

FRAMES OF A PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL PARADIGM ON CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Habilitation Thesis

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SUMMARY

The attempt to unify (relatively) miscellaneous concepts on contemporary educational phenomenon through a paradigm must not be conceived as evidence of excessive ambition, or a longing too high. It is rather an attempt to understand some of the complexity of contemporary education. It is at the same time, an attempt grateful to those who supported me and helped me to understand the true complexity and extent of the field of education.

A university career path is marked by a large factorial context. It integrates identity and professional duties, specific and general framework of current research and teaching activities. In this context, and considering the specific activity of the department where I teach - professor at Department of Teacher Training at the „Al. I. Cuza” University – my research and interests falls naturally, within the framework of the broad Educational Science domain.

Within this complex context, my personal career in educational research can be assessed through two complementary trends. On the one hand, it can be identified a continuity element in the work and research themes, elements that can be subsumed under the broad fields of Education Psychology and Educational Management. On the other hand, it can be easily identified an increasing trend, an approach from the Pedagogy perspective of some of the most exciting topics of educational space of the XXI century. We are talking about highly promising developments in education in cyberspace.

In an attempt to order and unify the entire personal scientific achievements we can start from a simple paradigm to interpret the evolution of the educational phenomenon along a continuum that examines it from a triple perspective (Khan, 2004):

BENEFICIARY \longrightarrow PROCESS \longrightarrow PRODUCT

This interpretive grid cover in an adequate manner, all the activities carried out through the entire career of teaching and research, but equally, this "umbrella" is much larger than the whole of topics addressed in personal research. Thus, a comprehensive approach remains only

an aspiration. Beyond the inherent difficulties, this is the model that I preferred in order to present in this thesis, my personal research achievements and concerns.

A. BENEFICIARY

This term, is very general, and it can include a highly complex ensemble of elements linked to the pupil or to student, to the child or to adult. In this direction, starting from my education (Doctor of Psychology) with a thesis in Psychology of Education, I was concerned about the problems of the learner. Thus, I addressed in some articles and conference papers, different issues related to student' self-efficacy and satisfaction when introducing the Bologna model. Thanks to my interests and accomplishments regarding the study of learning in the virtual environment, since 2008 I was asked to be a part of a German-Romanian research team, which included specialists from the "Ludwig Maximilian" University in Munich, "Babes-Bolyai" University Cluj-Napoca, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca and "Al. I. Cuza" University. The collaboration with these specialists, especially with the Germans, has resulted in a series of articles and conference papers focused in particular on one of the newest theories that attempt to explain human behavior: the Theory of acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh). From the same psychological perspective we approached the study of educational options of students or their preference for e-learning training model.

B. PROCESS

The study of educational process (in the broadest sense possible) can be made from very different perspectives. Interpretation grids can be multiple and extremely varied. One way of approaching the educational process is the managerial perspective. Addressing education as a social service enabled the analysis of this, based on the principles of scientific management. Educational management is an integrative concept, an attitude, a methodology of action headed towards achieving success in education. It includes a set of principles and functions, rules and management methods through which shall ensure the reach of the educational goals. Management of educational services considers the theory and practice, the science and art the design, organization, coordination, evaluation, adjustment of all elements of the educational activity. Starting from here, my research interests in this direction have resulted in a number of books and studies that have as central theme Educational management. In addition, taking into account my teaching experience in the field, this orientation may be an evolution in the direction of future research.

C. PRODUCT

Within the proposed paradigm, the product is an educational model with the action value, which may positively impact the social system. Obviously, there are a multitude of educational models, with different application, which produce different effects. The perspective that we analyzed in a general way, immediately after obtaining the Ph. D was related to the

interference between technology and educational field, focusing on aspects of e-learning and its extensions.

Aspects regarding the educational potential of e-learning model are extremely important especially due to the expansion and its widespread use. Moreover, within this research field there is a paradox. The practical use of e-learning far surpassed the educational research. This is the vision that drove me when I conducted a number of researches: comparative analysis of computer use and the introduction of e-learning in Romanian educational system. However, there are arguments to identify a “pedagogy of e-learning”- research direction for which we advocate and which we support. Also, the educational effects of the use of social media, quality standards for e-learning, interactive virtual environment, multimedia and educational effects of its use, characteristics and types of educational software used in school are themes that preoccupied me.

Also, the extensions of the e-learning model: mobile learning and ubiquitous learning (m-learning and u-learning), important topics in contemporary educational context, have a particular personal relevance. Until not very long ago, researches on m-learning educational model were based essentially on the pedagogy of e-learning. Pedagogical research on mobile learning as a individualized method, opened several lines of research such as: the characteristics of mobile learning and ubiquitous learning, instructional design for m-learning, mobile learning principles in formal educational settings and beyond.

The last section of the thesis, presents career plan and future intentions for teaching and research development.