in science and technology are so fast that the school's task to prepare children for the demands of life should be reconsidered. Ideally, we should, in school, lay the foundations of permanent education, of continuous formation in any field of activity.
- We should achieve, in school, emotional literacy, and based on that, we should achieve social and emotional education in order to develop the competences of social adaptability.
- The most important components of the youth policies must be counseling and career guidance through a holistic system of approaching education components and forms, through increasing the role and place of non-formal education and of the new educations in shaping students' personality.

In Romania, according to the principle "ten thousand cultures, one civilization" (Malița, 2000), today the following general directions of contemporary culture and education are prefigured:

- a) from theoretical academic culture to functional-in-action culture;
- b) from written culture to the oral and audio-visual culture; from books to computers;
- c) from monoculture to intercultural and multicultural approach;
- d) from "theoretical", mostly informative education, to pragmatism, to emphasizing the formative/applicative character of the instructional-educational process;
- e) there appears, based on the key competences established at European level, the necessity of developing some competences with large transfer possibilities;
- f) we need a curricular adaptation to the knowledge society, to change, to postmodernism. Both the social and emotional education of the future European citizen and the proper development of emotional IQ must prevail.

Postmodern education aims to form human beings capable of judging. In that respect, *to learn* means *to question, to criticize* (Bârlogeanu, 2004).

We aim to gradually form young persons, able to understand the world around them, to communicate and interact with their peers, to use their skills effectively and creatively and be able to continue the process of learning at all stages of their existence.

Thus, our school must reconsider its priorities and solve real needs (Beck, 1993):

- Updating the role of the teacher; the teacher must become a manager, a distributor, an organizer and a facilitator of learning;
- Rethinking the role and place of the student in terms of the management bases of teaching relations;
- Consolidating the teacher's contractual relations with society, with local community;
- Providing complex skills for each student in the context of social and emotional education; passing from the formation of ideals to the formation of skills and capabilities;
- Holistic approach to components, forms and principles of education in order to prepare the European citizen for the knowledge society under globalization.

The new curricular paradigms require “renouncing the categorizing breakdown of educational influences into those of intellectual, esthetic, moral, professional, physical education etc. and implies defining the pragmatic, efficient behavior through the componential model of personality, according to which efficient behavior appears as integration of the following existential components: personal competence (ability of self-control, self-orientation, self-discipline), cognitive competence (skills of acquisition, processing, informational application), social competence (regulating skills and abilities of the efficiency of individual-environment relationship), special skills (e.g. ability of acquiring specialized knowledge). The integrating element, the basis of effective behavior is represented by the communicational competence.

If we accept the fact that we must develop the performance of the student, then we must also accept that a limitation to the teacher’s authority is needed, even of the possibility of contesting it. In this context, the lesson practically loses its author, representing the combination of the teacher’s intentions with those of the students. The performance reached by the students will be due to the fact that they are permanently placed in life contexts that make them argue, analyze, interpret, create, think etc. (Stan, 2004).

In that context, real attention should be given to the problem of curriculum organization. Probably we should also promote deconstruction in education in Romania (Rosenau, 1992). All disciplines in education have been made too scientific and the principle of constructivism in education, the main postmodern theory of learning, was too emphasized (Stan, 2004). But today in education we do not require the increase of the number of answers (ideal answers), but the multiplication of questions, doubts and possibilities. Thus, personal interpretations will be supported, creativity will develop, students will always pay attention to new things and to the possibility of promoting/understanding them.

More and more emphasis is placed on the two different perspectives of the paradigm of the curriculum at educational level (Cristea, 2004:8-10 and 171-175):

1. *The perspective of deconstruction.* Deconstruction represents the postmodern *method* of edification of a theoretical construct with comprehensive vocation, which can lead to equating postmodernism with relativity (Stan, 2007:33).

2. *The perspective of reconstruction.* Such a perspective justifies the curriculum paradigm, which, together with the work of Ralph Tyler (1949), unifies the efforts in an axiomatic framework with a powerful normative and operating role. It aims to optimize the relationships between:

- a) Diversification – unification,
- b) Knowledge (theoretical) – experience (empirical),
- c) Fundamental research– applicative research,
- d) Hermeneutic research – experimental research.

It presents multiple determinations on the curriculum by: stabilizing the fundamental concepts in the context of off-center and intensive mobility of information and communication networks characteristic to post-industrial society, recognition and coexistence of diversity of globally multiplied opinions and interests, asserting the main directions of development in the medium and long terms, from the perspective of the curricular design of education (Cristea, 2004:5). Thus, the curriculum paradigm launched by Ralph W. Tyler ensures optimal approach of the educated person (individually, collectively, student, adult) globally (with reference to all contents and general forms of education) and open (with reference to all methodological resources and to all activity assessment strategies of) (Cristea, 2003:222).

Conclusions

Despite all the dysfunctions, there are reasons for us to say that the reforms started after 1990 succeeded to initiate the changing process of the education system in Romania and that there are uncontested positive effects. We believe, though, that it is absolutely necessary to improve the cooperation and communication between the State's institutions and civil society, between the educational research and education institutions, so that the long term strategies of training and development of the teachers will be naturally correlated with all the other aspects of the educational change and will be followed no matter the political changes.

In this context, the new curricular projection should be reconsidered in the light of the new European dimensions of education in Romania. We are talking about the necessity to increase the responsibility of teachers and students as European citizens, becoming aware of the social, economic and cultural diversity and unity of the European space, about promoting learning/education principles for all and for life, about emotional learning. Based on the social and emotional education, promoting change, developing creativity, heuristic, active and participative learning, career counseling and guidance, should all be components of youth policies, etc.

We are aware that the principles promoted should support the development of some learning outcomes such as knowledge, skills and competences with large transfer possibilities. This is the only way to approach the modern perspectives of passing from the academic culture of theoretical type to functional culture; from monoculture to intercultural and multicultural approach; from the "theoretical" education to pragmatism, to emphasizing the applied character of learning; from the instructive/informative character to emphasizing the formative character of education/teaching.

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