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LIFELONG EDUCATION

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Abstract : Nowadays, we discuss more and more about the need to make a distinction between the concept of continuous education and the collocation the continuous character of education. Whether about the permanent character of education, understood as a temporal coordinate, as the permanence of education, the specialists talked ever since the classical pedagogy period, the collocation continuous education constitutes a specific of the contemporary pedagogy.

One should accept that there is no definite definition for the continuous learning, since more conceptual characteristics operates with it and the objectives and contents of lifelong learning education regard the transformation of the whole personality, facilitating the individual's multidimensional accomplishment, developing the positive traits, aptitudes and skill of every individual. Hence, education becomes a vector of the sustainable development and improvement of the human condition.

Key words: lifelong education¸ continuous learning, pedagogy, sustainable development, human condition.

I. Concept of lifelong education

The plethora of information generated by the scientific, technological and cultural evolution faces the current educational systems with a major concern. The concern regards reorienting learning from the perspective of lifelong learning. Under these circumstances, confronted with a new reality, in a rapid and continuous dynamics, the school cannot remain frozen in strategies centred on the main training. Nonetheless, in order to meet the novel challenges, the school has to change the approach, concentrate upon those procedures to respond the imperatives of training a human being able of self-upgrading, and consent personal development. Because learning teaching and memorization are both insufficient and inefficient in the knowledge society, a society immanently and invariably informational. Therefore, the human being is necessary to learn *something else, to learn the learning*![1] This something else refer to the permanent learning, "learning throughout the entire life, which debuts in school, but afterwards everybody should pursue on one's own expense depending on each interests and desire"[2].

By nature, education is concomitantly, retrospective but anticipatory, perspective, too, because of the transmitting culture and integrating socially. For this reason, the individual moulding cannot neglect the effect of mechanization and automation of the social life.

[1] See C. Cucoș, *Istoria pedagogiei, Idei și doctrine pedagogice fundamentale, Publishing House Polirom, 2001*, p. 160
[2] Robert Dottrens, *Eduquer et instruire*, Nathan, UNESCO, Paris, p. 37

Mechanization and automation leave an important mark upon the individual existence of the human condition at large. Therefore, school has to focus more on stimulating the epistemic curiosity, on developing the desire for culture, the interests and aspirations for continuous upgrading, establishing them as educational priorities. "To know how to cultivate yourself, to enrich your spirit and polish you conduct are the objectives of the genuine training"[3].

One aspect becomes more and more obvious. That aspect regards the essential functions of education. The education has to respond concomitantly to the immediate requirements of the society (for example, the training of the human capital) but also to the long-term requirements of more comprehensive, perspective objectives. "The economic and social consequences of the scientific and technical revolution compels everybody to preoccupy in defining and applying the educational policies in designing the primary, secondary and post-secondary school education. This education is an element or part of a continuous education, starting with pre-primary education and brings to attention not the education accomplished by the educator, but acquiring knowledge and learning habits on continuous bases. This education supposes, also, a good articulation of the extra-school education consisting in other activities accomplished outside school classes"[4].

C. Cucoș draws attention on the need to make a distinction between the concept of *continuous education* and the collocation *the continuous character of education.* Whether about the permanent character of education, understood as a temporal coordinate, as the permanence of education, the specialists talked ever since the classical pedagogy period, the collocation continuous education constitutes a specific of the contemporary pedagogy. The concept covers "a theoretical and action principle that attempts at regulating a certain reality specific to our century"[5]. The specificity of this principle lies in that school has not the capacity to transmit knowledge and abilities valid for the rest of one's life. The school cannot train the human for the rest of his life. The meaning of the school is that of opening the human being, the possibility to the permanent concentration of the pressure and requirements of the social and cultural environment. Along this line of understanding the concern, the idea that education should conceive as "an

[3] C. Cucoș, *op. cit*., p. 160
[4] Douglas Aitken, *Le nouveau de le éducation: la région Europe*, UNESCO, Paris, p. 21
[5] C. Cucoș, *op. cit.*, p. 161

existential continuum whose duration should be as long as the life itself"[6], with no temporal limits for the individual (does not limit to the school age) and "does not close within space"[7].

The lifelong learning "constitutes a specific response to the existential dynamism, in the sense of involvement in the self-training depending on the multiple and novel requirements"[8]. The lifelong learning represents "the man's modality to free himself from tensions, crises, the unpleasant surprises of his job"; it is "a shield" and "a support" ensuring the trust in the future and progress. The human "strengthens" the trust though his *anticipatory* character "based on his habit to learn and on the idea that in a democratic society humans learn from one another"[9]. The concept of *metacognition* correlates with the concept of long-life learning. The metacognition concept of pedagogic relevance indicates the mental operations applied to other mental operations (a mental operation of that who learns "with the objective of another mental operation of the same subject assimilates"[10]).

Although, there are many attempts to define the continuous learning, one should accept that there is no definite definition, since more *conceptual characteristics* operates. Based on these conceptual characteristics, I. Jinga and E. Istrate found a definition. "The permanent education constitutes an ensemble of means at hand for the people of any age, gender, irrespective from the social and professional situation with the aim they should never cease to train along their lives in order to ensure the full development of their faculties and efficient participation to the progress of the society"[11]. Nevertheless, the definition is only an attempt because it does not meet the conditions of a logical definition nor those following seem incapable to define the lifelong learning. Here they are:

a) Réne Maheu claims that the lifelong learning is "...a dimension of the life itself. It is an attitude of insertion within the real, not a mere training for the active and responsible existence"[12];
b) Paul Legrand puts it that the lifelong training is an action able "to favour creating structures and models to help the human being along his entire existence in his

[6] Ibidem
[7] Edgar Fauré, *A învăța să fii*, Publishing House Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1974, p. 300
[8] C. Cucoș, *op. cit.*, p. 161
[9] George Văideanu, *Educația și frontiera dintre milenii*, Publishing House Politică, București, 1988, p. 137
[10] See C. Cucoș, *op. cit.*, p. 162
[11] I. Jinga, E. Istrate, (coord.), *Manual de Pedagogie, ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită, Publishing House All, București, 2006, 2008*, p. 187
[12] Réne Maheu, *Crise de l'éducation, crise de civilisation, crise de civilisation*, Raportul UNESCO pe anul 1968, în „Chronique de UNESCO, mai, 1969, nr. 5 (vol. XII), pp. 180-181"

continuous progress and development. It helps the individual to train and become his own subject and his own vehicle of his development via the multiple forms of self-instruction"[13];

c) Bertrand Schwartz regards the permanent education as "an integration of the educational acts in a genuine continuum in time and space through the play of an ensemble of means (institutional, material and human) which enable this integration"[14]. He insists upon the aspect that the permanence notion is immanent to education, "as it includes into the idea of education";

d) Bogdan Suchodolski considers the permanent education "a means to develop the needs and interests for the cultural values because it corresponds to orienting the human preferences and inclinations and because makes our lives more colourful and more valuable"[15].

Therefore, we plead for understanding the permanent education as a *continuous education* (the continuity or permanence being an essential coordinate of education), as a process of individual training through cultural transmission and social integration for the entire duration of life. Within the process, many educative subsystems intervene (starting with school, continuing with university and then, "societal learning", upheld by the life experiences in different contexts. The cultural pattern, the values pertaining to different civilizations, the community in which the individual lives and exerts his profession, the successive mutations in science and technology are subsystems, which complement one another contributing to the development of the individual personality.

For a mere reason, we consider an error to identify the permanent education with the adults' education. The continuity is the essential coordinate of education, which began in school (the initial training changes its contents from the perspective of values and valorisation in time, the accent moving from the present objectives and finalities towards objectives and finalities present and future alike.

II. Modalities to accomplish the permanent education. Perspectives of the permanent education

The lifelong education closely relates to the fundamental education. The fundamental education is that education that responds to the fundamental educational needs, the basic

[13] Paul Legrand, *Introducere în educația permanentă*, Publishing House Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1973, pp. 49-50
[14] Bertrand Schwartz, *Educația de mâine*, Publishing House Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1976, pp. 53-54
[15] Bogdan Suchodolski, *L'éducation parallèle,* în „Perspectives", Paris, UNESCO, 1972, nr. 2, p. 312

instruction representing a real support for the systematic learning. Understood as acquisition of general knowledge and the competencies necessary to long-life, the fundamental education proposes objectives, which then go on with those of the permanent education. "First, one cannot dissociate the permanent education's objectives from the objectives of the general, school education. All the objectives of the school and extra-school education, of the formal, informal and non-formal contents have to re-orient and dimension so that they should regard acquiring the formative autonomy encompassing certain qualities. The qualities are intra-psychic stability, emotional vigour, inner impetus, responsible option, social commitment, self-overcoming, and disposition for novel knowledge, learn to learn, inter-learning, enhancement of educability, self-guided learning etc"[16].

The objectives and contents of lifelong learning education regard the transformation of the whole personality, facilitating the individual's multidimensional accomplishment, developing the positive traits, aptitudes and skill of every individual. Hence, education becomes a vector of the sustainable development and improvement of the human condition. As an immanent coordinate, the permanent education has the value of a principle, which obeyed and applied, produces structural mutations, fundamental and materialised in *integrating in a unique system of the children, youth and adults' education*[17]. However, the operational modalities to accomplish the permanent education depend on numerous variable both intra and extra-educational, characterising different cultural spaces, even human individuals.

One should put the lifelong education, as a novel vision upon education, originated in the principle of continuity, in a direct relation with a factual reality, namely, the individual and social progress. The permanent education supposes "a quantitative expansion, under the aspect of carry out duration and multiplication of the learning situations, but a qualitative re-organization of the education itself as well. Education, "as an institutionalised modality, limited in time, as you know, has to stand a procedure re-thinking, in the sense that it is necessary to comprise the perspective of the permanent education, in the stipulated contents, teaching methods and assessment ones, but especially by proliferating some objectives of strong formative dimension"[18]. Here are some of such modalities[19]:

[16] C. Cucoș, *op. cit.,* pp. 162-163; See H. R. Dave for further details, *Analiza și sinteza conținutului ilustrativ,* în *Fundamentele educației permanente,* Publishing House Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1991, pp. 407-410
[17] See also I. Jinga, E. Istrate, *op. cit.*, p. 187
[18] C. Cucoș, *op. cit.,* p. 163

❖ Moving the accent, specific to the traditional education, from transmitting knowledge, forming of skills and habits and cultivating intellectual attitudes and abilities towards another hierarchy within this triad. Therefore, on the first place there will be intellectual attitudes and abilities, followed by forming skills and habits and then transmitting knowledge.

❖ The selection and processing of the educational contents should favour acquiring the intellectual and spiritual autonomy, which not should not reside only in exploiting the knowledge. It would rather make use of the means to get to knowledge, valorise them and utilise them.

❖ Having the value of a philosophic principle, axiological and praxeology bound of dimensioning and carrying out the educational practices, the permanent education claims the re-thinking of all the didactic components and correlating them. The re-thinking and correlating them to such an extent that one of the educational finality should regard training the individual for the availability of learning and accepting the idea that he has to learn his entire life. "The principle of permanent education suppose correlation and integrity to a higher degree of the educational processes at all the educational levels. Nobody can state that there is a stage of promoting the desiderata of the permanent education. On the contrary, all the domains as well as all the educational levels (pre-school, school and university) should consider the objectives of the permanent education"[20];

❖ The permanent education claims *a novel learning*, in which dominant becomes "learning to be and to become", to ensure the individual the adjustment capacity to unknown or unexpected situations. Such a claim situates in the face of the school new dimensions and supplementary assignments. In this novel context, the institution should fully contribute to the accomplishment of an initial prior training, as thorough as possible, thus, leading to enhancement of the schooling institution's role, not at all abandoning school (as the project of Ivan Ilich's concerning de-schooling).

❖ The lifelong education concentrates on self-organization, on the regulations coming from within, from the person subject to education.

❖ For the reason that learning does not reside any longer on mere mechanic assimilations, it becomes an opportunity of lifelong self-education.

[19] Ibidem, pp. 163-164
[20] Ibidem, p. 163

❖ The permanent education should determine the exigencies coming from outside should not act as mere constraints factors, as opposing forces to the individual interests and possibilities.

❖ The permanent education claims self-education, as one of the modalities through which the permanent education accomplishes (the human being is educable and self-educable).

❖ Since it does not form definite human beings, education needs to be permanent. The permanence is the coordinate making the education integrating factor and unifying of the previous individual experiences. Yet, the coordinate constituted the modality through which the individual adjust by changing when the socio-human and natural environment requires it.

❖ The lifelong education is an efficient pragmatic form of learning, especially in bringing it closer to the reality. Moreover, it gains a clear shape when it becomes a form of living cognition, assessing the virtual consequences and ensuring the individual the capacity to make decisions by himself. The urges, to which the lifelong education addresses and originates in John Dewey's expression "Learning by doing" are "Learning to learn", "learning to be and to become", "Learning by doing".

These modalities to achieve education by rapport to the educational principle need a re-organization of the knowledge, operating with new axiological standards, establishing a new hierarchy. In short, it needs a re-thinking strategy depending on the new exigencies of the life.

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