

HABILITATION THESIS

Perspectives in the Analysis of Change in Education. Theoretical and Empirical Fundamentals

Associate Professor Valerica Anghelache, PhD

Abstract

The habilitation thesis entitled *Perspectives in the Analysis of Change in Education. Theoretical and Empirical Fundamentals* illustrates the academic, scientific and professional profile of its author, as well as her most significant results acquired in the scientific activity after having been awarded the PhD title in Education Sciences. The theme of the thesis centres on educational change, analysed as a process, with applicability at the concrete pedagogical of Romanian education. The subject of educational change, analysed under its all aspects and manifestation forms has been a constant scientific interest, from the doctoral studies onwards.

In what the structure is concerned, the thesis is made up of two parts: the former illustrates the professional career, underlining the results obtained in the current teaching and research activity, while the latter presents the main objectives and directions of professional development.

Through its contents, the thesis pleads in favour of a coherent analysis of the process of change in education, from the perspective of its necessity, generative principles and long-term effects. Thus, the habilitation thesis presents the results of the interdisciplinary, theoretical and empirical research undertaking, which allowed for the outlining of three major research directions: the general analysis of the process of educational change, changes in the school learning paradigm – from intellectualism to the constructivist approach to learning -, and aspects of change in early education.

A. *General analysis of the process of educational change.* This research direction valorises the effort of analysing the effects of the process of change, and the mechanisms involved in the management of change, taking two major research avenues: organisational and individual. In what the *organisational dimension* is concerned, the change requires the revisiting of some aspects, such as: the redefinition of the school mission and objectives in the new context generated by the many reforms in education, and the reconsideration of the importance of organisational culture and environment, as possible factors which may

influence the accomplishment of change in managerial activity, promoting the strategic management at the educational level. The *individual perspective* outlines the results of several empirical studies on the effects of the process of change at the level of human resources, with special emphasis on the following aspects: attitude towards change, perception and attitude towards the professional activity in the new context created by the introduction of some reformative measure, job satisfaction, mentality towards work, professional responsibility, and motivation for a teaching career in the given context.

B. *Changes in the paradigm of school learning: from intellectualism to the constructivist approach to learning.* This research direction focuses on the results obtained from the investigation of some aspects which pertain to the effects of change at the level of the educational process, especially in what concerns the students. Relevant in this respect are: the influence of the non-cognitive factors of learning on the academic results (stress is laid on the students\ mentality towards learning, involvement in the learning tasks, etc.), as well as the learning performance, usually denoted by the syntagm `academic success` and the possible predictors of this success (non-cognitive skills, personality factors, emotional intelligence, previous experiences, etc.), in the new context generated by the promotion of constructivist learning principles.

C. *Aspects of change in early education* is a research direction which outlines the relatively recent interest in the changes generated by the reform of pre-school education, in the wider context of early education. Stress is particularly laid on the changes in the curriculum, at the level of teaching planning or that of building new learning experiences by valorising the partnership between kindergarten and the community.

The change in education has gradually departed from being just a “necessary evil”, drawing near both resistance and enthusiastic attitudes, and has reached the status of a more and more obvious necessity in a system in constant reference to the successful educational models in the European space. Regardless of our position, this is a long, non-linear process, with consistent aims, but with somehow little coherence in its concrete actions, a process whose effectiveness must be accurately predicted. The three research directions implicitly illustrate our personal efforts of experimenting and assaying these changes, or, more precisely, the way in which they operate at the level of school development, and at that of the factors which determine the individuals’ motivation and job satisfaction. The change in education has been and still is a topical subject. What is more important is its opportunity, consistency and validity.

The second part of the thesis is dedicated to the development plan for career advancement, emphasis being laid on the objectives assumed in the teaching and scientific activity, as well as on the concrete means of deeming them operational.