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PHD THESIS

***“Participation of non-formal education to development
and formation of entrepreneurial competences among
young people with visual disabilities”***

SUMMARY

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SUMMARY

The PhD thesis with the title *“Participation of non formal education to development and formation of entrepreneurial competences among young people with visual disabilities”* highlights the necessity to orientate the contemporary educational approach in case of visually impaired young people towards valorization and using of non-formal education, entrepreneurial education and a learning environment which puts them together with young learners without disabilities.

It has two parts that are followed by bibliographic resources, the abbreviation list, the figures list and annexes; first part has 4 chapters and reflects a theoretical foundation of the main problematic and the second part has 3 chapters and presents practical investigations and results.

Chapter I “Introductory elements” is an elaborate justification approach which emphasizes some necessary dates for a good understanding of the proposed problematic and methodological elections; on three subchapters are detailed the purpose, objectives and limitations of the study, the operational definitions for the main uses concepts and the relevant out-put elements.

Chapter II “The issue of non-formal education, as complementary educational form, in the Knowledge Society”¹ also has three subchapters which sketch the most known theories on non formal learning and education in international educational discourse, starting with 1973 year, when Coombs and his collaborators have realized first separation and definition of educational forms, have consecrated the terminology and also have started many controversies on educational variations problems.

First subchapter entitled **“Non-formal education history”** presents for theories on non formal education, as:

- ✓ *The underdevelopment theory* where non formal education is understood as a way to resolve many social problems generated by poverty and underdevelopment, but also as a panacea for all the diseases of the formal educational system from everywhere, overtaken by the reality of Post-industrialism era (Rogers, 2004);

¹ Parts of this chapter have been published in Gimbuta, A. (2011): “Non-Formal Education-A Logical Analysis of the Term”, *Journal Plus Education*, Arad, “Aurel Vlaicu” University Press, vol.VII, No.2, pp.266-286

- ✓ *The dependence theory* where non formal education is considered as an answer made by western countries elite that first have intended to declare the crisis of formal education system and after, on the necessity to satisfy the minimal basic needs of the poor people, to offer a solution to these peripheral countries and to reinforce a dependence and subordination relations between these and beneficiary countries (Harbans, 1983);
- ✓ *The free learning theory* which places „the birth” moment of non formal education in 1901, in Germany, where a daring youth group, conducted by philosopher Friedrich Paulsen, has expressed the desire to know and learn about the world in a non formal way, freely, by traveling, and also has constituted the “Pilgrim birds” Association (Văideanu, 1988).
- ✓ *The paradigm of a new, audit type, contemporary society* which associates the non formal education with the necessity of a permanent learning (Valchev, Pilavak și Cerna, 2009).

The second subchapter entitled **“Differentiated approaches on non-formal education-conceptual evolution”** presents the way in which has been understood and defined non formal education by Coombs and his collaborators in 1973, by David R. Evans in 1981, by Alan Rogers in 2004, highlighting the ambiguity of the contemporary international educational discourse when this educational form is denoted using vary terms as: non formal learning, out of school education, adult education, participatory education, outdoor education or education for the free time.

The third subchapter entitled **“Non-formal education/learning in educational practice from Europe”** indicates directions, recommendations and modalities for promotion and recognition of non formal education in today European educational practice, but also in Romania, as European country. Here are presented academic contributions of some Romanian specialists who was preoccupied by a holistic educational approach as: George Văideanu, Teodor Cozma, Constantin Cucuș or George Jinga, and also the national efforts for validation of non formal education/learning, the developed mechanisms and instruments which have placed Romania in the category of countries with a high level by implementation policies (Cedefop, 2008).

*Chapter III “The issue of entrepreneurial education, as new education, in Knowledge Society”*² has three subchapters and approaches the entrepreneurial education as new education which is necessary for the formation and development of contemporary individual who lives in a provocative and unstable existential context.

The first subchapter named **"Promotion of entrepreneurial education at European level"** emphasis the need for entrepreneurial education programs in all European countries, appealing to the obvious relations between personal and community development level, education level and active entrepreneurship promotion.

The second chapter entitled **“Differentiated approaches on entrepreneurial competences—premises, meanings and current models”** presents four entrepreneurial competences approaches, namely:

- ✓ *The European model of key competences* which situates the entrepreneurial competences among 8 key competences categories, supposing specific knowledge, capacities and attitudes (C. E., 2006, National Europass Centre, 2008);
- ✓ *The American school model* which has developed the entrepreneurial competences theory based on managerial competences, performance and success, being understood as cumulus between the competences for business initiation and competences for an efficient business management (Mitchelmor, Rowley, 2010);
- ✓ *The British school model* which considers entrepreneurial competences as basic minimum actions sets that are necessary to starting a business, but not to its management (Mitchelmor, Rowley, 2010);
- ✓ *The synteegrative model* which is a transposition in educational area of the synteegration principle and function in a perfect structure (consecrated by Professor Stafford Beer from Manchester Business School, United Kingdom) and reflects a personal view based on a cubic matrix where are organized 12 kind of knowledge, capacities and attitudes which have been selected by Entrepreneurial education scholar curricula for X class/high school level.

The third subchapter entitled **“Entrepreneurship in Europe-between reality and perspective“** brings into question the value and importance of entrepreneurship in the European

² Parts of this chapter have been published in Gimbuta, A. (2010): "Entrepreneurial competences from synteegrative perspective", *Journal Plus Education*, Arad, “Aurel Vlaicu” University Press, Vol VI , No. 2, pp. 262-272

area, as necessary and feasible response to changes of the Knowledge Society, emphasizing the role of entrepreneurial culture and education in shaping the country's economic level.

Chapter IV “Diversity and integration in „the Society of Knowledge for All” ³ has two subchapters that reflect the education for all perspective and promotion of inclusive education for people with special educational needs, in this case people with visual disabilities, at European level.

The first subchapter entitled **“Education of people with disabilities from the perspective of education for all”** takes in consideration the universal human right to education and the need to choose freely between multiple and different educational opportunities, in accordance with personal visions and learning or training necessities.

The second subchapter **“Socio-economic characteristics of the persons with visual disabilities from Romania”** begins with the status presentation in the case of persons with visual difficulties from Romania, as people with handicap, in accordance with the law 48 of 2006 (republished), then indicates a few important characteristics that are derived from a socio-economic analysis of the statistical data published by the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social protection, in 2011, on the evolution in the field of people with handicap, at March 31, 2011.

Chapter V “Stage I. Collection, analysis and interpretation of general data” reflects the results of three surveys for general data collection.

In first subchapter entitled **“Quantitative research on entrepreneurial behaviour at people with visual disabilities from Romania”**⁴ are presented the results of a questionnaire application on a 201 people with impaired sight, over 18 years, from Botoşani, Iaşi, Vrancea, Neamt, Ilfov, Buzău, Romania, Cluj and Timișoara counties for identification of entrepreneurial behavior and the most powerful reasons which can influence it.

³Parts of this chapter have been published in Gimbuta, A. (2012): “Ethical Dimensions of Academic Research which Involves Investigations on People with Visual Disabilities”, *Journal Plus Education*, Arad, “Aurel Vlaicu” University Press, Vol.VIII/2012, nr.1, pp. 77-85

⁴ The content of this subchapter was published in Gimbuta, A. (2012): “Entrepreneurial behavior at people with visual disabilities from Romania“, *Review of Applied Socio- Economic Research*, Volume 3, Issue 1/2012, Pro Global Science Association, pp.95-106

The objective of this study was to investigate entrepreneurial behavior at people with visual deficiencies and data interpretation (using SPSS 11.0 for Windows) has showed the following results:

- ✚ The intention to open a business in the future has been dominant for the subjects between 18-29 years old.
- ✚ The intention to open a business in the future has been dominant at men.
- ✚ A future business development intention has been significantly more advanced at subjects who have followed an entrepreneurial educational program, comparing with those who did not follow such a program.
- ✚ The reason *The financial support received from the State is sufficiently for a comfortable live* has been higher at subjects aged between 18-29 years.
- ✚ The reason *Many institutions are disinterested by visual adaptation in the case of necessary documents and procedures* has been higher at women, but also the reason *Low level of personal autonomy and the challenges fear* has been higher at men.
- ✚ The reason *The financial support received from the State is sufficiently for a comfortable live* has been higher at subjects who have graduated gymnasia, but also the reasons *Failure fear* has been higher at subjects with master studies and *Insufficient confidence in its own forces* has been predominant at subjects who graduated vocational school.

In addition, it was examined if are different level of importance for 11 reasons which can influence start business at people with visual disabilities applying Friedman test; results have indicated that on first places has been situated reasons related to economic policy, institutions and the lack of knowledge about how to start a business, revealing the need for changes of economic framework and the need for entrepreneurial education programs.

The second subchapter **“Qualitative research on general characteristics of the romanian entrepreneur with visual disabilities”**⁵ presents the results of 5 individual interviews which have been applied to 5 Romanian entrepreneurs with visual disabilities. The purpose of these investigations was to sketch a portrait of Romanian entrepreneur with visual disabilities and also to check if entrepreneurial success, understood here by initiating and

⁵ The content of this subchapter was published in Gimbuta, A. (2012): “Entrepreneurial behavior at people with visual disabilities from Romania“, *Review of Applied Socio- Economic Research*, Volume 3, Issue 1/2012, Pro Global Science Association, pp.95-106

maintaining a business on an unstable market, is influenced just by the personality and skills of business initiator.

The results showed that the Romanian entrepreneur with visual disabilities is a man, between 25 and 45 years old, with a serious visual deficiency; he started the business trying to eliminate various types of individual or family needs and always has a partner (associate or employee), a trusted person without visual deficiency. He has an ascending professional route, constructed on the assumption that business success is not represented only by satisfactory financial profit, visible and measurable by monetary unit, but also by increasing the degree of individual autonomy and independence, self-confidence and strength.

Romanian entrepreneur with visual impairment has confronted with various problems due to limited financial resources and environmental barriers, but he was motivated by the desire to overcome a precarious financial situation, to liberate by budgetary institutions that do not offer valid perspectives for personal development, by arbitral bosses and pressure of many kind of problems generated by dependency status.

The active entrepreneurship is perceived as a source of income, but mostly a way to avoid a typically depression for people with disabilities which is caused by lack of occupation, isolation, monotony or fear by various contexts of life that cannot be effectively controlled by its own forces, the reasons why this activity/opportunity should be further promoted because the quality of disabled people life would be a lot better and the State would get rid of the burden of social assistance.

The third subchapter **“Qualitative research on how perceive non-formal education the beneficiaries, young people with visual disabilities from Romania”**⁶ reflects a general perception about non formal education and a particular perception about non formal entrepreneurship programs, in the case of young people with visual disabilities from the main regions of the country (Moldavia, Transylvania and Wallachia). Have been applied 5 focus-group interviews on young people with visual deficiencies (students from high schools and universities, over 18 years old) from Iași, Cluj, Arad, Timișoara and Buzău districts and have been verified 5 hypotheses.

⁶ The content of this subchapter was published in Gimbuta, A. (2012): "Non Formal Education Through Eyes of Visually Impaired Youth from Romania", Proceedings of 9th International Conference *Efficiency and Responsibility in Education*, Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague, 7-8 June 2012, pp.140-150

The results have indicated that in all three regions of Romania the respondents have been involved in non-formal educational activities in school or/and outside school, at local, national and european level. They have signalised two important aspects:

- In the case of young people with visual disabilities, the non-formal educational offer is too much oriented towards sports, cultural activities and verification of knowledge acquisition (aspects which are not considered so useful in new existențial context) but to little towards personal development and formation of independent living skills;
- Non-formal educational activities are frecvently coming to attention of possible young beneficiary through public educational institutions; although the offer is presented as optional, it is associated with the compulsory elements and the type of schooling control whose main symbol is the teacher.

Respondents from all three regions of Romania were actively involved in non-formal educational activities because these offer a learning perspective which is out of decision and control of teaching authority that usually build realities to others through their own vision of life, but also because they want to interact with different people, to communicate and to experience new learning situations, to choose their own discussion topics, to express themselves freely, to be heard and taken their views into account. They perceive non-formal education as a free, funny, noncompulsory and nonexhausting learning which generate personal development, a more easy integration into a group and eliberation by closed and fixed thought; also, is often understood as the opposite of school education, as escape under compulsory teaching pressure, as a form of *otherwise* education.

Also, they have apreciated that non formal education is not suficiently promoted and encouraged in Romania where this is receipted as a second hand education and non formal entrepreneurial education offer for young people with visual disabilities is to sporadic and insuficiently focused on them because is still persisting a negative collective perception regarding people with disabilities and also because a quality learning for people with special educational needs is expansive, involving specialised workers and learning environment adaptation.

Chapter VI “Stage II. Collection, analysis and interpretation of particular data” presents the results of an investigative non formal entrepreneurial education pilot program in short version, on a 22 subjects between 14 and 17 years old, who never received an entrepreneurial

educational program in school or outside of school; they have been separated in two subgroups: 11 subjects legally registered with visual disabilities, and 11 subjects without impaired sight.

The program has been carried out in free time of the participants during the period October 2011-May 2012, at Children Club from Tg.Frumos town, Iasi district and it was separated in two modules: first module with a mandatory curriculum on 4 workshops and second module with a negotiated curriculum on 6 workshops.

The main objective of this study was to investigate if non formal entrepreneurial educational program that emphasizes on the active and autonomic involvement of participants in the learning processes and decision-making can contribute to the training and development of the entrepreneurial competences, through observation of possible statistical significant differences regarding the development of entrepreneurial knowledge, capabilities and attitudes before and after completing the proposed program. The study was also orientated by secundar objectives as: the analisis of work options on work market, the investigation of the family, school, mass-media and non formal educational institutions influences on potential options for working market insertion, the posible causal relations between visual deficiencie and Siberian sindrom indicators and also the perception of entrepreneurial opportunity among young people with visual disabilities.

Data interpretation (using SPSS 11.0 for Windows) has showed the following results:

- ✚ The initial tests 'results have indicated a minimum 2, 25 and a medium 5, 00 initial points which is mean that a minimal level of entrepreneurial competences is already formatted (the tacit knowledge is a individual competences part, after Kaj U. Koskinen, Pekka Pihlanto, Hannu Vanharanta, 2003).
- ✚ Non formal entrepreneurial education workshops generate a performance increasing among young people with or without visual disabilities. Cross tabulation technique and data analysis has indicated that before training program 3 subjects had Insufficient category, 17 Sufficient category and just 2 Good category and after training program no one had Insufficient category, 5 Sufficient category, 15 in Good category and 2 in Very Good category.
- ✚ The workshops program has been efficiently for every group, but especially for visual impaired participants who have registered a performance increasing amplitude greater than people without visual difficulties.

- ✚ The subjects have improved their performance, using more and more knowledge, acquired skills and abilities; using simple ANOVA with repeated measurements, results have indicated a significant linear increasing for behavioral acquisitions during 10 workshops, for all 12 indicators from the individual observation guide.
- ✚ Are not significant differences regarding the attitudes on working place insertion between young subjects with visual disabilities and those without visual disabilities; the results have indicated that subjects' majority (at the beginning and also the end of the program) have considered that insertion on working market is very important after 18 years old.
- ✚ Are not significant differences regarding the options for working market opportunities insertion between young subjects with visual disabilities and those without visual disabilities; the results have reflected that the subjects' majority have considered that the most opportune option is to start a business, even at end of the program the preference for public area working has been decreasing, while the preference for business initiation has been increasing.
- ✚ Are not significant differences regarding the way of reporting to educational authority between young subjects with visual disabilities and those without visual disabilities; the results have reflected that towards the end of the workshops program the subjects with visual impaired have been rather assertive, even they have prefer to decide freely on their own learning process (and this implies not to accept what the moderator tells), comparing with subjects without visual impaired who become more obedient in relation to educators.
- ✚ Visual disability is not a cause for Siberian syndromes manifestation; the results have reflected that towards the end of the program subjects with visual disabilities have increased the tendency to overcome the fear of expressing themselves.
- ✚ Towards the end of the program the entrepreneurial intention has been increasing and entrepreneurial option has been considered not so difficult as beginning of the program by majority of participants.

In conclusion, the results of this study have confirmed that young people with visual difficulties who participate to non formal entrepreneurial educational programs can have progress using an inclusive learning environment. Also, the interaction between disabled and non

disabled youth is favorable for every category, not just for one, and non formal educational programs can recover the natural bi-directionality of the inclusion process.

Chapter VII “Discutions and general conclusions” presents the general conclusions of thesis and highlights the utility of the presented studies in the case of contemporary educational approach which is focused on disabled people and proposes recomandations for increasing the quality of educational act which involve people with visual deficiences.

This thesis has 447 pages, 103 figures, an abbreviations list, a bibliographic list with 164 titles and 110 annexes.