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PRINCIPLE OF PSYCHOCENTRISM IN DESIGNING CURRICULUM FOR ADULT'S LEARNING AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article addresses the issue of curriculum for adults' learning and education in a formal and non-formal terms from a psychological perspective. In this sense, learning and education of adults are strongly focused on psychocentric approaches, which must be relevantly reflected in the curriculum. Namely, the curriculum has as object of reflection the relationship between the individual, the society and the educational (learning) institution. The psychological approach of the curriculum for adults' learning and education is focused on the following conceptual approaches: the process of changing/developing the curriculum in relation to psychological factors; organizing and conducting adult education through a curriculum that creates contexts for active learning and respects personal and professional needs. At the same time, the concept of curriculum is approached from the perspective of metacognitive competences (conscious awareness, metacognitive judgment, metacognitive decision), the peculiarities of mental processes in adults (perception, memory, thinking, attention), but also motivational factors (psychological, social, andragogic). The motivational framework is achieved in the educational curriculum through the following components: the conceptual component, the outcomes component, the contents component, the procedural component. The express study showed what reflections teachers have on the curriculum taught in psychocentric vision.

1. Introduction

Development of curriculum for adults' learning and education is an ongoing process that focuses on the following landmarks:

i. reporting on the dynamics and professional and individual needs of adults, but especially on the purposes necessary for more efficient integration into the labor market and ensuring a more decent living;

ii. reporting on the general trends in the evolution of education and on the international standards unanimously accepted, first of all, in the concept of lifelong learning;

iii. reporting on those traditions, social and professional values that are relevant from the point of view of developing the curriculum for adults' learning and education;

iv. reporting on the psychological peculiarities of adults.

2. Problem Statement

The existence of a contradiction between the individual choices of adults for learning and the curriculum with a generalizing content causes the problem of elaborating a curricular framework for adults' learning in relation to their psychological peculiarities and individual learning needs.

The study focuses on a fundamental theoretical framework of well-known researchers: (Delacour, 2001; Dandara et al., 2018; Guțu et al., 2020; Guțu et al., 2021; Guțu, Blândul, Lungu, et al., 2022; Guțu, Blândul, Țurcanu, et al., 2022; Noël, 1997; Posțan, 2021; Paris & Winograd, 1990; Mocanu et al., 2020) etc.

3. Research Questions

What do we mean by "psychocentrism" in relation to the educational curriculum? Why are metacognitive competences important in the structure of the curriculum for adults? How do the particularities of mental processes of adults influence the design of the curriculum from the perspective of psychocentrism? What is the role of motivation in structuring the curriculum focused on the principle of psychocentrism?

4. Purpose of the Study

Substantiation and valorisation of the principle of psychocentrism in the design of the curriculum for adults' learning and education.

Research objectives:

i. establishing the psychological and pedagogical factors regarding the design of curriculum for adults;

ii. defining and capitalizing on metacognitive competences in the structure of the curriculum for adults;

iii. identifying the particularities of psychological processes in adults as a factor of curriculum design focused on the principle of psychocentrism;

iv. establishing the motivational framework in the structure of curriculum focused on psychocentrism;

v. conducting an express study on the reflections of teachers on the curriculum taught from the perspective of psychocentrism.

Research hypothesis: we assume that the curriculum for adults' learning and education can be functional when it will focus on the following: psychological and pedagogical factors; metacognitive competences; motivational framework and teachers' perception of the psychocentric curriculum.

5. Research Methods

The specificity and logic of study generated the application of the following research methods: analysis of theoretical approaches to adults' learning content, theoretical modeling, adults' questioning, interview.

6. Findings

One of the psychological factors that influences and largely determines the concept of curriculum for adults' learning and education is related to the identification/reflection of metacognitive dimension in the curriculum. The rapid changes that are taking place in the labour market, as well as the growing volume of information, require a rethinking of learning in general and the learning and education of adults in particular. In this sense, learning must become more and more a learning for accessing and processing information at a higher level. There come to the first plane the motivational and personality factors about taking personal responsibility for resources and effective means of action in a given context. Learners' performance is closely related to their metacognitive skills. Flavell encapsulates the notion of metacognitive competence in the formula "cognition about cognition" or "learning to learn". Importantly, this approach to metacognition is valid for lifelong learning (Hinzen, 2018; Toma, 2022a; Toma, 2022b).

Metacognition is the ability to represent your own cognitive activity, to evaluate its means and results, to adjust it to different types of problems or situations by deliberately choosing strategies and rules and especially to establish the true or false nature of representations (Delacour, 2001, p. 89).

The process of metacognition involves, on the one hand, the valorisation of metacognitive competence, on the other hand, the training/development of this competence in learners. In our view, metacompetence is a dynamic combination of cognitive/metacognitive knowledge and cognitive/metacognitive abilities, attitudes and values. The concretization of this definition can be presented as follows:

Metacognitive competence represents an integrated system of metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive abilities and attitudes practiced by educators in a specialized way and in different situations and contexts.

Valorisation on the metacognitive approach in the learning process means the adult's awareness of the way he/she learns, of the techniques he/she uses, of the results he/she expects.

In this context, the formal or non-formal curriculum for adults' learning and education can be complemented with the components of metacognitive competence:

i. at the knowledge level (knowledge of learning methods, learning situations/contexts…);

ii. at the application level (planning the learning activity, carrying out different activities, estimating the results, time for learning…);

iii. at the integration level (transferring successful strategies in solving new tasks, changing learning strategies in relation to new skills, in relation to the needs of the labor market and the needs of personal development…) (Guțu et al., 2020; Guțu et al., 2021; Guțu, Blândul, Lungu, et al., 2022; Guțu, Blândul, Țurcanu, et al., 2022).

In order to improve the updating of metacognitive competences, the curriculum should include activities to engage the adult in reflections on learning. Approaching the process of learning and education of adults from the perspective of metacognitive competences, they will be able to improve learning, to produce new knowledge with more opportunities for success, transferability and applicability. Hence the idea of the need for activities specifically aimed at the formation of metacognitive competences, which allow the learner to be aware of the methods applied, to evaluate their effectiveness, to intervene on their regulation in relation to the objectives obtained. At the same time, designers of the curriculum for adults' learning and education, as well as trainers, must start from the fact that there is no clear distinction between metacognition and cognitive activity.

Metacognition is a mental process whose object is either a cognitive activity, or a set of cognitive activities that the subject has performed or is performing, or a mental product of these cognitive activities. Metacognition can lead to a judgment (usually unspoken) on the quality of the mental activities in question or their outcome, and possibly a decision to alter cognitive activity, outcome, or even the situation that caused it (Noël, 1997).

Within the metacognitive process, Noël (1997) distinguishes three stages:

i. The mental process itself, which includes the subject's awareness of the cognitive activities he/she performs or their outcome and which translates into explaining his/her mental processes. This stage is that of awareness;

ii. The judgement, expressed or not by the subject, regarding his/her cognitive activity or the mental result of this activity. In this case, it is a question of metacognitive judgement;

iii. The decision that the subject makes to change or not his/her cognitive activities, their result or any other aspect of the situation depending on the metacognitive judgement. In this case, it is a metacognitive decision.

Metacognition can be limited to the first stage if the subject does not try to evaluate his/her cognitive activities; it can stop at the second stage if the subject is satisfied with the judgment and does not make any decision; and, if all the stages are completed, the regulatory metacognition is reached (Paris & Winograd, 1990).

We support the concept of Paris and Winograd (1990), which include the concept of "metacognition" and the affective component (attitudes), as it is difficult to distinguish between cognitive, metacognitive, and affective competences in learning and education, including the ones of adults.

No less important psychological factor that must be taken into account in the process of designing the curriculum for adults' learning and education, is the factor of manifestation the psychic processes in adults (Table 1).

Table 1. Peculiarities of Psychic Processes in Adults

Perception	Memory	Thinking	Attention	Personality
• In adulthood, the informational content of perception is rich, complex and objective. • All the senses (auditory, visual, gustatory, olfactory) register a decline after a certain point during maturity (after the first period - 45 years), but this is gradual and relatively small. In addition, the loss of sensory capacity can be compensated by causing minor lifestyle changes. • From a sensory point of view, it has been found that different professions improve visual perception and observation. • Changes are dependent on human professional activity, some sensory abilities being perfected or maintained through professionalization.	• The qualities of memory (volume, suppleness, fidelity) are dependent on the structure of life demands, the use of mnemoschemes, memory strategies. • Mechanical memory decreases after 40 years, and short-term memory after 50 years, but ideas are retained even after 60 years, due to their own "semantic anchors". • Fixation and retention have a longer "longevity" compared to recognition and reproduction, which decreases slightly after 55 years. • Professional identity influences and gives a certain meaning to life.	• From a cognitive point of view, it is considered that at this age adults think integratively and that they solve most efficiently the practical problems, having the best performances in this sphere, compared to people in other stages of life. • In terms of intellect, a good performance is maintained up to 55-60 years (verbal comprehension, cognitive mobility, reasoning); technical intelligence and intuition are maintained with good performance up to 60-65 years. • The results indicate that during maturity there is a level of performance approximately equal to that of youth for thinking, memory and verbal fluency, and spatial orientation.	• The adult is characterized by openness to new experiences, promptness, freshness in appreciations (non-conformity, lack of rigidity). • Distributive attention is "efficient" between 25 and 50 years, slightly decreases the ability of long-term attention and visual acuity, requiring glasses. • Adult attention evolves under the influence of social, cultural, extra-professional, informal/non-formal concerns, which create important resources for balance and expression. • Lifelong learning, adult education alleviates existing inequalities in training and	Abraham Maslow enumerated a series of peculiarities on the basis of which we could characterize the adult age, of a personality that is actualizing itself to the maximum and realizing its potential, these being the following: • acceptance of reality; • acceptance of own person and others; • passion for his/her occupation/ profession, goal orientation, activity; autonomy, independence (in thought, action); • social feeling - attentive and benevolent attitude towards other people, ability to help others; • openness to new experiences, freshness in appreciation (non-conformity, lack of rigidity); • spontaneity and authentic/true/ natural/authentic behavior; • ethical certainty - the delimitation

	prolongs the duration of participation in social life by training all functions and cognitive psychic, motivational-affective, volitional phenomena.	of the purposes of means, of the good from evil; • sense of humor; • deep but selective social relations; • creative spirit.

Based on the peculiarities of manifestation the psychic processes in adults, the curriculum designers, and also the trainers, will design the educational aims and the learning process in such a way as to take into account these peculiarities. For example, in relation to the specifics of adults' memory, learning activities will be less focused on information memory, but on the practical application of this information.

One of the dominant factors in adults' learning and education is motivation. Despite the existence of different approaches to this concept, most specialists define "motivation as a whole, a system of heterogeneous and dynamic psychological factors that determine the behaviour and activity of an individual." "Motivation is a complicated mechanism of correlation by the personality of external and internal factors of behaviour, which determines the launch, direction, and methods of achieving concrete forms of activity" (Dzhidar'yan, 1974, p. 148).

Motivation for learning is a generalizing notion that includes the processes, methods, means that determine the productive cognitive activity of the personality. Motivation allows the personality to identify not only the direction, but also the means to achieve the learning activity. Motivation can also be the effect of productive learning activity: the performance of learning act, the satisfaction of being learned, the satisfaction of educational process, the perspectives of more efficient social and professional learning (Posțan, 2021).

With age comes the development of interdependent needs and motives, the change of dominant needs and their hierarchy. Learning motivation is formed based on mobiles that change and interact permanently. Therefore,

... the formation of motivation is not simply the amplification of positive or negative attitude towards learning, but the completion of motivational sphere's structure situated behind this process with the triggers included in the motivational sphere, the appearance of new relationships… (Zimnyaya, 2000, p. 225).

Thus, in the process of approaching the learning motivation it is necessary at least: to establish the dominant trigger (reason); to take into account the motivational structure of the personality as a whole; to classify the "reasons" (concrete causes of the subjects' involvement in the learning activity); to correlate the "reasons" with the blocks of reason and the stages of motivational process, which take into account the age and gender of the trainee, the social and professional experience, etc.

Because the process of forming the motive (motivation) is related to the training of several personality factors, gradually constituted, as the personality develops, in each stage of age certain particularities of the motivation and the structure of the motive are manifested. Il'in (2002) notes that the structural and content changes of the motives according to age are summarized as follows:

i.   As the personality develops, new psychological formations appear, which give complexity to the motivational process, as well as to the structure of motive, enlarging the composition of the motive's constituent factors.

ii.   The previous components of the motive develop: the level of self-evaluation develops, the range of interest's increases, the level of morality increases.

iii. The linear character of psychic formations, triggers of actions is replaced by their hierarchy and systemicity.

iv.   There is a periodic change of dominant needs, values, orientations and other motivators and in connection with this the personality's tendencies change in different periods of age; thus, with age, social and professional motives begin to hold a dominant place in human life.

v.   The degree of motive's structure awareness increases, the own behavior is realized as intrinsically determined and not only as a "reactive" response to triggers of extrinsic origin.

vi.   With age, the number of cases of blocking the triggers of needs (desires) increases, i.e. the "negative" reasons become more frequent.

vii. The number of motivational guidelines related to the social and professional needs of adults is increasing.

In this context, the motivation for adults' learning is a procedural-situational, affective one determined by previous educational experiences and current fears, stimulated by openness, requirements or social-professional needs.
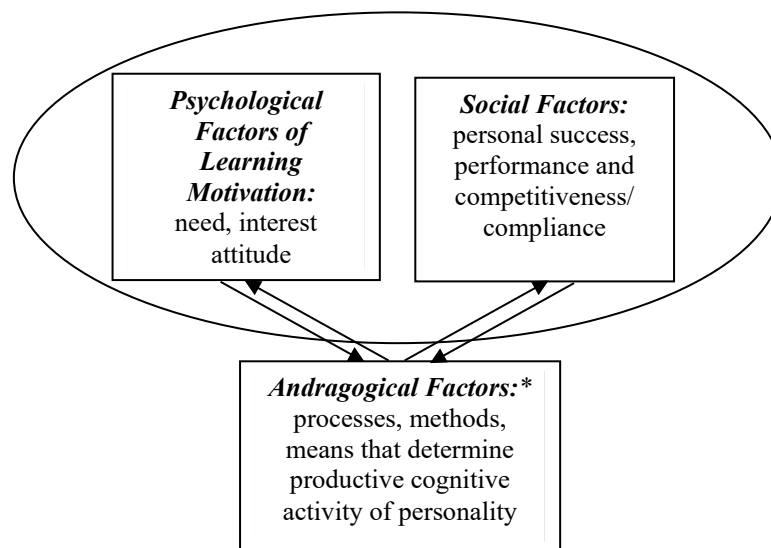

Figure 1. Factors Motivating Adults for Learning

Therefore, the motivation of adults for learning is formed throughout life through the laws of personal development, ontological stages and psychosocial processes of training the reasons of human

activity, including learning activity and the structure of motivation in pedagogical situations includes, at the same time, updated and latent factors (Figure 1.).

In the context of approaching the learning and education of adults from the perspective of motivational factors, curriculum designers must structure an educational curriculum that would valorize on the motivational framework through the constituent components:

i. The conceptual component will include specific theoretical provisions for motivating adults for learning and development.

ii. The component of outcomes (competences) will include the formation of motivational attitudes in adults.

iii. The "contents" component will include topics current for adults.

iv. The procedural component of the curriculum will include strategies for valorizing on motivators: socio-economic, normative-institutional, psycho-pedagogical (Dandara et al., 2018).

6.1. Methodology and Express Study

The aim of study was to investigate the relevance of the taught/procedural curriculum of lifelong professional training of teachers from the psychological perspective.

This study was conducted within a Lifelong Education Center. Questionnaires were applied which included five questions and interviews respectively with respondents - 42 in number. Respondents' anwers were estimated as a percentage. The study's results are generalized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reflections of Teachers on Curriculum Taught from a Psychocentric Perspective in Lifelong Vocational Training (%)

Questions/ Indicators	Appreciation		
	To Small Extent	*To Medium Extent*	*To Large Extent*
To what extent does the lifelong education curriculum:			
1. respond to personal and professional needs	30	60	10
2. correspond to the psychological peculiarities of adults	25	65	10
3. orient towards valorizing on own professional experiences	60	60	10
4. orient to the development of professional competences	20	65	15
5. provide the motivational framework for professional and personal development	60	30	10

The analysis of the obtained results allows us to deduce and formulate the following provisions:

The results on psychocentric dimension reflect a dispersion of the respondents' visions on the same variables.

Although, the averages presented in percentages less reflect these discrepancies. However, it is found that the majority of respondents (60%) indicate that their professional experiences are not taken into account in the training process, and there is no emphasis on valorizing on motivational mobiles.

A positive appreciation of the taught curriculum is related to its orientation towards the training of professional competences and not on sequential knowledge (information).

The results of study allow us to make two important suggestions:

i.   It is necessary to create conditions and create opportunities for curriculum development for adults' learning and education, valorizing on the principle of sociocentrism and the principle of psychocentrism;

ii. It is necessary to train adult curriculum designers as well as trainers on the development and implementation of a contextual curriculum, focused on professional and personal development reasons.

7. Conclusions

The diversity of psychological factors - personality's structure, metacognition, motivational framework - generates the updating of psychocentric principle related to the individual potential of the learner, in this case the adult's.

Adults - a segment of the active economic population, must be continuously trained and informed in order to keep up with rapid changes, education has the function of responding to challenges and changes in the labor market, but also in society in general.

Learning at this age is becoming more and more a phenomenon related to the adult's profession, his/her job, lifelong education, but also/or personal development.

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