Abstract

In this article we are going to present the significant results obtained in the stages of the research project Curricular Adaptation – Fundamental Tool in the Inclusive Education. The subject that we approached is of great interest and of significant importance because it plays a great part in improving the school conditions in order to make easier the access to a quality education, the attendances to the courses from the compulsory education, as well as the prevention and elimination of the school dropouts.

Keywords: curricular adaptation; inclusive education; diagnosis; therapy; recovery; school orientation; special education needs;

1. The concept of curriculum and its evolution

From the ethimological point of view, the term of „curriculum” comes from Latin (curriculum – singular and curricula - plural) and it means „running” or „race”. It also has the figurative meaning of „way” within expressions such as: curriculum - solis, lunae, vitae – way of the Sun, of the moon, of life (Crețu, 1998).

The term „curriculum” is used in education for the first time in the documents of Medieval universities of Leiden – Holland in 1582 and Glasgow – Scotland in 1633. In the work The Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the meaning of the term is „obligatory study in a school or university” (Crețu, 1998).

In time, the meaning of this complex concept has evolved from a restrictive to a modern one (Bocoș, 2001).

Traditionally (as accepted up to the middle of XIX th century), the concept of curriculum was the same with the one of education. This is referring to a school documents consisting of designing the teaching documents, official schedule of teaching organised in an institution.

From the modern perspective, the curriculum represents an integrative concept globally approached on education activities, of its elements and their interaction. The main stages of the evolution of the concept of „curriculum” are (Niculescu, 2003):

- Original meaning of: running, race, way, trajectory;
- In the XVIth century, the contents of the concept was focused on one element, meaning „learning”. The concept can be applied to the formal education;
- At the beginning of the XXth century, the concept enlarged including the learning experience, methodological aspects („how to learn” – J. Dewey – 1902) and the learning objectives (Bobitt – 1924). The concept can be applied to the formal education, inherently to the non-formal and informal one (Bobbit – 1918);

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At the middle of the XXth century, the concept included besides contents, methodology, objectives and evaluation. The concept extends on two levels:
- that of reporting to the forms of education which considers the education formally and informally, but related to school (UNESCO), stressing the possibility of enlarging the concept to the informal education (Cremin, 1971; Schubert, 1986);
- that of reporting it to the relationship theory and practice insisting on the fact that curriculum is related to practice (Tyler, 1949; Swab, 1969).

At the end of the XXth century and the beginning of the third millennium, it is stressed the multi-dimension of the curriculum and including the methodology, objectives, evaluation and other elements such as: learning time and instruments.

The concept contents:
- between the large meaning referring to the all three forms and meanings and narrow meanings referring to the formal and nonformal education;
- at the level of the relationship theory-practice, there is the concept of curricular design, of management that includes the its development and its strategies.

Within the evolution of the concept of curriculum there are several stages. From the historical perspective, the curriculum is a dynamic, open concept which has increases and successive improvement. In our country, the discourse about curriculum appears after 1989, and, at present, the term of „curriculum“ is very frequent in various contexts and having different meanings. The concept of curriculum imposed in its large significance in the 90s, being associated with the reform of education system. Although some specialists consider the term of „curriculum“ too forced or useless, in the Romanian pedagogy vocabulary, it is recommended that it should be considered both ethimologically – related to the modern pedagogy- and pragmatically (the curricular development in the Euro-Atlantic area refers to conceptual unity and coherence). The effort of understanding this term and the pedagogical ideology results in the approaching, projecting and applying of some education models adjusted to the modern world.

1.1. Contemporary approaches

The systematic research related to the defining and using of the term of „curriculum“ led, after the 50s, to a more clear curriculum theory.

The curriculum theory is the pedagogical subject that studies the content of education and methodology of its selection, proposing the valuing of the human knowledge of science, technology, art, moral, religion, etc, that are considered relevant in the process of changing the human personality.

Mainly, the curriculum is a project that has the value of an education action plan (Potolea, 2002). From point of view such as:
- functional, the curriculum indicates purposes, leads, organises and runs the process of teaching and learning;
- structural, the curriculum includes: results, content, time of teaching and learning (the triangle model), or results, content, time of teaching and learning, strategies of teaching and learning and strategies of evaluation (pentagon model);
- the product, the curriculum is concretised in curricular documents: education plan, school curriculum, school book and other materials.

The school curriculum represents a pedagogical project that values the multiple and complex interactions between the following elements:
- a. the teaching-learning contents used in achieving the objectives, contents of the school curriculum (education plan, school curriculum school books, study areas, thematic areas, etc.);
- b. the general education objectives, the reference and framework objectives for various subjects and operational and evaluation objectives corresponding to the teaching-learning activities;
- c. teaching-learning strategies in school and after school, correlated with formal activities;
d. evaluation strategies of the efficiency of the teaching-learning activities;

Analysis perspectives of the school curriculum:

A. Process perspective analysis of the school curriculum aims:

- curriculum design;
- curriculum implementation;
- evaluation of the model where the school curriculum was implemented;

The school curriculum exists by the three processes. They represent a whole. There is none which can be eliminated. They must be integrated in a comprehensive concept of the curriculum (Potolea, 2002).

B. Structural perspective aims the essential elements of the curriculum and their relationship. The approach of the curriculum from this perspective can be achieved after several models such as:

Triangle model, according to which the elements of curriculum are: results of the teaching-learning process, school contents, education time;

Pentagon model, which includes the following elements: results of the teaching-learning process, school contents, education time, teaching strategies, and evaluation strategies (Potolea, 2002).

C. The perspective of the curricular products or documents

Curricular products can be classified as follows:

- **Main**: education design, school curriculum, school book
- **Auxiliary**: methods guides for teachers; copybooks for students; learning packages; multimedia sets; education software.

Curricular products specific to the teaching framework, results in planning the activity by those: calendar planning; learning units planning; lesson planning.

1.2. Concept derived categories

The vast significance and approach of the term of curriculum led to the deriving of some concept categories.

The curricular area represents a field of knowledge approached on the purpose of preparing the students at the level of the instrumental, general and specially culture. There are some interdisciplinary areas, thematic modules that aim the achievement of the same results and which, within the educational process, are reported to the same framework objectives.

The content of the education represents the system of the information pedagogical resources, according to the results of education which determine the elaboration of the education design, of the school/university curricula, school books and other necessary materials in order to stimulate the learning activity. The content of the education process represents the values in the domains of science, culture, practice that exist in the society at a certain moment. The content of the education process is an element of the curriculum. The meaning of the curriculum is not given by the content because the demands of the society are changing. The meaning of the curriculum is given by the student with all that must represent as product of an education measure, with its acknowledgement, abilities and elements.

The curricular cycles represents dividing on periods, study years of the teaching-learning process. These have in common some education results and methodological systems. By the aimed results and by the teaching strategies, the curricular cycles must ensure the continuity of the teaching-learning process from stage to stage.

Our national curriculum consists of the following cycles: fundamental acknowledgement / learning cycle (kindergarten - II grade), development cycle (IIIrd – VIth grade), observing and guiding cycle (VIIth – IX grade), deep study cycle (Xth – XIth grade), speciality cycle (XIIth; XIIIth grade).

The activity is a unity of learning situations submitted to some teaching results and to some definite operational objectives that runs on the basis of a narrow and precise content, with an adequate methodology to both results and contents and age. All the education measures are achieved by activities that correspond to the school level. (Niculescu, 2003).
2. Development and improvement of the education curriculum

In every stage of the society development stage, there is the interest of the specialists for education. The relationship between man and society represents an important criterion in researching and elaborating the educational curriculum. The totalitarian societies are aims to education results that do not take into account the individuals’ needs, whereas the liberal societies are focused on the personal needs of man. Thus, the traditional curriculum will produce weak personalities that can not contribute to the progress of the society by promoting the new values and the curriculum focused on values tends to produce exceptional personalities, sometimes unadjusting in the living context. The curriculum specialist proposes a balance by analysing all the criteria that guide the educational curriculum. The curricular development aims a new curriculum, for example, a new education institution. The curriculum improvement aims the action on the curriculum in the best possible way. Improvement means more than that – correct what does not work. Stages of development and improvement of curriculum The development and improvement of curriculum mean the passing through several stages representing the management that respect the principles and pragmatic rules of the management of change. In the XX th century, the practice of education changes was marked by the using of three types of measures:

Three-phase measure consists of curriculum design, testing the new curriculum and practice the corrected curriculum after testing;

Four-phase measure consists of: design, testing, validation and implementation;

Five-phase measure consists of: curriculum research, design, testing, validation and implementation;

The five-phase model is considered by the specialists the most complex and fitful in order to achieve an improved curricular reform.

a. Curriculum research is the first stage in the process of education change and it is formed of two operations: diagnose and forecast. The diagnose of the education status of an institution represents an investigation that allows the identifying of difficulties, problems, real obstacles. The forecast allows the identification of the tendencies of school, economic, scientific and technological evolution in the institution.

b. Curriculum design represents the activity of creating the new curriculum by respecting a set of reference concepts and specific principles. The reference concepts define the obligatory elements of curriculum that is to be designed: mission of the institution, pedagogical results, the content of the education process, its methodology and evaluation.

The specific principles of the curriculum design are:

- Principle of empirical basis;
- Principle of philosophical guiding;
- Principle of individualising;
- Principle of realism;
- Principle of balance;
- Principle of collaboration;
- Principle of evaluation;
- Principle of assurance;
- Principle of permanence.

c. Curriculum testing is achieved in two ways: vitro testing and vivo testing. Vitro testing means some critical analysis, publishing the project and debate. There are organised debates with all the interested categories. Vivo testing can be achieved by empirical investigations, setting a reference model in schools, students, teachers, a new testing on a certain period, collect and interpret data, identifying the weak points, errors correction of design and continual improvement if the tested curriculum.

d. Established curriculum is achieved by a designated authority taking the responsibility.

e. Curriculum testing is achieved by specialists involving decision factors.
2.1. Paradigm of differentiated and personalised education

Within the learning process, among students there can be identified bigger or smaller differences concerning the rhythm, deep structure of acknowledgement and the style in which the knowledge was assessed. The equality of chances to education means to recognise and respect the differences concerning the capacity and the potential of learning of students. The equality of the access to education refers to teaching-learning process adjusted to the students’ competence possibilities and needs and it does not restrict to the general available learning. The paradigm of differentiated and personalised education is based on the philosophy of change. The change is a process that is achieved by individuals and not by institutions. The process of change is possible only if teachers change by developing skills and abilities of challenge and keeping up the change. Although the applying a new program or an innovation in education, the emphasis is stressed, firstly, on materials, finance, strategy and plan of attitudes and feelings of education stakeholders. The latter have an important role in the success of change (Crețu, 1998). The differentiated curriculum supposes the elaborating objectives, standards of proficiency, selection and organisation of content, of the psychological environment of learning, taking into account the possibilities of students’ skills, their personality and dealing with information. The differentiated curriculum represents an important instrument of inclusive school in order to ensure the chances and access to education of all students. The adjustment of curriculum can be achieved through various strategies as follows:

- deep learning (it supposes the achievement of objectives and learning the obligatory content from the education plan by diversifying the learning activities. This variant can be achieved with students whose interests are not focused on that particular curriculum area; or for the students with special education needs who need more classes than the others).
- extension (on condition that it is not altered the children’s intellectual potential, for example, the children with visual and physical disabilities; this method is achieved by introducing new special activities in order to support the specific language such as Braille alphabet, signs language, communication, space orientation, socialising and community integration activities, practical activities that the student can achieve in order to prepare himself professionally adjusted to the his disability type;
- select the content from the general curriculum addressed to children without disabilities, contents which are understood by children with special education needs and giving up to those contents with a high complexity degree;
- access and diversify the elements of the general curriculum – children with special education needs are in the situation of achieving various individual therapeutic activities, that aim their recuperation and participation at the activities of the common education;
- using the pedagogical methods and procedures, of education tools with intuition permanent character that allows the student with special education needs to acknowledge the taught content and develop the necessary competences;
- using evaluation methods and techniques by which it is achieved the evolution and performance of students not only from intellectual perspective but also from skill one and solving problems ways.

Individualised design of learning supposes the adjustment of the teaching-learning process to the individual needs from the existing differences between students perspective. Differentiating the curriculum, for both children with special education needs and those with high intellectual level is based on the same premises:

- stakeholders’ education can adjust the teaching-learning process to different abilities and needs;
- competences can be achieved by various types of curriculum;
- achievement of education purposes is facilitated by the selection and the organisation of the education objectives according to the individual differences;
- educational needs specific to the various categories of students can be done well in various education circumstances.

The curricular difference supposes the selection of the learning tasks after the criterion of the intellectual maturity, the working rhythm and not after the age. It is necessary to adjust the teaching-learning process to the intellectual possibilities, cognitive interests, rhythm and style of learning of students.
3. Conclusions

All the students who participate at the education process must benefit from a differentiated education due to the fact that these have abilities, interests, previous experiences of learning. They come from different social environments; have different affective behaviour and learning potential.

The difference should be a normal inclusive practice in each class because the students have different learning rhythm, learning styles. Teachers must ensure the valuing of each student’s potential, their life experience that leads to the adjustment to different learning methods, but also to various teaching tools.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number 882/19/01/2009, PNII - IDEI, code 471/2008 Program Exploratory Research Project, „Adaptarea curriculară - instrument fundamental în educația inclusivă.”

References