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## **INDIVIDUAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DYNAMICS OF ACADEMIC LEARNING IN ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS**

Habilitation thesis

### **Abstract**

The present habilitation thesis provides an overview of the scientific research carried out over a period slightly exceeding a decade (2004-2015) and performed after receiving my doctoral degree (in 2003). It investigates psychological and psychosocial factors of the learning process, the central theme of the interdisciplinary field of educational psychology. The reflection upon my research and teaching activity triggered the organisation of the contributions on two broad axes, i.e. academic learning and learning about oneself. Remaining within the frame of the interactionist approach, a distinction has also been operated as regards academic learning: the individual dynamics and the psychosocial dynamics.

In the first chapter, among the personal factors which influence one's academic progress, I described the research concerning the anxiety towards foreign language acquisition. The anxiety and self-efficacy in using the computer and the internet were investigated with high school students, university students and teachers from Romania. The research focusing on self-handicapping, as a negative facet of conscientiousness, on the locus of control, stress and coping strategies, motivation and intelligence are presented in the second chapter.

The third chapter opens the discussions on the psychosocial and contextual dynamics of learning. This chapter is entirely dedicated to the teacher-student relationships in the assessment process and to its impact upon the learning process. The diagnosis of the assessment styles was conducted using an original psychological tool, *The Inventory of Assessment Styles*, used in a triple hypostasis: self-reported style, preferred style and perceived style.

The analysis of the learning factors, conducted together with teams of engineering researchers from the university with a view to developing an online learning environment represents the object of the fourth chapter. The online environment was also described from the perspective of the communication needs, learning styles and strategies used by the students or of the e-course design by teachers.

The fifth chapter of the thesis presents the violence connected to assessment in relation to other individual and situational factors. This is a concept proposed and researched in a national project I coordinated. After defining the violence connected to the assessment

process, I described the bullies and victims, as portrayed by the multiple voices of the persons interviewed. The analysis of the concept of violence is enriched by the study of the relationships between individual factors (anger, self-esteem, dominance, responsibility, self-control), some socio-demographical characteristics and elements of the assessment situation. I consider that the most significant methodological contributions in this direction are related to the diagnosis instrument for the school climate, *Questionnaire for the School Environment Connected to Assessment*. These findings were published in two books, a technical manual and over 20 scientific papers.

Due to the fact that I consider intervention to be a major objective of educational psychology, I took the responsibility to design and validate some programs in order to reduce the violence connected to the assessment process, so as to form metacognitive competences, subordinated to the axis 'learning about oneself'. These contributions were described in the sixth chapter of the thesis.

The description of the significant results of my research was completed by a short presentation of the coordination activity I performed as a team member during the elaboration of collective volumes, or as a member of research team in which I took part (7<sup>th</sup> chapter). Here, reference was made to the five books edited and to the courses which were devised for the students I teach. Data were provided in brief about the coordination of the undergraduate or graduate thesis, partially presented as scientific papers.

In order to allow the assessment of the quality of my research, I briefly described the methodology used, the size and the composition of the samples, the applied tools and their metrical qualities, as well as the procedure used. The findings presented were published in books, ISI papers and several papers comprised in the proceedings of international conferences, ISI indexed or not, or in the journals indexed in different databases.

Without being the victim of the control illusion, starting from the aforementioned topics, I devised my career plan and the development directions, describing possible means of action in the eighth chapter. I intend to keep the two broad axes, academic learning and learning about oneself, but reducing the thematic span. Without denying the role of personal factors, I will select the psycho-social and contextual factors of learning, focusing on the school environment and school violence. In accordance with the present dominant factors of the cultural and educational context, the use of the online environment and multimedia technologies for learning purposes would be another direction in which I would like to continue. I firmly believe that the previous achievement will be a premise for new contributions appreciated by the academic community.

The compliance with the practical end of psychology also entails the support given to learners or teachers for developing their competences and their potential according to socially accepted values. In my work, the topic of learning about oneself will be permanently connected to the area of academic learning and professional development. At the same time, I hope to remain open-minded towards new themes and approaches, because a part of the fascination and usefulness of scientific research comes from unexpected challenges and findings.

As regards the development of my career from a didactic and institutional perspective, I intend to adapt the courses already published for online learning by using the facilities of the emerging information technologies. Another essential part of the projection of my career is connected to the services offered on the community by providing psycho-pedagogical counselling to the teachers in the university and to the active school counsellors and through my activity as a peer reviewer for journals and conferences.