

## ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF A POSTMODERN CURRICULUM IN INITIAL TRAINING OF TEACHING STAFF

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**Abstract:** *The curriculum for initial teacher education is the component that should be changed in order to update it and to correlate with the other curricula. The reform of the education system should start with teacher training and in the Romanian education system it has always been marginalized. Our proposal is the result of the experience of the authors in the initial and continuous training, supplemented by the needs analysis of the teachers who participated in continuous training programs over time.*

**Key words:** *curriculum, teachers' initial training, educational plan, Romanian education system, reform.*

### 1. Introduction. Postmodern Vision on Education

A postmodern approach on education highlights the need that both students and teachers should be modern. Students find it easier to learn when they capitalize the internal motivation to learn, however change aims to (Wilson, 1997):

- a. creates an attractive class environment, as a manner to organize space which will encourage one type of communication or another. A reflection targeting the type of mankind's future organization is also required;
- b. model, namely to use the behaviour of people admired in order to prove the values and the behaviours which the teachers want their students to acquire. If teachers are no longer the "coolest" model in classrooms, then they are facilitators;
- c. the instructional strategies lay emphasis on group activities and student-focused teaching strategies, as they are built on the need for recognition and affiliation;
- d. the teacher's expectations inspire the students to study in line with such expectations. Students with good results will interact more frequently and better with their teacher. Any attitude of the teacher may determine label attaching in case of both good and mediocre students;

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- e. feedback as motivation factor has to be provided only in case of desirable actions, and the teacher must clarify which activities need to be improved and be therefore credible. As commendation entails a better self-respect it may represent the basis for an internal long-lasting change. Motivation is closely related to reinforcement principles (behaviour is controlled by its consequences). Punishments and rewards have to be adapted because what rewards one student may represent a punishment to another;
- f. getting the students involved means stirring their interest in relation to the classroom, to how it looks like and to how activities are conducted there.
- g. increase of the degree of immediate applicability of knowledge acquired in school is connected to the teacher's answers to the students' questions concerning applicability of knowledge acquired in real life.

## 2. Change of Approaches

The perspective of postmodernism is supported by theoretical analyses and developments, and in the educational space this paradigm is being established whereas the school practice and the contemporary school still function in the space circumscribed by the postmodernism paradigm.

Through proposals of new existential educational projects, the postmodernism paradigm in education requires avoidance of enthusiasm. This is the reason why when we innovate we should first think that "each paradigm relies on a specific ideological discourse which objectifies itself in a philosophical foundation of defining, undertaking and achieving education" (Păun, 2002, pp. 15-16):

- "romantic ideology" in the hereditist conception;
- "culturalist ideology" represents the basis of the philosophical empiricism and behaviourism and the consequences of the educational practice were the pedagogy of the objectives, the Skinnerian teaching and the didactic projection model;
- "progressive ideology" was objectified in the educational cognitivism and functionalism while Piaget's epistemology was used to move from teaching to learning, from teacher to student.
- The specific phenomena of the market economy penetrated the educational space as well; a new school culture came to life, with both positive and negative effects. The positive effects are visible in the encouraging of change and educational progress.
- In the educational area, the limits of this market logic determine:
- emergence of an excessive elitism which is contrary to the perspective of guaranteeing equality in education. "A school segregation" is progressively setting in, which means that good students are protected in relation to the other ones, and studying is exclusively focused on good results in the examinations;
- conveying in school only knowledge considered to be important, only if suitable for the job market, ignoring the other information which represent general knowledge, philosophy, arts, pure sciences;

- generating a new concealed curriculum, which leads to a positive political socialization (initiative, autonomy, independence) as well as to socialization with negative values (opportunism, egoism, individualism, dishonesty etc.). Under such circumstances, “school seems to be a market of school goods of which the student must choose, becoming therefore a consumer of school objects” (Păun, 2002, p.16).

### 3. Characteristics of Postmodern Pedagogy

In the educational area, the postmodernism paradigm is extremely attractive, as it emphasizes the person-focused education, its main source being the humanist psychology (e.g. C. Rogers, A. Adler).

The main characteristics of the postmodernism paradigm refer to: subjective-emotional component of the educational act, reconsideration of the student as an actor in the educational space, in a permanent process of becoming, of building his or her statute and roles, of acquiring competences needed in this profession.

A significant contribution is represented by the interpretative analyses on the curriculum sector, analyses which are predominantly sociological and anthropological. Therefore, the curriculum is not tackled in terms of objective-related analysis but in terms of culture, starting from “the analysis of the cultural contexts where the curriculum is structured and is institutionalized; this approach is supported, among others, by J. Bruner. The curriculum theory has to be integrated into a cultural space, and, from the educational point of view, this space is the classroom space” (Păun, 2002, p.21). The analyses on curriculum have highlighted three levels of types: formal or pre-written curriculum, real/actual curriculum and concealed curriculum.

In education, the ratio between knowledge and experience, theory and practice, implies analysis between the main actions of training teaching – learning – assessing and their individualized development, in various psychosocial contexts and situations (Cristea, 2004). Therefore, the postmodern education integrates the theory and the teaching practice between the general theory of education and the general theory of training, tendency which in epistemological and methodological terms can be found at the general theory level of the curriculum.

As a stage in the evolution of teaching sciences, postmodernism in education capitalizes the cultural model through (Connor, 1999, p. 342):

- stabilizing the fundamental teaching concepts under circumstances of an intense information mobility;
- recognizing the diversity, various teaching interests and the multitude of opinions;
- medium and long-term affirmation of major directions of teaching sciences evolution from the perspective of curricular projection of education (training), in the context of permanent education, self-education, maximum capitalization of educability.

The constructivist perspective on learning (the constructivist paradigm is the major example of postmodernism theory application) relies on the idea of instruction and construction complementarity. Hence teachers have to be less focused on “how much” they convey and more on “how” they convey it, namely the methods and manners

which they can offer students so that the latter may come across various information, discover, experiment, search and solve problems. Students become thus active participants to building their own knowledge, knowledge is no longer offered “readymade”. Therefore, learning becomes an active process, more than a mere passive reception of information. Nevertheless, students have to be motivated towards going through the learning experiences proposed by teachers and, since every student has their own learning style, it is required to adapt and differentiate up to individualization of the entire teaching endeavour.

#### **4. Proposals on Contents for Teaching Staff Initial Training Curriculum**

All these paradigms and perspectives should urge the academic teaching staff involved in initial training for future teachers’ didactic career to rethink (in case the ministry does not consider changing the curriculum plan on psycho-pedagogical training for certification of competences needed in the didactical profession - level I and II) structuring contents, by disciplines, as well as teaching strategies so that generations of postmodern teachers are initiated towards a mentality, an attitude and a psycho-pedagogical training which should be implemented in classrooms in a postmodern manner.

We propose that, in relation to disciplines already part of the psycho-pedagogical training programs attended in order to get certification for the teaching profession, contents such as the following should be approached both for the first and second level of certification:

- Individualized and differentiated learning, differentiation and individualization strategies (training theory and methodology) (Cuciureanu, 2014; 2015);
- Using CES in teaching children (education psychology);
- Management of the system, institutions/organizations, of the class – conflict, time and stress management (management of the class should come after elements of educational management);
- Elements of education sociology (since the professional competences profile which a teacher should possess in the postmodern society implies orchestration of such competences using a series of competences and attitudes typical of education sociology);
- Child – pre-schooler, pupil, teenager psychology (they are included in the curricula of the Pedagogy and Primary and Pre-Schooling Pedagogy; however they are not part of the Teaching Staff Training Department curricula where every teacher has such a personal approach that sometimes he or she significantly moves away to from the goals and the contents of the discipline taught) – and general psychology elements applicable to education – analysis of all mental processes and personality components and their use in the learning process and educational people skills (education psychology);
- Postmodern teaching strategies (training theory and methodology) – focused on the teacher’s roles of facilitator, supporter, guide (Căpiţă, 2011);
- Efficient learning methods and techniques (training theory and methodology);
- Students assessment strategies (preparing instruments required in assessing and

analysing, in terms of advantages and limits, of all types and forms of assessment, through applicative activities).

### **5. Proposal on a New Curriculum Plan for Initial Training**

Following analysis of the legislation on initial training of teaching staff and curriculum of psycho-pedagogical training programs through Teaching Staff Training Departments (Internal Rules and Regulations of Teaching Staff Training Departments – Minister Order no. 4356/1996; Minister Order no. 3312/23.02.1998 regarding Regulations on organizing and conducting teaching training; Minister Order no. 4237/13.06.2003 regarding Curriculum Plan of Teaching Staff Training Departments; Law no. 288/14.06.2004 regarding organizing university studies, as amended and supplemented by Emergency Ordinance no. 78/2005; Government Decision no. 88/2005 regarding organizing bachelor's studies; Minister Order no. 3235/10.02.2005 regarding organizing cycles of bachelor's study; Minister Order no. 3617/16.03.2005 regarding generalized application of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS); Minister Order no. 4343/17.06.2005 regarding study program for graduation certificate of Teaching Staff Training Department; Law no. 346/2005 regarding approval of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 78/2005 for amending and supplementing law no. 288/2004 regarding organizing university studies; Law no. 258/19.07.2007 regarding internships of pupils and students; Order no. 4316/03.06.2008 regarding approval of psycho-pedagogy studies program for certification for didactical profession through the Teaching Staff Training Department; Order 4872 of 22.07.2008 regarding approval of graduation certificate of Teaching Staff Training Department; Order no. 5745 of 13.09.2012 regarding approval of Framework Methodology for organizing psycho-pedagogical training program to obtain certification of competences for didactical profession; Order 3850/2017 of 02.05.2017 for approval of Framework Methodology for organizing psycho-pedagogical training programs within accredited university studies establishments to obtain certification for didactical profession) we can say that the Romanian education system still functions in line with the modern approach ([www.edu.ro](http://www.edu.ro)).

A proposal on a curriculum plan seen from a postmodern approach would be:

Table 1

*Curriculum plan on psycho-pedagogical training program for certification of competences required in the didactical profession, provided by Teaching Training Department*

No.	Disciplines	Length of disciplines study			Number of hours / week*		Total hours			Asses- ment forms	Credits
		Year	Semester	Number of weeks	C	A	C	A	Total		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>CORE CURRICULUM</b>											
Discipline for Fundamental Psycho-Pedagogical Training (compulsory)											
1	Elements of Education Psychology	I	1	14	2	2	28	28	56	E	4
2	Pedagogy Bases	I	2	14	1	1	14	14	28	E	3
2	Curriculum Theory and Methodology	I	2	14	1	1	14	14	28	E	3
3	Theory and Practice of Postmodern Training	II	3	14	2	2	28	28	56	E	4
4	Educational Management	III	6	14	2	1	28	14	42	E	3
Disciplines for Teaching Training and Practicum (compulsory)											
5	Specialty Teaching	II	4	14	2	2	28	28	56	E	4
6	Teaching Practice in Mandatory Pre-university Education (1)	II	4	14	-	2	-	28	28	C	2
7	Teaching Practice in Mandatory Pre-university Education (2)	III	5	14	-	3	-	42	42	C	3
	Computer-assisted practice	III	5	14	1	1	14	14	28	C	2
8	Teaching Practice in Mandatory Pre-university Education (3)	III	6	12	-	3	-	36	36	C	2
	TOTAL – Level I	-	-	-	-	-	154	246	400	6E+4C	30
	Graduation Examination, Level I	III	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	E	5
<b>EXTENSIVE CURRICULUM</b>											
Disciplines for Extensive Fundamental Psycho-Pedagogy Training (compulsory)											
1	Age Psychology			14	2	1	28	14	42	E	5
2	Educational Project Management			14	1	1	14	14	28	E	4
3	Education Sociology			14	1	1	14	14	28	E	4
Disciplines for Teaching Training and Practicum (compulsory)											
4	Didactics of Curricular Area/Domain (for secondary, post-secondary, university education)			14	2	1	28	14	42	E	4
5	Pedagogical Research Methodology			14	1	1	14	14	28	C	3
6	Teaching Practice (in secondary schools, post-secondary schools and universities)			14	-	3	-	42	42	C	4
<b>OPTIONAL CURRICULUM (two optional disciplines will be chosen)</b>											
7	Optional Package 1 (choice of one discipline)*: - Educational Marketing - Postmodern Assessment Strategies - Inclusive Education - Priority, Time and Stress Management ...		2	14	1	1	14	14	28	E	3

No.	Disciplines	Length of disciplines study			Number of hours / week*		Total hours			Asses- sment forms	Credits
		Year	Semester	Number of weeks	C	A	C	A	Total		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8	Optional Package 2 (choice of one discipline)*: – Postmodernism in Educational Relations – Intercultural Education – Projection, Implementation and Assessment of Educational Programs – Psycho-pedagogical Counselling ...		3	14	1	1	14	14	28	E	3
	TOTAL – Level II	-	-	-	-	-	126	140	266	6E+ 2C	30
	Graduation Examination - Level II		4	2	-	-	-	-	-	E	5
	TOTAL I and II						280	386	666	14 E 6 C	70

Observations:

C = Courses, A = Applicative Activities (seminars, laboratory classes, practice)

\*Open list for each Teaching Staff Training Department.

## 6. Conclusions

To be genuinely and beyond a declarative level under the umbrella of the postmodernism paradigm in the education system, to restore the prestige of the teaching profession in the context of the contemporary society, in order for the Romanian school to become a credible institution of which fundamental mission has to aim at promoting authentic values and implicitly at developing individuals' personality, we have to take the first step, i.e. reforming the initial training system for the teaching career. Starting from the obvious needs and the stringent issues of the Romanian education system, the creators of educational policies along with practitioners in this field have to find in the shortest timeframe possible "a successful formula" with regards to curriculum for initial training of future teachers, in line with principles of educational postmodernism.

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