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## **Curricular approaches in the education of children with disabilities, in inclusive contexts**

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**Abstract.** Addressing curricular issues in the education of children with disabilities in inclusive contexts, this paper aims at the importance of requirements implementation of the integrated curriculum in special education, necessary for a quality education for all children, regardless of their abilities, their state of health or their living standard, ethnicity etc. This is necessary to allow all people equal access to society's resources, regardless of their nature. The objective of the paper is, mainly, to emphasize the need and importance of inclusion of all children - including those with disabilities - in mainstream school, as well as adapting the school to these categories of students, in terms of curriculum; the need to include in the school curriculum specific didactic approaches, adequate, effective educational techniques, adequate and individualized learning supports for each child separately. Thus, the inclusion policy aims to provide the basis for a lasting change in society's perception of people with disabilities, which translates into the need to raise the acceptance of people with disabilities, in order to increase diversity in general. The education system has managed to align with international trends and requirements regarding the right to education, integration and inclusion of all persons with disabilities, but the aim is to maximise the number of children / persons as much as possible, regarding inclusion, integration and taking all measures so that these people live a life as independent as possible.

**Keywords.** Curriculum, children with disabilities, inclusive contexts.

### **1. Defining the curriculum concept**

As a basic concept in education, the term "curriculum" was first taken over by English literature specialized in educational studies, obviously Anglo-Saxon. This takeover was not only informative but, based on this term, the foundations of the curriculum theory and methodology were established. The study of the educational curriculum was, starting with that period, integrated in the life of educational institutions, which continued both in modern and contemporary periods.



In addition to these specialized educational studies, it should be noted that the term "curriculum" was linked to the educational context in the medieval documents of some universities, such as those in Leiden, the Netherlands, 1582 and Glasgow, Scotland, 1633.

Although in the lexicographical works the term "curriculum" was first mentioned in The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) - defined here as a compulsory study course, the most important contributions to the development of the concept were made by American literature, whether specialized or not.

The term "curriculum" comes from Latin and refers to a race, a race, a run - as it appears in Cassell, "Latin-English Dictionary". (cf.<http://www.scribub.com/profesor-scoala/Fundamente-istorice-si-teoreti72922.php>, accessed on: 17.04.2019)

Writing about the European origins of the curriculum, David Hamilton (1989) mentions the fact that, due to the need for standardization, all documents related to educational content began to be called curricula. Thus, from the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of curriculum was generally used with the meaning of "official course, organized in a school, college, university, whose completion and graduation ensure the student a higher degree in education; the whole body of courses offered in an educational institution or its department" (Webster, "New International Dictionary").

Paradoxically, the contradiction in meanings appears, for this term, in the specialized pedagogical literature. Thus, in some texts the term "curriculum and evaluation" appears, although most consider that evaluation is an integral part of the curricular project, having a formative function, of regulation and self-regulation of the education / training activity.

The concept of curriculum is also called into question for historical reasons. In this sense, Ion Negreț-Dobridor mentioned that "in classical European pedagogy, the expression curriculum still appears exotic; however, theorists and administrators of Romanian education have embraced it in the last decade, using it in many ways often and often abusively and even incorrectly.

Compared to other terms used in education, the curriculum has a wide variety of definitions. These definitions differ in complexity, clarity and simplicity. Referring to the current pedagogical literature, we can say that there is no consensus on a clear definition of the curriculum.

Regarding the definition and usage of the educational curriculum concept, two trends were identified: restrictive and extensive (Negreț-Dobridor, 2001, p.14). The restrictive trend is characteristic of XVII-XIX centuries. There is an attempt to narrow the meaning of the concept, the curriculum being seen as a school document (curricula, analytical programs, calendar planning, school textbooks).

This trend enrich the traditional meaning of the curriculum with the meaning of:

- set of school and university documents planning the results of education, training,
- a tool for social efficiency of school and university activity, an official, institutionally organized learning program, compulsory for the subject and for the object of education (Crețu, 1995, p.125).

John Dewey (1902, cf.<http://www.scribub.com/profesor-scoala/Fundamente-istorice-si-teoreti72922.php>, accessed on 17.04.2019) is the first supporter of the modern significance of the curriculum concept. In his view, the curriculum is defined by two separate entities:

- (a) the subjects and subjects studied in school;
- (b) the child's learning experience, organized by the school.



Education has an important place in all these fields of knowledge. National mass education systems connected strictly with the age of the learner - now globally widespread - are a relatively new invention of the last 200 years. Schools for groups of children or students have been in existence for centuries, although specific forms and practices, such as curricula based on disciplines, examinations, departments or various classes have been developed for particular, very precise purposes. Over time, there have been universities and higher education institutions for groups of elite students. Throughout history there has been a wide variety of informal and learning forms and processes of people who were part of society at the time.

In the last 500 years, books - in their modern, printed version - have repositioned school knowledge and education to clerical education. Recent research has shown a close relationship between books and their readers.

A specific form of the book is the textbook - and we refer here to the textbook produced for schools or other educational institutions - which appeared since the 1830s. The textbook was and is used by teachers, readers, children and students for the purpose of presenting information or ideologies (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

## **2. Definitions, concepts in education**

A definition of pedagogy, given by Sorin Cristea: Pedagogy (etymological: paidagogia = to lead the child; in Greek, paid = child; agoge = to lead and historically, in the ancient tradition, the pedagogue, paedagogusera "a slave who had the task of leading the child to school") is the sociohuman science that studies education at the level of its function and specific structure through specific research methodologies, which aims at discovering and capitalizing on specific laws, principles and norms of action. Addressing the fundamental problems of pedagogy involves explaining and understanding the basic concepts of the field, which can be applied, analyzed, synthesized, critically appreciated in the sciences of education considered fundamental. In this area we can include:

1) General theory of education (which includes the subjects proposed in the curriculum of the faculty, college or specialized high school under the name of Fundamentals of pedagogy and Theory of education);

2) General theory of training (which includes the subjects proposed in the curriculum of the faculty, college or specialized high school under the name of General Didactics or Theory and methodology of training);

3) Theory and methodology of the curriculum - has as object of specific study: design and implementation of education and training activities organized at the level of the education system and process;

4) The theory and methodology of pedagogical research - has as object of specific study: highlighting the epistemological foundations of the field and the necessary innovation strategies at the level of activities organized at the level of the system and the educational process (cf. [https://www.academia.edu/5674527/Sorin\\_Cristea-Pedagogie\\_generala](https://www.academia.edu/5674527/Sorin_Cristea-Pedagogie_generala), accessed on: 23.11.2018).

„The etymology of the word education (word of Latin origin) suggests the complexity of the phenomenon of education at the level of three primary meanings: a) educatio = growth, feeding, formation; b) educio - educare = to grow, to feed, to form, to train; c) educio - educatio = to take out of (...), to raise, to raise”. (Cristea, 1998, p.118).



The pedagogy dictionary (1979, p.141-142) develops three secondary meanings, which can be capitalized at the level of some methodological landmarks necessary in the analysis of the phenomenon:

- a) education as an effect, realized according to a model proposed by the society;
- b) education as a process, achieved through the development of all internal resources of the human being;
- c) education as a „set of actions”, integrated in a complex activity of personality formation-development.

These three methodological landmarks demonstrate the current extension of the education as a concept, simultaneously representing: a) an institutionally organized activity according to pedagogical aims / value orientations; b) a product of the activity, determinable and adaptable to the requirements of the company; c) a process, engaged between several human beings, in different relations of communication and mutual modification. (Cristea, 1998, p.119).

The definition of education - as a study object specific to pedagogy (pedagogical sciences / education) - involves the advancement of a fundamental pedagogical concept developed through a coherent epistemological approach, under the conditions of exploiting an axiomatic model, certified by a historical scale from the curriculum paradigm. As a result, in support of the curriculum paradigm, a more complex definition can be outlined: „education - activity of (self) formation - (self) development of the personality projected through system and process finalities, aiming at the optimal social integration, through the full evaluation of all pedagogical resources at the educator-educated correlation level, realized in an internal context and in an external open (self) perfectible perfect” (Noveanu & Potolea, 2007).

The notion of curriculum (content of education) is one of the main components of teaching that represents a „structured set of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, expressed in official documents and transposed in the teaching-learning process.” (Vrăsmaș, 2013).

### **3. Curriculum concept**

Curriculum, curricula (Latin) – course, running (sun, moon, life ...). In the field of education, the concept of "curriculum" was used in the pioneering phase, in response of state authorities to the great autonomy of universities:

- in 1582 at the University of Leyda (Netherlands);
- in 1633 at the University of Glasgow (Scotland);
- The child and the curriculum (Dewey, 1902);
- In the USA, in the '20s of the 20th century: „... the school curriculum refers to all the students' experiences in the area of influence of the school”(Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 1941);
- Tyler's acceptance (1949) - curriculum components: objectives, learning experiences (contents), their organization methodology and evaluation of learning outcomes;
- The acceptance of D'Hainaut (1982) - an educational project, which sets the goals, objectives, recommends methods and means of achievement (Avram, 2017).

### **4. The stages of didactic evolution**

As a pedagogical science, didactics has registered a historical evolution, both conceptually and methodologically, enriching and expanding along three identified stages,



depending on the paradigms of pedagogical history and pre-modern society (traditional), modern and postmodern, as follows (Avram, 2017, pp114):

Traditional (premodern) didactics: it is developed in premodern pedagogy, as a form of the magistrocentric paradigm (with evolutions until the end of the twentieth century and with late results until the present moment, regarding some clichés and abnormality of the didactic conducts, useless etc.).

Modern didactics: it is introduced and developed in modern pedagogy, in modern society, in accordance with the norms of the axiomatic requirements of two pedagogical paradigms, namely: psychocentrism and sociocentrism. Its evolution has been registered throughout the twentieth century and till now and psychocentrism and sociocentrism are complementing each other (a didactics based on pedagogy through objectives) (Avram, 2017, pp.114).

Postmodern didactics: it is introduced in postmodern pedagogy in the middle of the twentieth century, continuously developing today, having special manifestations in the computerized society, based on knowledge. This stage of didactics advances as the „Copernican revolution” (Dewey) in accordance with the axiomatic and normative value of the curriculum paradigm. The design of education / training is focused on finality (ideals, goals and general objectives, specific and concrete), created by designers to pursue the maximum degree of permanent connections between the student's psychological requirements (abilities, skills, etc.) and his social requirements (society periodic validations regarding the basic contents)(Avram, 2017, pp.115).

„John Dewey (cf.<http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/csv/curs/tc/c1.html>, accessed on: 22.03.2019) is one of the first theorists and practitioners who contributed to concept extension. His work, *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), raises no objections to the traditional meaning of the concept, but draws attention to the possible error of its interpretation as representing two different, separate entities:

- (a) the subjects and subjects studied in school;
- (b) the child's learning experience, organized by the school.

The professionalism of the educator stands out in the process of correlating the two phenomena, through a continuous reconstruction that starts from the current experience of the child and moves to what is the organized whole of the truth assimilated through learning. „Learning hard” and „learning easily” are realities that reflect not so much and not only the child's abilities and the particularities of the curriculum (in the traditional sense, of knowledge organized to be acquired). The organization of the assimilation of knowledge or „learning experiences” is also decisive, so that it benefits the „natural inclinations” of the child. It is thus suggested to include the latter approach in the curriculum, as component part.

This line of thinking evolved, becoming around the First World War, quite popular among educators, especially among those who represented the vanguard of education reform. In this field, Bobbitt's book, „*The Curriculum*” (Bobbitt, 1918), appeared, considered to contain the first explicit opposition to the traditional meaning of the term. The curriculum definitions pair is launched here:

- (1) the whole range of direct and indirect experiences, consisting in the development of the individual's abilities;

- (2) series of direct and conscious training experiences designed by the school to complement and refine the individual's skills.



F. Bobbitt synthesizes the conception as a basic, simple theory. Human life, no matter how much it varies individually, consists in carrying out specific activities. Education that prepares for life actually prepares, explicitly and adequately for these activities ... This process involves discovering what particularities each activity has. The following will be highlighted: the skills, attitudes, habits, appreciations and forms of knowledge that respective people need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, precise, customized. The curriculum will therefore be the series of experiences that children and young people must have in order to achieve these goals”.

Later, this view is extended and redefined by Tyler (1949) in „Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction”, a course taught at the University of Chicago between 1930 and 1940 and published in only 128 pages, surnamed the „Bible of the curriculum”. The book is structured in four chapters, devoted to the answers to these questions:

- (1) What objectives must the school achieve ?;
- (2) What educational experiences must be offered to achieve these goals ?;
- (3) How should these experiences be organized ?;
- (4) How can we determine whether these objectives have been achieved?

(cf.<http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/csv/curs/tc/c1.html>, accessed on 22.03.2019).

### **5. The origin and development of the curriculum as a field of study**

Over the centuries, the curriculum has been particularly important for education. Plato (Greek philosopher, 4th century), Comenius (15th-century Moravian bishop and educator) and Froebel (19th-century German educator), for example, turned their attention to curriculum and its problems. But the specialized and systematic study of the curriculum and curricular phenomena, as well as the identification of certain individuals as specialists in the curriculum field, did not take place until the twentieth century (Kliebard 1968, p.70).

The field of curriculum has its roots in the Herbartian movement of the late nineteenth century (Seguel 1966, p.7). Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) was a German philosopher, whose educational ideas were widely accepted in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. Herbart's theories of teaching and learning require systematic attention to the selection and organization of subjects.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, a number of significant educational events took place that intensified interest in curricular concerns. First, the State Committee, chaired by Harvard President Charles W. Eliot, published its famous report in 1893. This report dealt with issues such as courses, elective courses, college preparatory subjects, and practise of "practical" disciplines, all aspects of the curriculum. In 1895, the Herbart Society (now the National Society for the Study of Education) was formed. In the next two decades, the members of this organization had a great influence in keeping alive the problem of content and curricular organization. At the same time, John Dewey was involved in experimenting and innovating the curriculum at his famous School of Laboratories at the University of Chicago.

Despite this focus on curricular issues, however, no individual in question was considered a „curriculum specialist” and there was no „easily identifiable field of curricular specialization” (Kliebard 1968, p. 70). It was not until 1918 that the first book on the curriculum, written by Franklin Bobbitt, was published and, the volume „Curriculum” has been generally recognized as a „milestone” that marks the emergence of the curriculum as a specialized field of study.



The 1920s are considered the formative years of the curriculum. In these years, following the publication of Bobbitt's book, volumes began to appear on the curriculum, written by theorists and educational practitioners who are considered specialists in the curriculum. W.W. Charters at Ohio State University, for example, published the Curriculum of Construction in 1923.

The following year, „How to Make a Curriculum”, was considered Bobbitt's greatest work on the subject, and in 1926 the National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE) published a comprehensive review of 685 pages having as subject the curricular movement called „The Foundations and Techniques of Curriculum Construction”, a yearbook constituted from two parts of society by a distinguished committee of researchers, „trained in the curriculum”, positioning as chairmans Franklin Bobbitt, Charters WW, Charles Judd and Harold Rugg.

The word „curriculum” comes from Latin and means „railroad race”. Traditionally, the school curriculum has been something similar - figuratively speaking, of course - to a race of most people. Indeed, until the recent past, even the most well-known professional educators considered the curriculum a relatively standardized field, covered by students in their race to finish line (a diploma). It should not come as surprise, then, to find that many current curriculum concepts are firmly grounded in this notion and that the notion of curriculum is a list of topics (disciplines) that need to be mastered.

A curriculum designed as a series of planned learning experiences is one of the most common concepts among education specialists today. For example, Krug (1956, p. 4) refers to the curriculum as „all the tools used by a school to provide students with learning opportunities” and Doll (1964, p.15) writes: „The frequently accepted definition of the curriculum - The light has changed from the content of study courses and subject lists, to all course experiences - which are offered to students under the auspices or direction of the school.”

Curriculum development refers to a process closely related to curriculum construction, but differs from it by virtue of the nature of its decisions. Curricular development is a process that determines how curriculum construction will continue. Curricular development refers to the following questions: Who is involved in curriculum construction - teachers, administrators, parents, students? What organizations will be used in curriculum construction - administrative departments, university committees? If these commissions are involved, how will they be organized?

Curriculum implementation is one of the few terms that is used consistently in this area. It simply means the implementation of the curriculum, which has been developed by the construction and development processes. Thus, the implementation of the curriculum by definition provides evaluative feedback to the construction / development processes, in which the data are used to revise and improve the curriculum.

## **6. Curriculum adapted to SEN (special educational needs)**

The main axis in the formation of the human personality is represented by education. As Plato stated: „there is nothing more divine than education, through education man truly becomes man”.

Currently, we are taking part in the development of new, educational approaches, determined by the organization, living learning experiences in which we must take into account certain requirements of the future and the usefulness of producing changes today, in terms of children's reactions and young people.



Nowadays, human knowledge is marked by a continuous process in which new disciplines appear, added to the already existing ones, to an informational outbreak that leads to a quantitative growth, as well as to essentialization.

Solving concrete life problems assumes skills usage, knowledge, competencies, so that students can meet the needs of the contemporary world. But for this, the capacity to develop fast and efficient transfers between the studied fields, the collection, the synthesis and the application of all the acquired knowledge must be formed and developed. It is necessary to form skills, attitudes, transversal and transferable values for personal and social development.

The preoccupation of elaborating a new curriculum, as a process of education reform, has an important role, the reform being essential and a guarantee part of the success at global level, of the Romanian education.

The foundational idea on internal and international expertise of the school curriculum reform was submitted to the basic options for public debate by the Ministry of Education and Research and by the National Council for Curriculum.

The designed National Curriculum must respond to the challenges reserved for young people on school desks, for the next century. Thus, the duty of educational system and its responsibility are to prepare young people for new changes at the economic, social, political and cultural levels.

From a European perspective, eight key areas of competence emerged, regarding the adequacy of the school to the dynamics of the labor market, as a „European training profile”. As domains we have:

- Communication in the mother tongue;
- Communication in modern languages;
- Mathematics - sciences - technologies;
- Civic and interpersonal skills;
- Information and communication technology;
- Entrepreneurial education;
- Lifelong learning;
- Cultural awareness and expression,

In this context, competences are sets of knowledge, skills, attitudes to be formed by the end of compulsory schooling; all of which are recommendations for member countries and are not binding. The key areas of competence in the European document are one of the conceptualization efforts.

The translation published in Romania is known as the „Delors Report”, a document developed under the auspices of UNESCO, which analyzes and foreshadows the lines of development of education around „four pillars” (Delors, Jaques, Inner Treasure - Report to UNESCO of the International Commission for Education in the 21st century, 2000):

- „Learning to know” - general knowledge is sufficiently combined with the possibility of deepening a limited number of disciplines, meaning learning how to accumulate knowledge and take advantage of the opportunities that education provides us throughout life.

- „Learning to do” - not only to acquire a professional qualification but also the competence to face the multitude of situations, to be able to work in a team; adapting to the different social contexts that young people face and to experience, as a result of the local or national context in an educational institution through courses, alternating study with work.



- „Learning to live with others” - cultivating empathy for others, correct appreciation of interdependence (engaging in common projects and the ability to resolve conflicts) in the spirit of respecting the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace.

- „Learning to be” - to develop your personality and be able to act with increasing autonomy, judging by your own conceptions and taking responsibility. In this sense, education must not neglect any aspect of human potential: memory, reason, aesthetic sense, physical qualities and the ability to communicate (cf.<https://www.examenultau.ro/blog/temele-pentru-acasa/>, accessed on 30.11.2018).

Special attention was paid by specialists in the education of children with special educational needs, when the concepts of inclusive schooling and integrated education inserted, bringing changes in the vision of the educational act. Due to the characteristic features of the learning process for children with disabilities, the curriculum needed changes and flexibility allowing each of the students to have their own pace, but also had to be seen in dependence on the learning ability of each.

In order for them to be achievable, it was necessary to differentiate the objectives, the contents of the instruction and the way of transmitting the information during the classroom teaching, as well as the evaluation.

The reasons behind a flexible and practicable curriculum, adapted to the educational requirements for each student are:

- respect the right of every child to training and education to the extent of their potential and abilities;
- educating the disabled child in an adequate behavioral register that allows him to adapt and social integration, through common learning experiences with normal children;;
- ensuring the connection with real life facts and getting acquainted with a multitude of habits in activities of practical utility and free time;
- the development (as far as the degree of deficiency allows) of the necessary capacities regarding the independent solution of life problems, self-control (in extreme situations, which requires this); - practicing the methods and techniques of intellectual work that allow ensuring the efficiency in adaptation and school, social integration, etc.

Landmarks that underpin an effective learning process for children with SEN are:

- interactive learning: the use of learning strategies focused on cooperation, collaboration, communication between students during the development of teaching activities, the interaction between teachers, between teachers and students;
- the learning objectives (educator-student) will be elaborated together, because each person involved in the act of learning has ideas, experiences and personal interests that must be taken into account in the design of teaching activities;
- demonstration, application and feedback in the case of children with SEN, the learning process becomes easier and more efficient when the information presented is demonstrated and applied in real life situations, where there is real continuous feedback throughout the process;
- means of supporting the act of learning, where these students need moments of active learning support during classroom and out-of-class activities, things that can be achieved through educational partnerships with certain specialists and students' families.

It is necessary that the teaching-learning methods and procedures to be selected in relation to the purpose and objectives of the teaching activities, the contents of the lessons, the



particularities of the students in terms of age, level of mental development, type, degree of deficiency / disorder, types of perception (analytical / synthetic) and the work style of the educator.

The didactic activity addressed to these students uses the expository methods (story, exposition, explanation, description) and respects the requirements:

- use of appropriate language corresponding to the level of verbal communication;
- clear, precise, concise presentation;
- systematic ideas;
- use of intuitive procedures and materials;
- training students through questions to check the level of understanding of the contents and the intervention with new explanations, when required.

The use of storytelling as a working method in children with mental disabilities must be accompanied by an illustrative-suggestive support, or filmed images, as attention can be easily captured and facilitates emotional-emotional involvement during the lesson.

The didactic game, the dramatization are moments of simulation that can be applied with positive results in the content of the disciplines, in the formation and development of communication for those with mental and sensory deficiencies. A direct involvement of these students in experimental life situations, bring back to life the motivation and active, emotional participation, constituting means of socialization and interrelation with those around.

The basic elements of some phenomena or processes are understood by these children through the method of demonstration. In addition to this method, the exercise in the activities of consolidating knowledge and training skills is a method with a wide applicability in special education.

Cooperative learning is a method that can be used successfully in the educational activities of children with SEN. Students encourage each other, share their ideas and explain to others, discuss what they know, teach each other, realizing how much they need each other to be successful in the group's activity.

For the child with SEN., integrated education allows him to live with other children, to carry out common activities, to acquire skills that are indispensable for a life as close as possible to that of common people, for an adequate social insertion.

These students need help in terms of adaptation, integration, becoming like other students, ie with success and failures, achievements, losses but also with stimulating effects. (Gherguț, 2005; Stănică & Popa, 2001; Ionescu, 1998).

The ideological theories related to school inclusion and integration and those regarding the normalization of the learning environment, or of the social environment are still real problems of the implementation in practice of the ideology of this educational current, which was imported from the West. An approach of the psycho-pedagogical intervention from the perspective of education sciences, but also of pedagogy, is the interest towards the particularities of the instructive-educational process in the case of students with SEN / deficiencies / disabilities. Thus helping to form and develop cognitive skills, communication and fine motor, which are meant to facilitate learning, has obvious implications in adapting and increasing the level of personal autonomy of children with disabilities.

Special education refers to the adaptation of the educational process and to specific interventions of empowerment, rehabilitation / recovery and compensation, which target people



who „fail to reach, in general (regular) education, the educational and social levels corresponding to age” (UNESCO, 1983, GD no.1251 / 2005, apud, Vrăsmaş, T., 2015, p.10). Special education includes the requirements / needs of special education and disability. The concept of special education (ESC) was launched in Great Britain in 1978 and introduced in Romania by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1990s and aims to orient special education towards children and society, community. This concept requires an adapted schooling, a specific intervention through rehabilitation / recovery, specific educational requirements or needs, which derive or not from a deficiency and comes with a supplement, complementing the general objectives of education, in terms of attention, additional assisted education that refers to the adaptation, completion, as well as to a flexible education for certain children. Appropriately addressing these special educational requirements, we can talk about equal opportunities, participation, school and social integration.

From the various papers published under the guidance of UNESCO on disciplines and terminology of special education we deduce certain connections: medical psychopedagogy, medico-social, child psychology where it is shown that people with special needs / disabilities (different types of deficiencies or disability) meet information from medicine (pediatrics , pediatric neurology, neuropsychiatry, ophthalmology, neuropathology, otorhinolaryngology, etc.), psychology, sociology, pedagogy, legal notions (laws), social assistance in terms of personality studies of people with various disabilities (mental, auditory, visual, somatic, language, etc.) or people who are in difficulty regarding integration, their relationship with the community, its institutions or peers.

Returning to the topic „Curricular approaches in the education of children with disabilities in inclusive contexts” I can add that there is a challenge of mainstream schools, namely inclusive education which involves improving the education system for all students and also changes in the curriculum, in the manner teachers teach, in the way students learn, as well as changes in the way children with SEN / disabilities interact with their peers and vice versa.

We are therefore talking about normalization, especially ensuring adequate living conditions for people with special needs, their acceptance within the society or community they belong to, having guaranteed the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities to access community services as other members of society, in order to develop and maximize the potential of these people, referring to the support provided to people with special needs by the components of the social system, to allow them a way of life similar to or close to other members of society; the practical consequences of normalization being programs and actions based on inclusion and integration. In fact, the integration of children with disabilities (special needs) in public school.

In Integrated Education, relationships between individuals are based on a recognition of the integrity, values and common rights they possess, with the following objectives:

- to educate children with special needs / disabilities in regular schools, together with other normal children;
- to provide specialized services (recovery, educational therapy, school counseling, medical and social assistance) in the respective school;
- to support the teaching staff, the school managers in the process of designing and implementing the integration programs;
- to allow the effective access of children with special needs / disabilities to the regular school curriculum and resources (classrooms, offices, laboratories, library, sports fields, etc.);



- to encourage friendships and communication between all children in the class / school;
- to educate and help all children to understand and accept the differences between them;
- to take into account the problems and opinions of parents, encouraging them to get involved in school life;
- provide individualized support programs for children with special needs / disabilities;
- to accept radical changes in the organization and development of instructive-educational activities in the school.

Another process of education is Inclusive Education, where regular school can respond to a wide variety of children and here we refer especially to marginalized, and / or disadvantaged children who are excluded from education (Vrășmaș, 2013).

Inclusion differs from integration, where inclusive education involves a permanent process of improving the school and aims to exploit existing resources, and human resources, to support the participation in the learning process of all students in a community. Thus, a special school can be inclusive or can develop inclusive practices in approaching children (Baban, 2001).

A UNESCO definition would be: „Inclusive education seeks to address the learning needs of all children, young people and adults, with a particular focus on the vulnerable in terms of marginalization and social exclusion”(UNESCO, Salamanca, 1994).

Definition in Romania: „Inclusive education involves a permanent process of improving the school, aiming to exploit existing resources, especially human resources, to support the participation in education of all students in a community” (Vrășmaș, 1999) .

„Regular schools, with an inclusive orientation, are the most effective means of combating discrimination and create welcoming communities, developing an inclusive society and giving everyone access to education” (UNESCO, 1994).

Each student has his own intellectual abilities, different from those of other colleagues, each has his own style of learning and each has his own needs in terms of assimilating information. So one of the most important aspects of today's education is the necessity to adapt to the needs of children, whatever those needs are and whatever the children are - whether they are children with SEN or simply children with a much faster pace or slow learning.

One method of adaptation is the inclusive school, a school that focuses on the inclusion of children or groups who have been previously marginalized and who involves parents, caregivers and specialized counselors in the learning and decision-making process.

The notion of inclusive education comes in response to traditional and old-fashioned approaches, according to which certain categories of children have been excluded from mainstream schools due to disability, learning difficulties / problems, family vulnerability or other reasons.

The concept of inclusion appeared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights within the United Nations (UN, 1948), which recognizes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The statement induces the idea that inclusion means the acceptance of all people, regardless of their differences; people's appreciation for what they are and their skills, other than about the way they walk, talk or behave. Inclusion allows us to capitalize on the differences between people, by appreciating that each person is unique in their own way, the concept being completed and enriched later. International organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank and others have launched their vision on inclusive education and the concepts derived from it.



In 1990, at the International Conference on Education, held in Jomtien, Thailand, on March 5-8, the concept of Education for All was proposed, and according to the Conference Declaration, all states of the world must build their systems of education (cf. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000975/097552e.pdf>, accessed on 28.10.2018).

Schools must include all children in the educational process, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Schools must include children with disabilities and the gifted, street children and the employed, children belonging to populations living in hard-to-reach areas or living a nomadic life, children belonging to linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, and children coming from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

People with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, schools that need to adapt their pedagogy focused on the learner, to be able to meet these requirements. Ordinary, inclusive schools are the most useful means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and providing education for all; moreover, they provide a useful education for most children, increase the efficiency and, ultimately, the profitability of the entire educational system.

In Romanian education, the inclusive school was established as a new dimension of democratization and equalization of opportunities for each child, in response to the resizing of education, with the aim of creating a learning environment for all children and the idea that differences between people are normal and they must be accepted. Therefore inclusion is a moral and social right that cannot be denied to no one. Within the inclusive school, an important role is played by pedagogy and student-centered learning. This involves adapting the curriculum and teaching methods to the capacity and in accordance with the needs of each student. A first step in the schooling of children with SEN, is to accept the idea that there are such children, to recognize their right to education and their gradual integration into mainstream schools. As children grow up, become adults and are likely to have children of their own, inclusion will already be an accepted fact and a natural measure in education. Children educated in an inclusive school will be better prepared to interact with various individuals as well as with various real-world situations.

It is only in the modern era, during the Enlightenment, that the first concerns related to the education of children with disabilities appear. A pedagogical illustration of the genesis of these concerns can be identified in Comenius, in „Didactica Magna” (chap. IX): „The heavier and less gifted one is by nature, the more he needs help to free himself from his limitation and stupidity” (apud. Vrășmaș, 2001, p.10). The first schools for the blind were established at the end of the 18th century in England (since 1791) (Roth, 1973, p.20). However, Itard, the French physician who at the end of the 18th century tried to educate a wild child, discovered in the forests of Aveyron, is considered the pioneer of special education experiences.

The teaching-learning techniques developed by Itard were taken over and later developed by Séquin, who founded in 1837, in Paris, the first school in the world for the education of severe mental disabilities (Arcan and Ciumăgeanu, 1980, pp. 36, 37). Since that time, special schools (having the character of separate education) are developing and differentiating one from another more and more, until the twentieth century.

In our country, the first institutions for the schooling of children with disabilities appeared in the nineteenth century (1864 - School for deaf children in Focșani) and in the early twentieth century (in 1901 - School for the Blind in Focșani and in 1918 - School for the mentally



handicapped from Cluj-Napoca) (Gherguț, 2001, Roth, 1973, p. 20). The first attempts to overcome the segregated model of education appear, interestingly, between the two world wars.

In our country, the Education Law of 1924 provided for the possibility of establishing in ordinary schools differentiated classes for mentally handicapped children, for those with health problems and for blind and deaf-mute children. This is the first mention, in an official document, regarding the organization of differentiated school structures (classes) within mainstream schools, so of some forms of integrated education. This is also the case of “advanced classes” in France (Gherguț, 2001, Vrăsmaș, 2001, p.11).

„Education for all” and „education for all” is the basic idea of national strategies and policies regarding children with disabilities, with the priority:

- the inclusion in the educational process of all children, including those with disabilities (regardless of type) in such a way that all schools promote and support inclusive education;
- early intervention;
- removing the label, stigmatizing the “non-educable” type of the child with disabilities / deficiencies, as well as preventing his / her exclusion from education;
- the provision of material resources, on the principle “the resource follows the child”, necessary for the education of these children, regardless of what kind of form of education follows (Gherguț, 2013).

Adapted and / or differentiated curriculum for people with SEN, regardless of the school in which they study, includes additional study disciplines, complementary to those accessible to all children, which are intended to ensure equal opportunities (equal bases). Such disciplines are called specific intervention or therapy (Vrăsmaș, 2010). They must be available to each child / student with SEN, depending on the individual learning (development) needs (requirements):

- speech therapy intervention (therapy);
- physiotherapy;
- psychomotor education;
- educational therapy;
- visual-perceptual education;
- auditory-perceptual education;
- mobility and orientation in space;
- alternative and augmentative languages and communication systems (mimic-gestural, Braille, etc.) etc.

In special schools there is already a tradition of adaptation and differentiation at the level of organization and curriculum (curricula, curricula, textbooks with adapted content or adapted form of presentation), access and participation in the curriculum and assessment, but which is an obstacle in education integrated and / or inclusive for children with SEN.

In pedagogical practice there are concepts and strategies that remove these obstacles, namely: curricular adaptation, curricular differentiation, differentiated training, multilevel training, etc. Adaptation refers to the application of the principles of curriculum development and implementation:

- equal access (ensuring as much as possible access to the subjects of the National Curriculum);



- equality in terms of learning opportunities and school participation (ensuring personal educational needs, priority for students with SEN), access to a variety of curricular disciplines of specific therapies, compensatory, complementary and additional to other school subjects;

- curricular adaptation which, according to GD no. 1251/2005, refers to the „correlation of the contents of the components of the national curriculum with the possibilities of the student with special educational requirements, from the perspective of the finalities of the process of adaptation and school and social integration. This is done by the support / itinerant teachers together with the class teacher by eliminating, substituting or adding contents in accordance with the objectives and finalities proposed by the personalized intervention plan” (Vrăsmaș, 2010) .

In Romania, according to the legislation, theories and practices on integrated education use some basic notions that form a link between adaptation and curricular differentiation. The content (curriculum) of special and special integrated education includes:

- national curriculum for special and integrated education;
- specific curriculum for special education;
- mainstream school curriculum adapted for integrated education;
- specific methodologies, guides and handbooks (Vrăsmaș, 2010).

When a child needs special educational requirements, then the creation of short-term goals and strategies for achieving them must be correlated with the general objectives and the elements highlighted in the diagnosis. In most cases, the strategies for achieving these objectives are established through an individual educational plan (IEP). As an action displayed at school or presented in extracurricular level, the IEP must record only what is in addition or different from the plan in the differentiated curriculum. As a result, there will be children with special educational needs, diagnosed or not as such, who do not need an individual educational plan because their requirements are met and achieved through alternative methods. However, the individual objectives, the strategies used to achieve these objectives and the progress made should be recorded as part of a general record for all children in a group. If a student identified as having SEN is at risk of lack of affection or exclusion, then the individual education plan must contain the appropriate strategies to cover these needs.

Some schools may choose to add long-term goals to include in an individual education plan (IEP). Such a long-term goal may be useful in identifying the student's results and progress, but it must be correlated with the initial goals and must provide information for setting subsequent goals.

In general, teachers should include SMART objectives in a IEP:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- (with) terms (time bound) ” (Vrăsmaș, 2010).

In the instructive-educational and compensatory-recuperative process of children with special needs, the principles of general didactics are largely applied, but with the difference that they are adapted to the specifics and particularities of students with different types of deficiencies. Depending on their relevance and importance, the principles are identified (cf. <http://www.scritub.com/profesor-scoala/Principiile-procesului-de-inva53553.php>, accessed on 20.05.2019):



I. The principle of unity / correlation between sensory and rational, between concrete and abstract in the teaching-learning process (principle of intuition).

II. The principle of accessibility and individual, differentiated treatment.

III. The principle of respecting age and individual characteristics.

IV. The principle of systematization, structuring and continuity.

V. The principle of integrating theory with practice.

VI. The principle of conscious and active participation of students in educational-compensatory and recuperative activities.

VII. The principle of thorough acquisition of knowledge of skills and abilities.

The didactic principles specific to special education come to support the educational activity in schools and other educational and recuperative services for students with special needs, which together with the general didactic principles are an adaptation of them, regarding the education of students with disabilities, but also intervene with other principles:

1. The principle of ensuring the unity of instruction, education, compensation, recovery and / or re-education;

2. The principle of equal rights;

3. The principle of uniqueness and individualization;

4. The principle of diversity;

5. The principle of access and participation.

Therefore, the key principles of inclusion take into account the fundamental concepts: valuing diversity, the right to be respected, the dignity of the human being, individual requirements, collective responsibility, the development of relationships and professional culture, professional development, equal opportunities (cf. <http://www.scribub.com/profesor-scoala/Principiile-procesului-de-inva53553.php>, accessed 20.05.2019)

Currently, in the didactic activity, a diversity of curriculum types is used. In order to achieve the specific difference it is necessary to approach a classification from the perspective of basic research and from the perspective of applied research. In terms of basic research, the following types of curriculum appear: the general curriculum includes knowledge, skills, competencies, as well as attitudes and behaviors that must be acquired / formed by all students; this type of curriculum can be congruent with the names of:

- common or compulsory curriculum;

- core curriculum (corecurriculum);

- basic curriculum;

- the specialized curriculum is the one that ensures the specific difference on types of knowledge, abilities, aptitudes, and specific competences;

- hidden curriculum seen as a subliminal curriculum „expresses the learning experience that comes from the psychosocial and cultural environment of the class of students”;

- informal curriculum is usually provided by informal education.

From the perspective of applied research, the following types of curriculum appear:

- the recommended curriculum is made by the representatives of the national educational authority for teachers;

- written curriculum is the official or formal curriculum, which through teachers becomes a real curriculum;



- the taught curriculum offers those learning experiences that the teachers present to the primary beneficiary (pupils, students);
- the support curriculum is made up of the auxiliary products of the curriculum;
- the evaluated / tested curriculum is related to the taught curriculum and is found in learning experiences included in the evaluation tests;
- the learned curriculum represents what the primary beneficiary assimilates as a result of the learning experiences (cf. [euromentor.ucdc.ro/euromentor-ro20.12.2013.pdf](http://euromentor.ucdc.ro/euromentor-ro20.12.2013.pdf), accessed 20.05.2019).

„In 1990, measures were taken regarding the reform in education and protection of institutionalized children (Vrășmaș, 2010, p.7), of those with disabilities, etc. being a first step towards change, namely:

- substantial modification of the living and educational conditions in the special institutions in which found these children, like other children (those without family support, then in child care facilities and orphanages - currently placement centers): food allowance, supplies and clothes, children per teacher (adult), staffing (including medical and social work), etc .;
- initiating the training of specialized personnel in this field - initiating superior/university training in the profile of special psychopedagogy (formerly known as defectology), psychology, pedagogy, sociology and social work;
- resumption of research activity in special education, by establishing the National Institute for Recovery and Special Education of Persons with Disabilities (currently, the Institute for Preventing and Combating Social Exclusion of Persons with Disabilities, under the coordination of the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities). The institute managed, during 1991-1993, within the curriculum, to produce new curricula and school curricula, for all levels and profiles in special education (kindergarten, general school, high school, vocational school, post-secondary school).

At the proposal of UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Education Foundation) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1993, the authorities schools have launched projects and reform ideas, mainly on school integration, RENINCO being the result of one of them (launched in 1994); projects that continued after 1998, when it was established and developed in Romania

RENINCO Association (National Information and Cooperation Network for the integration in the community of children and young people with special educational needs).

In 1995 no. 84 of the Education Law brings significant changes:

- non - discriminatory access to education for children with disabilities (effective elimination of the recoverability criterion);
- various forms of schooling (special schools, special classes or even regular classes);
- introduction of the concept of special educational requirements;
- the evaluation of children with deficiencies by the complex expert commissions (provided by school inspectorates), which in 1997 passed to the Child Protection Commission (CPC).

The training of the teaching staff started in 1995 (Vrășmaș, 2010, p.7) and was set in motion in 1996 by the first masters of integrated education at universities in Bucharest, Cluj, Iași, Timișoara (in collaboration with those in Bologna, Copenhagen, London and Malaga), when inclusive education was introduced through translations, dissemination of zonal courses of the



UNESCO resource package "Special Requirements" in the classroom, through cooperation between UNICEF and the central education authority.

The year 2000 brings to the center of attention (Vrăsmaș, 2010, p.8) in terms of policy (requirements for integration into the European Union) - the issue of child protection in residential institutions, including those in special schools boarding schools, and the need reducing the number of these children, while creating appropriate community services (placement with foster carers, day centers, etc.).

Following the evaluations of the students from these schools, it was concluded that some of them can be transferred in various forms, in general schools by individual integration; special "compact" classes (many transferred with the staff and the teacher of the special school, especially in grades V-VIII) or by the phenomenon of "reverse integration" - enrollment in special classes of students or classes of students in the community (especially in vocational schools).

The school education of people with SEN is currently (Vrăsmaș, 2010, p.8) represented mainly by:

- Education Law (no. 84/1995, Chapter VI), republished, with amendments and subsequent completions
- Regulation on the organization and functioning of special education, approved by order of the M.E.N. no. 4217/1999
- Regulation on the organization and functioning of pre-university education - chap. IX, approved by O.M.Ed.C. no. 4925 / 08.09.2005
- Government Decision no. 1251/2005, regarding some measures to improve the activity of learning, training, compensation, recovery and special protection of children / pupils / young people with educational requirements.

But the Government Decision no. 1251/2005 brings new elements, necessary for the evolution in the field:

- the notion and the new institution of county center of resources and educational assistance (which integrates among others two important support structures for children with SEN in kindergartens and general schools - interschool speech therapy centers (traditional but efficient structure) and transient teachers / support, the operationalization of the activity of these structures being achieved through an updated methodology;
- the notion and institution newly created by the school for inclusive education (equivalent for most European countries and other developed countries to the notion of school - resource center);
- diversification of the forms of school integration of children with SEN.

Of particular importance is Law no. 448/2006, on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, in the sense that it brings novelties in addition to the education legislation:

- ensuring lifelong education and training;
- education "at the hospital bed", during hospitalization.

As specific measures of this law we have the obligations of the public authorities regarding the educational units and institutions:

- ensuring access to educational units and institutions;



- support in the cooperation between the special or mass education units with the family and the community, in order to ensure the educational offers that respond to the individual needs of the disabled people;

- support in the training of teachers in order to adapt educational practices for students with disabilities in regular education groups or classes;

- providing educational support services for people with disabilities and their families, through specialists in the field of special psychopedagogy;

- recommendations and supports in introducing the initial training of pupils and students, through courses related to the issue of disability and their needs and diversification of ways to achieve accessibility (Vrăsmaș, 2010, p.9).

The National Authority for Child Protection, the Ministry of Education, the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities and the Ministry of Health, to which UNICEF and RENINCO contributed (Vrăsmaș, 2010, p.28), developed new criteria and adopted by common order a Methodological Guide for the evaluation of the child with disabilities and classification in a degree of disability. The evaluator has an important role in evaluating children. He must know as precisely as possible what disability is (or can be), what are its coordinates, but also recognize it as a unique experience, as a dimension of human diversity; only in this way he will be able to assess correctly whether the intervention and support services and programs he proposes and evaluates meet the needs of those to whom it is addressed and it is advisable for the evaluation to be done at preschool age in order to intervene early in the educational context”.

In conclusion, the education system has managed to align with international trends and requirements regarding the right to education, integration and inclusion of all persons with disabilities.

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