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THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES OF THE REFORM OF THE CURRICULUM IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

- PhD THESIS SUMMARY -

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Argument

The issue analysed in the paper „ Theoretical Concepts and Practical Approaches of the Reform of the Curriculum in the European Context” ” is initiated by the theoretical and investigational preoccupations oriented towards the progress of a coherent and unitary theoretical and methodological frame of the *curricular reform in the European context*.

The radicalism of the educational European reforms at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century was largely the consequence of the *curriculum impact on education*, as the main mechanism, able to create a viable and consonant connection between education and a global society, in a continuous change. (D. Ungureanu, 1999, p. 310).

In any educational reform process, the preoccupations from the domain of creating a new curriculum have played an important role. It is well known the fact that the educational reforms from different European countries have evolved mainly in the curricular area or significantly concerned the curriculum parts. Acknowledging that, *the authentic educational reforms* can be considered, explicitly and implicitly, *the curricular reforms*. As professor Dan Potolea claimed, *the school reforms of the latest period are mainly and above all curriculum reforms. The directions, the magnitude and even their inside coherence are theoretically dependent on the nature of the approved curriculum* (D. Potolea, 2002, p. 71).

In this study we referred to the *comprehensive curriculum reform*, due to the quasi general *accessibility* and *compulsory marks* that they imply, with the result of a significantly more consistent group of beneficiaries than at any other educational level. The construction of a *knowledge society* is strongly dependent on *a proficient and efficient formal educational system* which has to create its own institutions to uphold the quality directly interrelated with the *local, regional and global* interests, on *economic, social and cultural* dimensions. The UNESCO studies enhanced the dependence of the educational reforms on the renewed structure of the system that highlights *the role of the comprehensive school*, this level having to give all students a balanced qualitative education (S.Cristea, 1994, p. 111), in accordance with the *global society* requirements.

The paper is structured in *four chapters*. In the first chapter we analyse *the directions of the education reform, with the characteristics of this approach in the European space*. To carry out the

stated aim, we have planned a theoretical method focused on two aspects: *the specific dimensions* and *the education reform in the European context*.

At the beginning of the analysis of the specific dimensions of the education in the European space, we declare our intention to explain the concept of *compulsory education* from the perspective of the demarcation that must be drawn between *compulsory education* and *compulsory education system*, very close concepts that yet do not refer to the same reality. The other discussed aspects are, one by one, *the history of creating the educational European systems*, *the goals of the European education system* and *the dimensions of the Romanian education system from the perspective of the European requirements*.

The second part of the chapter would like to underline the main characteristics of the *education reform*, emphasizing them within the European reality. It seemed useful to us to establish the terminological delimitation between *innovation and reform* in education, by giving a reflective definition of the concepts as not any change in the education deserves the name of reform. In this context, the reform is conceived from the perspective of many more social sciences: *history*, *philosophy*, *sociology*, *politology*, *economics*, *psychology* and *obviously pedagogy*. Explaining one of the most important *theoretical patterns* and *educational reform types*, as well as enhancing the *specificity of the education reform in the Centre and South-East European countries*, with emphasis on the orientations of the Romanian education system in order to *accede to the extended European education space*, completes a theoretical approach whose goal is understanding, in all its dimensions, one of the key-concepts of the paper, the *education reform*.

In the second chapter we want to highlight the profile of the *reform of the curriculum* as a nucleus of the *educational reforms*.

This chapter is constructed symmetrically, on two coordinates like chapter one of the paper. The first structure aims at the *conceptual analysis* of the *curriculum* and of the *curricular reform*, other key-concepts of the thesis. *The curriculum*, a major concept, polysemantic and multidimensional is explained through its fundamental meanings, subsequently investigating some of the perspectives of the conception of the comprehensive curriculum in the European space from a practical and a complementary point of view.

From the conception of the curriculum we go to the *conceptualization of the curricular reform*, also invoking some of its important *theoretical patterns*, such as *the structural pattern* that

we will use for the theoretical basis of the research in the last chapter, *the research-development-distribution pattern* and *the democratic pattern*.

The second structure of the chapter is based on the delimitation and the analysis of some practical frameworks of *the curriculum reform in the European context*. The achievement of this goal supposes the identification of some orientations and characteristics of the curricular reform in *different European countries*, among which *the Republic of Moldavia* and *Romania*.

The third chapter mostly resumes the title of the paper and from this perspective it is the most consistent one. In this chapter we would like to identify and to explain a series of *theoretical concepts of the curricular reform* sustaining this approach by underlining some existent concepts, specific to the reform processes of the curricular systems in Europe.

We conceived this personal distribution emphasising the *philosophical, political, economic, psychological and pedagogical* concepts of the curriculum reform, not provided in the structure that this paper puts forward by any bibliographical source from the consulted reference literature. We want that in the context of this theoretical approach, the personal contribution to be also backed up by the repertoire of *the interdisciplinary theoretic basis* of the curricular reform.

Among *the philosophical concepts* one can identify *the epistemological concepts* in the analysis of which an important role is played by *the redefining of learning in the knowledge society* and *the axiological concepts*, context in which are enhanced some marks for the *axiological conditioning of the goals of the curriculum* in the European environment and the use of *the European dimension of education*, element with important value accents for the European educational politicities. This structure of the paper submits some outlines for the theoretical basis of the practical approach in the last chapter.

The analysis display of the *political concepts* is built on three structures: *political conditions specific to the neo-liberal dogma*, *the role of the political organisms* in the creation of the European curricular reforms and the *European decentralization policies*.

In the context of *the economic concepts* we considered it important to analyse the *investment* and the *efficiency* as economic indicators in the European education and the economic confirmation of the reform from the *globalization* perspective because the increase of the competitiveness in the global environment supposed the development of the institutions that produced knowledge.

The *psychological concepts* of the curriculum reform are placed in two explanatory frameworks: the framework of *the constructivist trend*, by evoking some of the most important psychological theories that assert it and by structuring a didactic constructivist approach, in the first part, and *the differenced and personalised curriculum* as a curricular option for the personal learning experience, in the second part.

Another part of the chapter is dedicated to the *pedagogical concepts*. Among the *pedagogical concepts* of the curricular reform we intend to underline the four structural components of the curriculum, *the goals, the contents, the didactic strategies and the assessment* and their framing in the area of the fundamental pedagogic conditions of the curricular reforms of the European space, by underlining the most important change of emphasis in every structural stage: focusing the curriculum on competences, integrating the approach of the learning contents, didactic strategies aimed at the learning subject, formative paradigm of assessment. This part of the paper sustains, by its theoretical construction, the theoretical basis of the content analysis from the last chapter.

We assigned a special place to analyse the *theoretical interdisciplinary concepts* due to the complexity of the issue that is subjected to: *the global context* that requires the education a series of demands specific to the change, *the cultural and linguistic diversity*, an interdisciplinary theme that involves some very important aspects of the European space: identity European construction, cultural and linguistics policies, management of diversity in the European school, planning and implementing *an intercultural curriculum*. Other problems listed in the interdisciplinary study of the curricular reforms concepts are *equal chance* in education with the most important meanings that it has from an economic, social and cultural area, revaluing the education in the context of the *community partnership* and the frameworks of the European strategy for the *social cohesion*, open issues with consequences in the curricular reform area.

The theoretical interdisciplinary basis of the curricular reform is found at the crossing of many scientific fields such as: *sociology, social and cultural anthropology, linguistic and psycholinguistic economics, etc.*

In the last chapter of the paper we come with the study of *European values in the curriculum of the subjects History and Civic Education/Culture. A content analysis from an intra and interdisciplinary perspective*. We have chosen a practical approach, whose theoretical basis

is found in the context of *the axiological repertoire of the curricular reform* from the European space, considering *the moral crisis of the European spirit* (A.Dumitriu) in the global world, which affects all the society spheres, including the formal education systems, one of the causes being the absence of the significant changes at the curriculum level, from the perspective of the specific value horizon.

We consider that the application from the last chapter and sub-chapter *Axiological concepts of the European curricular reform* determines a distinctive scientific construction that we judge as a premise for a wider paper having the theme *Axiological dimensioning of the curricular reform in the European context*.

In conclusion, we would like that the complementary use of some of the theoretical and practical dimensions of the curriculum reform, announced from the title, should be considered in an approach with meanings for the present pedagogical discourse, consolidating, at least from the perspective of the *value approach of the curriculum reform*, the coordinates of a domain that is nowadays spreading itself scientifically: *the theory and the methodology of the curricular reform*.

Chapter I. The Education in the Reform context. European Frameworks.

In this chapter we analysed the European context of the education reform. To accomplish this goal we projected a theoretical approach focused on two aspects: *specific dimensions of education in Europe and the education reform in the European context*, following the logic of an ascending and complementary construction.

The conceptualization and the structure of the compulsory education, the history of creating the systems of the formal education in Europe, the goals of the European education system and the dimensions of the Romanian education system from the perspective of the European demands, were the coordinates of an approach whose main aim is understanding the specificity of the comprehensive education in the European space. The pattern of the comprehensive education has been encountered during the last decades in the European education systems, for the principle of *equal chances* in education (C.Beck, 1990).

In this approach of terminological concepts we introduced the conceptual demarcation between *compulsory education and compulsory education system*, very close concepts that yet do not designate the same reality in many other European countries. The structure of the compulsory education system was aimed both at *the extension of the period* as well as *the modification of the stages or its succession*, being unanimously accepted by the nowadays European societies, that the students must be kept in school for an adequate period to let them acquire a *basic education*.

We have tried to demonstrate afterwards that the educational systems from the European countries are highly influenced by *history, national traditions, by norms and values* often rooted into *religion*, European history still being characterized by strong *national identities*, built many years ago and strengthened in time, establishing the current structure of the educational systems.

Referring to *the aims of the education*, we observed that the compulsory education system from the European space essentially pursues the same objectives. Generally, it was offered the role of *outlining for all the citizens the knowledge, the capacities and the attitudes* needed for the economic and social integration in the community they live in. The invariableness itself of the mission given to this aim is the one that explains the little changes occurred during the last decades, having changes of the educational aims however, regarding the *regional opinion*, dictated in *the decentralization* context and the adjustment to the requirements of the *global society* as a consequence of a *dynamic job market* and of an *increasing social mobility*.

The approach for the foundation and development of *the Romanian educational system* according to the *European standards* meant, from the perspective of this paper, identifying the orientation of *lengthening the compulsory education system* from eight to ten grades by raising the age of finishing the studies and by decreasing the inferior limit of the age to have access to the compulsory education system.

Asserting the characteristics of the educational systems in the European space we created the premises for understanding the specific of their reform. Valuing first, in an extended space, some of the general information of the educational reform, beginning exactly with *the definition of the term, the theoretical patterns and the typology of the education reform*, we limited the analysis sphere focusing on the identification of the specific marks concerning the restructuring approaches in the *Central and South-Eastern European countries* and on the accents put on the *Romanian reform* in order to accede to *the extended European space of education*. Thus, we examined the education reform in the Centre and South-Eastern European countries, from a double perspective, as a reformative process with specific accents, interesting by itself but also as an over systematized context of display through the presence of some common marks specific to the geographic, political and cultural environment of the Romanian reform. Even if all education systems from Europe met an extraordinary extension during the last decades of the 20th century, those from the Central and South-Eastern Europe, were involved in a *restructuring process and reconstruction on a large scale*, with the meaning started by M.Fullan, as a consequence of the communist regimes dissolution from a certain region or other important political and social events. Enhancing the promotion approach of the European dimension of education, at the beginning of the 21st century, incredible progresses took place in Europe in order to create in fact an extended European space for education and in this first chapter of the paper we tried to analyze the orientations of the Romanian reform from the perspective of acceding to the European education space, the most important being the introduction of the *comprehensive reform*, a wide reform that pointed out the character of the education system, the *curriculum*, the infrastructure, the teachers' training, the management, the relationship with the community, being conceived on the basis of national and international expertise, dedicated to the Romanian education system, with the participation of European specialists and mostly having as a starting point the reform of the education system promoted in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Chapter II. The Reform of the Curriculum – the Nucleus of the European Educational Reforms

In this chapter we aimed at the creation of a profile of the *reform of the curriculum* as a nucleus of the educational reforms from the European space. In the last decades they have been deeply influenced or even soaked by the spirit of *the curriculum* the main operator for the reforms of the education systems, as an expression of emancipation, the reforms acquiring, through this indicator, an *increased viability and a significant social importance*.

To understand the specific of the curricular reform we planned an ascending tour having as a departure point the *conceptual analyses* from the *curriculum* domain, crucial term of our theoretical discourse in this chapter. Determining the necessary limits to define the *comprehensive curriculum* in the European context, we realize the transfer towards the *conceptualization of the curricular reform*, a priority aim for this first part of the second chapter.

Considering the fact that the conceptualization approach of the curriculum is essential in the context of the nowadays curricular reforms, defining this main concept, polysemantic and multidimensional, considered as the major operator in the interactive pedagogy (V.Chiş, 2002, p.55) we tried it to be as systematic and strict as possible, putting forward our conviction that only this approach in *the curriculum conceptualization* will be able to better limit its research territory and point out future directions of practical interference.

We have defined the curriculum as *an integrating concept*, underlining the evolution paradigms and the *fundamental meanings*, enhancing the two complementary dimensions for the curriculum conceptualization: *the conceiving one, the vision one and the structure one*.

We have alluded, in this paper, as we specified in the argument, to *the reform of the comprehensive curriculum* because of the quasi general limits of *the compulsory trait and accessibility* which they imply, resulting into a section of beneficiaries significantly more consistent than at any other educational level. Discussing about this type of curriculum, it was also obviously necessary a terminological articulation of the concept. We defined the *comprehensive curriculum* considering the limits promoted by the *comprehensive educational pattern* proposed by C.Beck, as a curriculum designed for students coming from different social, economic and cultural environments, which certifies that everybody has the same value as human beings and can generally benefit from a similar education that is not essentially dissimilar from one social class

to another. We attached to this conceptualization approach solid display limits for this type of curriculum in the European context.

We considered the *conceptualization approach for the curricular reform* indicating two important stages, a stage for the *foundation of the studies* and another one for the *conceptual elucidations*, beginning with the central concept, the *curriculum* and climaxing with the improvement of the conceptualization, characterized by maturity and scientific consistency, following the gradual structure of the *conceptual, strategic and organizational* components. We have underlined the idea that the contemporary reform of the curriculum must constantly consider the strengthening of the links between education and society, by analysing *the social conditions of the reform* and by considering the society as an assembly of standards according to which the school must prepare the “products”. We have enhanced the fact that the curricular reform does not have to operate only with abstract things, such as the interface between culture and education, but also solve *pragmatic problems* such as the right and consequent translation of the social standards into goals, contents, specific strategies for learning and education. This conceptualization approach has been completed by presenting some *theoretical patterns of the curricular reform* among which the *structural pattern* highlights itself, an important notion for the theoretical foundation of the practical approach from the last chapter.

The second part of the second chapter aimed at the limitation of the *curricular reform characteristics in the European context*. Thus, there have been analysed orientations of the reform processes from many European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, France, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, a more important place being given to the curricular reforms from the Republic of Moldavia and Romania. This approach was suggested to us by the interference of some similar concepts that we could identify in the reform programs of the curriculum, present during the last decades in the two countries, but also by diverse conditions, such as the geographic position in Eastern Europe and the common historical and cultural dimension. The distinctive features of the curricular reforms begun in the 90’ of the 20th century in the Republic of Moldavia and Romania explain the foundation of the reforming approaches in these countries beginning with the social, economic, political and cultural changes of the global society and the exposure of the specific educational policies to *the European values*.

Chapter III. Theoretical Concepts of the Reform of the Curriculum.

Community perspectives (EU)

The paper suggests through the content of this chapter six types of theoretical concepts for the curricular reform: *philosophical, political, economic, psychological, pedagogical and interdisciplinary*, considered according to the spirit imposed by the title of the paper, in the European context.

For the *philosophical concepts* of the curricular reform we would like to identify and to explain the limits of a curriculum “philosophy” built on the *prospective orientation of the education* and on the opening of the curriculum towards a *permanent education* in the context of a global social project where *the society is centred on education*. For a strictly conceived “philosophy” of the curriculum, we considered that it is needed a double background: ***epistemological***, from the perspective of giving new meanings in the curricular reform programs for the concepts of *knowledge and learning* and ***axiological***, from the perspective of a new value dimension of the curriculum in the European space.

Among the epistemological concepts of the curricular reform we emphasised the reference points developed in the circumstances of *the constructivist trend*, which has been lately one of the most convincing frameworks to confirm the necessity of a change of mentality and of a pedagogic attitude to manage de future. *The constructivism* has become an orientation more and more important in the educational sciences and from the perspective of an *epistemological dialogue*, the psychological accents are important due to the impact that it has on *the strategies centred on the education beneficiaries*. From the point of view of these directions of giving new meanings to the curriculum, from the epistemological constructivist perspective we have underlined the necessity of replacing the mental pattern of the curricular development, centred on transmitting information, by a more subtle mental pattern which keeps the information in equilibrium and processes it according to the capacity of applying the knowledge creatively to give independent and efficient solutions to the problems.

We have tried to establish the axiological dimension of the curriculum by explaining the *value orientations of the educational goals* within the curriculum structure and by emphasizing the *European dimension of education* as an element of the European educational policies with important value reference points. Consequently, the *philosophical perspective* of the foundation

of the curricular reforms is committed to the *epistemological and axiological* explaining of the contemporary reforms from Europe.

The political backgrounds of the curriculum reform were engendered around the idea that the *curriculum educational reforms* have had, in the last decades, important political requirements. In this context we investigated *the contribution of the neoliberal politics, the character of the political actions in the European Union and European Council and the significance of the decentralization European policies* for the political foundation of the curriculum reforms from the European space.

We demonstrated that in the neoliberal strategy, the *education* represents a social subsystem with a priority role in producing the labour power educated and expert (***knowledge workers***), able to compete inside the global economy.

In the same framework of the political requirements, we explored the significance of the political actions in the *European Union and European Council* in the foundation of the compulsory curriculum reforms inside the European space, by a series of adopted *resolutions, recommendations, programs and projects*. We also enhanced the noteworthy achievements from the *area of the European curriculum*, this reality developing not only in the countries of the *European Union*, but also in those belonging to *the European Council*. The progresses registered were worth mentioning and there were people who even alleged that the European political organisms involved are on the point of becoming too powerful in the decisional space of the educational and curricular policies.

We synthesised the *reference points of the decentralization European policy* emphasizing that their projection inside the educational systems of the European space cannot be conceived without a certain *regional and local* involvement and without a certain *autonomy degree of the school institutions*. The decentralization has the goal of enlarging the productivity in education, contributing this way to the increasing of the *human resource* quality at a European level.

The economic background of the curriculum reform means recognizing the role of education and training in the process of the economic development. Starting from this premise, we identified the economic bases of the curricular reform by investigating the balance between *investment and efficiency in education* and the new meaning given to the economic value of education and curriculum inside the approach of the development of the *human capital* in the institutions that produce knowledge in order to increase the *competitiveness and the performance* in the global

environment. We confirmed the necessity of *an efficient management of the resources through the educational decentralization, partnership approaches and better coordinated actions, national and European standards*, from an economic perspective. We constantly emphasized the goal of education and training in the development process, supporting ***the investment in education***, *when time comes and in the long term*, which produces important individual and social benefits.

In the context of the economic backgrounds of the curricular reform, explained from the globalization point of view we have also incorporated the concept of ***human capital***, borrowed from the economists' language in order to express the additional value guaranteed by a quality education, reasserting the fact that the education system has become nowadays more an investment than a social facility.

We have drawn the conclusion that the economic perspective of the education adds another dimension to the concept of *human being as resource and capital*. At the same extension, the profile of a *society* and of an *economy based on knowledge* causes *an extension of the investment towards the human resources* in the context of transforming Europe in a reference space for the quality and significance of education. This thing will happen only in the case where a main concern will be given to the *curricular reform connected to the social and economic necessities*.

The psychological concepts of the curricular reform were elaborated under the sign of the theoretical orientations advanced by *the constructivist pattern* which highlights from a psychological perspective the role of ***the subject of education*** in structuring and restructuring the learning activity through *the entire valorisation of personality development resources*, in a didactic approach built on the same supports. The constructivist pattern, promoted by the latest curricular reforms enhances the importance of the initiative of ***the education subject*** in structuring and restructuring the activity of efficient learning according to the *permanent education and self education by valorising the personal resources*.

Talking about the construction reference points of a didactic constructivist approach we demonstrated that the constructivist didactics is centred on the learning subject, the teacher being only a resource of the didactic process and teaching a framework for structuring the learning. The constructivist strategies uphold *an active, autonomous, situational learning*.

The conclusion that results from this context is that the constructivist orientation is the expression of an *interactive pedagogy* describing the manner in which the learning must be done,

recommended to those who learn to use their experience in order to know and to develop new meanings for learning.

Asserting the reference points of the *humanist curriculum* we underlined the necessity of the *differentiation and personalising the learning experience* in a well established psychologically and didactically teacher-student relationship. Essentially, this way of curricular organisation aims at the adjustment of the instructive-educative process to the possible abilities at the level of the cognitive interests, at the rhythm and student's learning style. In terms of educational polity, the curricular differentiation strategy is expressed by the passage from "a school for everybody" to "a school for each of us" (C. Crețu, 1998). In the reference literature there are many curricular patterns of the differentiated and personalised education. In this context, we have chosen to present the most significant paradigms of the *differentiated and personalised curriculum* from a consistent scientific perspective and their impact on the curricular reform.

In the framework of the pedagogic concepts of the curricular reform we created the demarcation among the four structural components of the curriculum, *goals, contents, didactic strategies and assessment* and their classification in the area of the fundamental pedagogical conditions of the curricular reforms of the European space by underlining the most important changes at every structural stage.

Thus, *the centring of the curriculum on competences* was the most visible orientation with an impact in the sphere of the curricular reform in the frameworks of *the educational goals*. In the context of *an economy based on knowledge*, guided and regulated by the flexible training (Brown, Lauder, 1996) based on *competence and added value*, we have enhanced that the *final reference points of the training* suffered important changes. *The flexible training, the adaptability, the creativity and the capacity of lifelong learning* represent the characteristics of the new "player" on the job market and the educational connotations of this profile are extremely important. Asserting the need of centring on competences and not on knowledge, the significance of the curriculum itself changed, the consequence being a new curricular concept, the *curriculum centred on the learning results*, imposing a new type of curricular design where the accent is placed on *outputs, on results* and not on the means or processes that generated them.

In this context of redefining of *the contents*, we have chosen to aim at *the integrated curriculum approach*, considering that it represents an innovative reference point for projecting and organising the *curricular contents* which put the accent on outlining some *competences, attitudes*

and transversal and transferable values, useful for the personal and social development of the students. The changes of the **contents of the curriculum** were signs for its institutional adaptation to the conditions of the global society in order to surpass the encyclopaedism and the single disciplinary approach, aiming mainly at *the qualitative aspects of the curricular reforms* among which the *integrated approach of the curriculum* is emphasized. Defying the requirements and *the challenges of the contemporary world* also means the ability to do fast and efficient transfers between different knowledge domains. Besides the subjects, but together with these, the education can be done based on **an integrated curriculum** whose principal benefit is **bringing closer the school life to the real life**.

The educational strategies centred on the learning subject represent the experimental paradigm with additional psychological and pedagogical limits that gave a new meaning, in the most authentic sense, to **the didactic strategies**. The paradigm change inside the didactic strategies domain implies the global rethinking of the entire didactic approach but also the relationships between their actors. From this point of view a series of studies accentuated the fact that the teaching process orientated towards communication and transfer needs a change of emphasize, from the methods centred on teacher and content to **methods centred on the one who learns**. The teachers do not give knowledge to be memorized anymore, but offer support for the students during their process of constructing the skills. From the knowledge and the experience already acquired they present new information about the study subjects, but also *facilitate the skills of critical and creative thinking* as well as the learning abilities by involving directly the student in the teaching experience (*Eurydice Study, Key Competencies*).

In the context of the nowadays curricular reforms in the European space, the choice of reconsidering the **assessment strategies** has become more and more present, the modern sense of assessment strategy supposes a more adequate and flexible perception, in the conditions of a *deeper, more profound, more complex, dynamic and auto generative educational assessment*, (M. Manolescu, 2008), **oriented towards the formative**. The applied constructivism principles consider that *the formative assessment* is a construction, a result of an approach of conceiving, carrying out, verifying and appreciating the results, mostly in *qualitative terms* in accordance with *the values*. The formative paradigm in assessment promotes the transition from the notion of *control* of acquiring the knowledge to the concept of **assessment of the learning products** but mostly of **the processes** they

involve, meaning the passage from a transmission of knowledge pedagogy to *a pedagogy of training abilities and attitudes*.

The theoretical interdisciplinary concepts of the curricular reform was projected at the crossing between many scientific domains such as *the sociology, the economics, the social and cultural anthropology, the linguistics, the psycholinguistics*, supposing a more intricate issue where one can find *the globalization* by marking the context and the imperatives of change in education and curriculum, *the cultural and linguistic diversity*, an interdisciplinary theme which involves very important aspects also for the European space: *European identity construction, cultural and linguistic policies, diversity management in the European school, planning and implementing the intercultural curriculum, chance equality, community partnership and social cohesion*.

We have explained that the term of *globalization* is used to designate the complexity of the *social, political, economic and cultural* reality which appeared as a consequence of the changes appeared the last decades of the last century, the reality also called “new interrelations age” according to the speeding up and deepening of the *interconnections* at worldwide scale in all contemporary life domains. The transformation of the education and curriculum, installing *the global education and the global curriculum* as results of the globalization-education condition, takes place in this context, at more levels, generating a series of challenges for the European education mainly enhanced by the global reference points through over national integration, the processes of economic increase, the cultural values of the social-political reconstruction or the common European educational patrimony. (J. Schiewer, 2000).

The cultural diversity asserts itself in the globalization context becoming an essential coordinate for the functioning of the democratic society either as a result at a social level of the displays for the dynamic character of culture or as an intricate reality built on the cultural identity reference points, found under the determinism of implementing the cultural rights. The coexistence, in the same space, of a cultural diversity and the concern of building a society based on the democracy values, starting from the recognition and the valorisation of these differences, cause new meanings at the level of *identity construction* of the person (M.Voinea, C.Bulzan, 2003). In the context of the global change, the European integration and the extension project has as a condition *keeping and promoting the linguistic diversity*. The European citizens will plead for a *united Europe* only if their cultural and linguistic inheritance is a part of it.

The speciality studies demonstrate that the extended formula of the *intercultural curriculum* is interested not only in contents, *in what is taught, but also in what is learnt, the way that is learnt, the modalities in which the minorities specificity is didactically valued*. Consequently, this kind of curriculum with openness to diversity involves a training effort for *the intercultural competence* during the entire school involvement. Until nowadays, *the curriculum for foreign languages* is the one that opened at the highest level *the intercultural pedagogical practices*. *The pluricultural and plurilinguistic competence* is not built by the simple add of mono linguistic competences but by combinations and alternations, by organising linguistic situations where the speakers with different cultural origins interact. This way the *intercultural* is produced as *a new way of social knowledge, a result of the cultural thinking, of the interactions and interiorising of the cultural capital*.

We have also underlined in this space of theoretical interdisciplinary background of the curricular reform, the need to create and implement some curricular policies that can approach systemically and structurally aspects of the *equity and qualitative education* promotion *for everybody* because the inequity associated, many times, with the level of education and *the principle of chance equality*, one of the democracy basis, in the European context, is committed to remediate this reality.

At the beginning of the last century, the education reformers considered useful to reconsolidate the *organic connection between school and community* from the perspective of the fact that the curricular reforms need initiatives with deep local roots and with the participation of the authorities, of the parents, of the teachers and of other economic agents at the same time. *The role of the community in education*, according to its participation in the educational management, has become a debate theme and constant preoccupation during the last decade in almost all the European states. The social changes, the cultural dynamic and the economic context have a real impact not only on the internal school functioning but also on its *social responsibility*. This thing involves the reorientation of the acting manners, the reform of the processes and educational administration structures, including the reconfiguration of the relationship with the family and the community.

We have chosen to conclude our approach built around the interdisciplinary concepts of the curricular reform with a problem with vivid axiological connotations: *the social cohesion*. The transformation of the *European Union* in the *main economy of a globalized world, based on knowledge*, can be made only if *the education and the training* are considered elements that can produce *economic development* and *social cohesion*. This way, the education has been placed in a

consonant framework beside the dimensions of the economic reform and social cohesion stimulation and *the lifelong learning* has been considered a protection method against the most important forms of social exclusion.

Chapter IV. European Values within the Curriculum of the Subjects History and Civic Culture/Education. A Content Analysis from an Intra and Interdisciplinary Perspective

In the last chapter of the paper I have proposed the study *European values within the curriculum of the subjects History and Civic Culture/Education. A content analysis from an intra and interdisciplinary perspective*. I have opted for a practical approach whose theoretical basis is undergone in the context of *the axiological reference points of the curricular reform* from the European space, given the *moral crisis of the European spirit* (A.Dumitriu) worldwide which affects all the layers of the society, including the systems of the formal education, one of the causes being the absence of the significant changes at the level of the curriculum, from the perspective of the specific value horizon.

The goal of the study has been that of finding out how frequently the *European values* selected from the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, 2007 version, appear in the curriculum of the subjects History and Civic Culture/Education. This frequency has been measured on three different curricular structures, *finalities*, *curricular contents* and *methodological suggestions*, analysed within the syllabuses and school textbooks, in accordance with *the level of the curricular integration (intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary)*, *the study level of the class* and *the period of the curricular reform*.

I have chosen as an educational platform of representing and manifesting the selected European values, *the curriculum of the subjects History and Civic Culture/Education* due to the important formative potential, from a European perspective that the two fields detain at an intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary level. The study of History pays a special attention to knowing and understanding the historical and social processes and phenomena aiming at developing the students' attitudes and values which allow the latter's social integration and affirmation as active citizens in a democratic and pluralist society which synthesises the values of the past, the present

and the future. By studying Civic Culture/Education one tries to attain some objectives, deeply axiologically dimensioned, such as *the development of the tolerance spirit, the acceptance of differences, knowing and respecting the moral and the juridical norms of the society, understanding the citizens' rights and responsibilities etc.*

Both subjects have been influenced, in their curricular development by the changes in the Romanian society of the latest decades and the ***European dimensioning of the Romanian education.***

The new curricular framework for the compulsory education has opened the perspective of ***an interdisciplinary approach***, which would allow the transfer of the studying results within the curricular area and beyond its borders. From this viewpoint, *Civic Education* has incorporated a historical perspective of the themes referring to the key moments in the evolution of the democracy and *History* rediscovered the civic instrumentation in the analysis of data and historical phenomena, rendering ***the civic dimension of History.***

Then I have systematized the presentation of the similar theoretical and practical approaches, in accordance with ***the international context, national*** respectively, where they have been done.

As a research method I have opted for the ***analysis of the content.*** Thus, ***the context units*** have been 94 ***curricular documents, History and Civic Culture/Education syllabuses and textbooks*** for all the compulsory education grades in Romania, where the two subjects are studied. In this study I have made use of the ***categorial analysis***, which is based on grouping the themes in categories and the ***frequencies calculus.*** Thus, I wanted to identify, in the entire communication content a set of ***categories*** which have been the interest ***themes*** of our research. In this case, ***the thematic categories*** have been the ***European values freedom and human dignity, equality, solidarity, democracy and a rule of law, human rights, European citizenship.***

In this study there have participated teachers from the secondary education (primary school teachers, teachers of history and civic culture), trainees in the continuous training programme *Paideia*, done by the Teacher Training Department from *Ștefan cel Mare* University, Suceava in many series, during the five years of accreditation. In the practical activities at the subject ***Curriculum, instruction, evaluation*** in Module I of preparation, the trainees were asked to identify the European values from the thematic categories scheme in the disciplinary and interdisciplinary curricular structures of the two subjects.

I have noticed an axiological dimensioning of the curriculum of the subject *History* more focused on the area of the *curricular contents* and less on finalities and methodological suggestions. This difference could lead to the launching of the hypothesis that one can notice real imbalances of curricular planning, teachers of History having more axiological resources at the level of *what to do with?* and fewer suggestions for *what to do?* and *how to do it?*; therefore a weak value consistency of the procedural resources, being known the fact that for transmitting some valuable contents one needs some methodological resources planned in order to support the former.

In contrast with the planning of the curriculum at the subject *History*, I have noticed, this time, a more obvious balance in undergoing the curricular design at the subject *Civic Culture/Education*, the best argument in this case being the values relatively close that the category *solidarity* emphasized, on all the intradisciplinary curricular structures. The same statement can be made in the case of the categories *democracy* and *freedom* which have attained close percentages in the case of the finalities and contents.

Alongside this balance in planning the curriculum, I have noticed a more important presence in the curriculum of *Civic Culture/Education*, of *the emphasis of the curriculum focused on finalities*, one of the major orientations of the curricular reforms in the European space, assumed at least at a declarative level by the reforming Romanian syllabuses as well. This curricular point of view promotes the priority role of the finalities in dimensioning the syllabus. This approach has been assumed, as I have mentioned in the paper, in all the reforming approaches in the last decades, in the European context, being proposed in order to replace the traditional point of view, of placing the contents on a privileged position

Therefore, one of the most important conclusions that I have drawn has been that in the case of the two subjects, the curriculum *dimensions axiologically primarily from the contents area* and less from the area of finalities (*framework and reference objectives, general and specific competences, values and attitudes*), one being able to notice imbalances of the curricular planning approach. This reality betrays *the traditional model of planning* where the contents are a priority. Although the contemporary curricular theory promotes *the model of the curricular planning, centred on finalities* (the latter representing in this approach *the fundamental orientations of the curriculum and its option in relationship with the different value systems*) (B.Șerbănescu, 2000, p.61) in the curriculum of the studied subjects, one notices an inconsistency of this theoretical principle.

I have also noticed in the axiological construction of the finalities a striking ***cognitive component*** (ex. *knowing the human fundamental rights, the construction of a conceptual system which would relate fundamental notions such as: freedom, dignity, solidarity, discrimination, etc., analysis of the historical dimension of the human rights etc*), neglecting two very important reference points, for an authentic value dimensioning of the curriculum: ***affective and attitude register***. To plan a curriculum with deep value markings means not only *to know*, but also *to do*, *to be* and *to learn to live together with the others* (J.Delors, 2000).

One could notice in many situations that in the curriculum of a lower grade there have been present more references of European values.

The most important argument of this „supremacy” is, we believe, the fact that at the 4th grade both at *History* and *Civic Culture/Education* there are the alternative textbooks, new in conception, including on the dimension of the usage of the European axiological referential.

These textbooks are neither revised nor added editions of the textbooks from the transition period, but original curricular products belonging to the comprehensive and systemic period of reforms. In the case of the 7th grade though, at least as far as the subject *History* is concerned, the majority of the textbooks represent republications of the old ones.

Final considerations

I have had in mind two important criteria for ensuring the unitary character of the paper: ***the complementarity criterion*** between the theoretical and the practical approach, so that the practical approach from chapter IV completed the previous theoretical chapters, thereby making use of the axiological and pedagogical main points of the curriculum, developed in chapter III and the ***criterion of the terminological unity***, taking into consideration the fact that in the practical part there are exploited, with the same semantic consistency, the concepts explained in the theoretical chapters of the paper. This is the reason why, I have not resumed the explanations from the content of the paper but I only referred to the points necessary to this part, which supply information from this standpoint.

I have tried, through the theoretical and practical course of action of this paper to sustain the necessity of a theoretical foundation of the reform of the curriculum, having for this approach the following justifications:

- The problem of *the reform of the curriculum* implies theoretical and practical reference points with a high degree of complexity, with rigorous conceptual delimitations, constantly making use of interdisciplinary significances and practical dimensions, in connection with the social environment;
- *the reform of the curriculum* delimitates and constantly gives another significance to the specific areas of analysis: planning, development, research and curricular implementation;
- the theoretical basis of the reform of the curriculum can increase the capacity of being managed in all the involved categories, actors and beneficiaries of the educational act, decision takers in the educational policy of all levels, conceptors of curricular products, researchers/theoreticians in the field of the sciences of education and other adjacent domains, practitioners etc.

By assuming these arguments, we will opt for a pragmatic formula of the final considerations, the organisation and the presentation of the conclusions, the suggestions and the recommendations being made in accordance with the category of beneficiaries to which they address.

First and foremost, we want the paper, in its theoretical and practical framework to have an echo in the area of the *decision factors* and the *conceptors of syllabuses and school textbooks*. At the level of the superior hierarchy of the educational system, the effects of the present paper are wanted to be at the basis of the construction of the future curricular products, syllabuses and school textbooks of the axiological, epistemological, psychological and pedagogical conditionalities. We consider that the possible use of these theoretical principles would significantly increase the quality of the curricular products. The decisions takers in educational policy will take into account the impact of the epistemology, axiology, psychology in (re)dimensioning the finalities of the education. Rephrasing the educational goal, making use especially of the axiological reference points can also constitute an interesting challenge for the educational politicians.

The researchers/theoreticians in the field of education sciences will probably be interested in following the analyses, the developments from a conceptual/theoretical point of view, the plausibility of the proposed conclusions and models, the given practical approaches etc. Therefore, the specialists with preoccupations in the field of *the pedagogical epistemology* will

find their scientific interest in the context of the epistemological main concepts of the curricular reform, specialists in the field of *the psychology of education* will find important landmarks for the future theoretical and practical studies in the area of the psychological concepts of the reform, *specialists* in the general didactic or in the special didactics will identify elements specific to the area of scientific preoccupations, among the pedagogical concepts, specialists in the *sociology of education* will find specific traits in the theoretical interdisciplinary conceptualization of the reform of the curriculum. We hope that from the perspective of the theoretical approaches that this paper proposes, the paper should raise the interest of the specialists in the *theory of the curriculum* to a great extent. The study theme proposed in this paper can be of interest for this category, from the perspective of making use of the results of the research in the plan of a theoretical basis of the Romanian curricular policies, oriented towards promoting the *European dimension of the education and the curriculum*.

One should mention the specially important role that the *practitioners*, primary school teachers, teachers of history and Civic Culture/Education have in taking and testing the concepts, the theories and the models proposed in order to form the competences in the area of easily and practically accessing the terminological code peculiar to the curricular reforms and especially in the area of implementing the reforming approaches. To this category there is the important mission of the axiological dimensioning of the curriculum in the didactic practice as it is not sufficient to find syntagms of the European values in the syllabuses and the school textbooks to formulate an example from our practical study, to have for instance *some civic education dimensioned according to values in the European spirit*.

It is crucial the way in which these theoretical orientations are transposed, how the problem of being stuck in some language clichés or that of remaining in a wooden language are solved, how the suspicion of *symbolic violence*, how one can surpass beyond the implicit ideology of the formal curriculum and especially how one draws the limits between the latter and the *hidden curriculum*. The practitioner is the one who has the mission of carefully placing the final snapshots of the *epistemological, axiological* and *praxiological*, in the context of the value dimensioning of the curriculum, from a European dimension.

We allocate in this last section of the paper, final considerations, an important place to arguing the option for the basis of the research in the fourth chapter, in the context of the axiological reference points of the reform of the curriculum. The practical approach was aimed at

the *European dimension of the education*, oriented as a final course of action in the **European values**, which constitutes as an acting and strategic priority in the context of the reforming processes in Europe in the last decades. In the conditions of the moral crisis of the „*European spirit*” which meant refreshing the political and spiritual model, based on *democracy, pluralism, freedom, legality* and the respect of *the human rights* (A.Marino,1995, p.105), the European vision is that the development of the current society depends mainly on major educational investments such as *lengthening the compulsory education period* and *focusing on the value register in the dimensioning of the curriculum*.

Mulford (2002) noticed that under the impact of the globalization, **values** with deep ethical and esthetical significances of the *truth, trust, empathy, compassion, honesty, responsibility, beauty* converted into the so called **values** of the *contract, market, choice and competition* in education. In this world oriented towards consumption, the economic values dominate the others and the acquisition of wealth becomes a goal in itself.

Rediscovering these systems of values and cultural models, with deep ethical and esthetical significances and their introduction into the formal curriculum constitutes one of the premises of the Romanian curricular reform in order to maximize its benefits, in the context of an efficient educational system, which would form **values and attitudes**, necessary to the Romanian society for managing the knowledge society.

We have chosen as an educational platform in order to represent and to display the selected European values, ***the curriculum of the subjects History and Civic Education/Culture*** due to the important formative potential that the two domains have from the perspective of the *education for a democratic citizenship*, considered a priority for the educational reforms of the European space in the 90'. This is often synonymous with *the education and the civic culture*. This convergence is determined on the one side by the renewal of the **civic skills** as a consequence of the political, social, economic and cultural changes after the 1990, and on the other side by the **cohabitation** as a pillar of the future education (C.Ulrich, 2007, p.32).

Absorbing the recommendations of the study *Civic education from an international perspective*, coordinated by Purta, Scheille and Amadeo (1999) which stated that the *civic education* has to be constructed considering the interdisciplinary valences, the new curricular framework for the compulsory education also opened, in most educational systems from the European space the perspective of an **interdisciplinary approach** which can allow the transfer of

the learning results inside the curricular area and beyond its borders. This way, in the formal Romanian curriculum, too, Civic *Education* incorporated a historical perspective of the themes and History rediscovered the civic instruments in analysing the data and historical phenomena establishing *the civic dimension of History*.

Both subjects were and continue to be influenced, in their curricular development, by the changes of the Romanian society of the last decades and by the enhancing of *the European dimension* of the formal curriculum in Romania, as a criterion for its quality assessment, by spreading some specific *internal values* as well as by the opportunity of connecting and giving meanings to the *external values* where, without any dispute, the European ones stand out.

We consider as a *limit* of our research, the absence of school syllabuses from the first years of the transition and from the period of the *comprehensive reform*. This inconvenience generated the impossibility of analysing important documents and, implicitly, determining the reference points for the European values from this period of the reform. Subsequently, we advance as future research directions the use of these materials with a new dimension for the results and the analyses of the present one.

We reassert the idea that the practical demonstration from the last chapter and the sub chapter *Axiological concepts of the European curricular reform*, engenders a distinctive scientific construction which can be considered as a premise for a more generous paper with the theme *The axiological dimensioning of the curricular reform in the European context*.

We want the anatomy and the results of our study to possibly contribute to the theoretical foundation of the Romanian curricular policies, oriented towards the promotion of the *European dimension of the education and the axiological dimension of the curriculum*, as a criterion of its quality assessment, by spreading some specific internal values as well as by the opportunity of connecting and giving meanings to the external values where, without any dispute, the European ones stand out.

The European dimension of the education oriented as a final approach by the *European values* should become, thus, an actionable and strategic priority on the agenda of the future reform approaches for the Romanian curriculum, to maximize its results in the context of an efficient educational approach which can *form values and attitudes* necessary for the school and for the Romanian society inside the knowledge society.

Consequently, the synthesis of this paper can be M. Fullan's assertion, an important contemporary theoretician of change, who said that the education reform involves *restructuring the system* (chapter I), *the global reconsideration of the curriculum* (chapter II and III) *as a result of a major new redirection of values* (chapter IV)