

## **THE PARADIGM AND INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD OF TRAINING MANAGEMENT - A MANAGERIAL AND CURRICULAR APPROACH**

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### **Abstract**

Early education, as a dimension of lifelong learning, has undergone an extensive process of curricular reconstruction, with reference to key competencies (premises of competences: knowledge, skills and attitudes manifested in the five areas of development). In order to optimally implement the Curriculum for Early Education, training management in early education aims at applying the general functions of educational management and capitalizing on specific managerial activities by reference to the principles of curriculum design.

The article promotes the opportunity to approach training management, as an interdisciplinary field, in early education from the perspective of two dimensions: curricular and managerial, presenting the theoretical bases and good practices in this field. Being in a functional connection, the two dimensions lead to the facilitation of the learning process and favor the learning opportunities of preschoolers, by increasing the receptivity and the degree of assimilation of

knowledge. It also emphasizes the use of managerial activities in the training process and the construction of training situations through which the premises of competencies are planned and formed, which leads to increasing the quality and efficiency of training.

The theoretical foundations presented will be the basis for developing tools to be tested in future research that will analyze the design-implementation-evaluation of the training process in early education, by building training situations focused on cognitive development of preschoolers.

**Keywords:** early education, training management, integrative-explicit design paradigm, curricular and managerial approach to training, managerial activities, training situation.

## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, we are in a broad process of modernization, restructuring and improvement of the Romanian education as a result of the new expectations from social, economic, scientific, cultural, technological, political, international factors that decisively influence the organization and regulation the instructive-educational process. The entire process of implementing European and national educational policies and strategies in the Romanian education is one of the reasons that determined the elaboration of the early education (ante-preschool and preschool level) curriculum which is based on the development of key competences, in the context that since birth begin the formation and development of these competences, but at this stage, being realized on the different dimensions of development areas. The early education represents the educational area that benefits from a multitude of research and theoretical and practical contributions, as a result of awareness of the need for an integrated approach to preschool

development and reporting to the European dimension of education, all possible only through a management characterized by effectiveness and efficiency.

The Early Education Curriculum focuses on addressing the holistic development of children, achieving an appropriate balance between learning and harmonious personality development, collaborative learning, transferable competences, attitudes and transversal values, useful for personal and social development. Training theories explain how preschoolers acquire knowledge, organize and reconstruct new cognitive hierarchies, how their transformation into skills, abilities and later into competences takes place. In order to highlight this educational phenomenon, approached curricularly, training becomes a fundamental pedagogical concept realized formally and informally, through contents, methodology and specific actions (teaching-learning-assessment), approached contextually through the forms of organization of the training activity, available pedagogical resources and the managerial/didactic/attitudinal styles adopted within the educational process.

However, in order to significantly influence the efficiency of teaching by improving the performance of preschoolers, the training process must also be approached from a managerial point of view, by capitalizing on specific managerial activities (*curriculum design, curriculum decisions, structural and action organization of training, coordination of activities, continuous assessment and operative regulation of the training process*).

## **2. Conceptual perspectives in the training management analysis**

Mary Follet defined management as “the art of doing something with other people”; training, which involves “building cognitive, operational structures” as the core of education, cannot be done by a single person and by a single action; it requires the active involvement and collaboration of several

people in organizing and carrying out the characteristic actions of the training process. The construction of training involves several stages – design, organization and coordination of programs, assessment and regulation – specific to management in general, and in particular, methodologically the entire procedure can be designed as a training management that belongs to educational management.

Educational management is a transdisciplinary subject (paradigms, theories, models, strategies based on the integration of several sciences), defined and characterized by operational and nuanced ways, aimed at efficient and effective use of organizational resources to achieve educational goals, depending on the particularities of the educational reality at which level it operates; it has a dual character – theoretical-conceptual and practical-applicative. Educational management is multidimensional and dynamic, integrating: school organization management, curriculum management, educational projects and programs management, class/group management, human resources management, financial management, time management and quality management in education. From this point of view, we can say that training management is an interdisciplinary, active and interactive field, which is at the intersection of educational management systems and which using the components of these systems leads to achieving the goals of education. By applying the principles and functions specific to educational management in the training process, training management is the connection area between educational management and training theory and methodology.

From the perspective of curriculum management, training management represents its instrumental-operational side at the level of the class/group of pupils/preschoolers, where “the teacher applies all managerial functions and performs specific managerial roles, using premises, conditions given by the

context of the school activity” through the managerial skills he/she has. Thus, training management can evolve as a methodology of education management applied in the educational process, and related to the teacher-child relationship, “training management is based on the optimal use of education actors, especially teachers and pupils/preschoolers in conditions of educational leadership” (Joița, 2010, pg. 3-7, apud Cristea, 2019, pg.66).

Training management aims at designing – implementing – evaluating training in the educational process, in an open context, “by choosing and applying the most effective courses of action achievable by integrating at the level of training strategies of methods, procedures and techniques, means of education, forms of organization and pedagogical styles adopted according to concrete situations, appreciated in relation to the existing or available pedagogical resources and conditions” (adapted from Cristea, 2019, pg. 68).

Based on these considerations we can approach the training management as a paradigm, which can provide “a global and comprehensive explanation of the scientific phenomenon” of training, as well as “a grid of observation and interpretation” of training, from the perspective of developing cognitive abilities of preschoolers. (Iucu, 2001, pg. 51). Also, the training management favours the pragmatic approach of the training, through the training theories, being conceived as an operational field constituted by the situations appeared in the training process and the solutions offered by the paradigms in force; it includes not only theoretical statements, but also a certain methodological basis for constructing learning situations in the construction of knowledge from the perspective of the global approach of the child in early education.

From the perspective of educational reforms, educational management, the constructivist paradigm of curriculum design and management, training management can represent the integrative-explicit paradigm of design –

organization, coordination, assessment and continuous and formative regulation – of elements and resources of the training activity, which includes a set of principles, functions, norms and a specific methodology of action aimed at achieving success in education.

According to Elena Joița, the instructive-educational process represents a management process, at micro-educational level. Thus, training management can represent “theory and practice, science and art of design, organization, coordination, assessment, regulation of the elements of the instructional-educational activity (not only resources), as an activity of free, integral and harmonious development of human individuality, permanently, for the autonomous and creative affirmation of his personality, according to the ideal established at the level of the educational policy” (Joița, 2000, pg. 25). Using the principles of design specific to the curriculum paradigm and applying the general functions of educational management, training management determines, from a pedagogical point of view, “the organizational structure of pedagogical resources, the training planning structure designed curricularly at the level of pedagogical correspondence between objectives – contents – methods – assessment, the structure of training through teaching – learning – assessment actions, developed in an open context” (Cristea, 2019, pg. 95).

### **3. Training management in early education**

In the field of early education, we consider that training management is the adequacy of the principles, functions, strategies and general means of educational management to the characteristics of the institutional system and the training process in early education, in order to effectively achieve several categories of activities at strategic, tactical and operational levels: strategic design, planning and programming, organization, coordination, monitoring,

assessment, meta-assessment and regulation. At the level of the preschool institution and the group of preschoolers, training management consists in applying all general functions of management in order to achieve high performance standards of early education objectives, meeting the needs and necessities of children, materializing in activities, actions, managerial operations specific to curriculum management and group management.

Defining characteristics of training management in early education:

- Complex and conscious activity of design, organization, implementation and coordination, evaluation and managerial regulation of training programs, through individual and group activities, by mobilizing and allocating human, material, temporal and spatial resources in order to achieve objectives in accordance with the purposes of early education;
- Involves a set of principles and functions, norms and specific management methods that ensure the achievement of instructive-educational objectives at the highest possible standards of quality and efficiency;
- Integrated structuring/organization of the contents of the experiential domains and of the development domains in order to form an integrative vision on reality through monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary, pluridisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary activities organized formally/informally/non-formally;
- Application of curricular operations – selection, systematization/organization, sequencing, pedagogical processing – on the curricular contents at micro-educational level in accordance with the cognitive development of preschoolers;

- Construction of training situations and selection of specific training strategies, in order to facilitate a quality education in preschool education;
- Carrying out instructive-educational activities by using, especially, the different forms of training promoted by constructivist pedagogy: child-centred training, active/interactive training, collaborative training, differentiated training, computer-assisted training.

#### **4. Training situation – the cognitive and operational core of training management**

The new curriculum and the new paradigm regarding the approach of early education from the perspective of competences face certain difficulties regarding the implementation in the educational practice. From this perspective, the elaboration of the learning situations in the light of which the premises of the competences are planned and formed is of a stringent topicality as a process and as an achievement. The educational process is the main means by which society educates and instructs the new generations, the responsibility for organizing and leading this process belonging to the school, and teachers being the main pillars.

Training situations represent “the set of relationships established explicitly or implicitly between a preschooler/pupil or a group of preschoolers/pupils, a particular training environment, a teacher and a learning object in order to make knowledge possible for the preschoolers/pupils.” The training situation is considered a key element of the curriculum concept, being the central element in its construction process, thus representing “the pedagogical context configured by the combined and convergent action of the following categories of elements, with the status of structural subsystems: training objectives, contents, learning tasks, training methodology, assessment

methodology, material resources of the training environment and learning space, characteristics of the context of didactic communication and relational context, time resources” (adapted from Bocoş, Chiş, 2013, pg.123-124).

According to I. Cerghit (2001) a training situation is a structure of network relations, which unites four absolutely indispensable component elements: the student, the content, the teacher and the environment. The pupil (P) can be considered the agent of his own learning, always a concrete individual, marked by his history, inserted in a well determined environment and time; Content/knowledge (C) represents the nature of the discipline being studied, the nature and characteristics of the learning tasks, the nature of the requirements expressed in the objectives, the provisions of the analytical program and of the textbook, etc.; The teacher (T), through his intervention, stimulates, gives the initial impulse to the training according to the situational whole, which puts the student in the situation – the best strategic position of learning. The environment is a framework for safety, support, facilitation and motivation for learning. Scientifically, the learning situation conforms as a didactic triangle, which has not only three vertices (P, T, C) but also three sides that are expressed in the relations between them: C-T, P-P, P-T, T-C etc.

The training situation has the general function of inducing and determining the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor activity of preschoolers, aiming to achieve educational objectives, and to generate learning and training experiences, positive, desirable. At the same time, the training situations must provide information regarding the training results, both for the teacher and for the child, offering opportunities to foreshadow the specific processes of training management and the actions necessary to solve the problem-situations.

In pedagogical terminology there are three meanings attributed to the training situation: context for learning; set of conditional factors of education

processes; position in which the person subject to the educational action is placed, i.e., the person “put in a situation” (Ştefan, M., 2003, pg. 43). The context represents the set of relationships between learning agents and the environment in which they occur, being authentic, extracted from reality, and not counterfeit. It influences teaching techniques and teaching aids. The development of the capacity to transfer knowledge in new contexts does not occur by itself by diversifying the contexts, but by the good organization of the training sequence, placed in a significant context.

From a systemic perspective, the structural configuration of the training situations is given by a set of internal and external conditions that guide the cognitive behaviours of the preschooler, in order to achieve the prefigured objectives. According to Muşata Bocoş these internal conditions are: motivation for learning, cognitive structures/schemes (fundamental block of knowledge: declarative, procedural, strategic, conditional knowledge; metacognition, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies), learning style, learning strategies and mechanisms, interests-desires-experiences-skills, willingness to reflect and act individually or in groups, willingness to collaborate and general and specific skills; the external conditions of the training situations are: pursued objectives, capitalized contents, regulatory curricular documents, learning task, combinations of training strategies (methods, means, forms of organization), learning environment and its characteristics, time allotted and spent (Bocoş, Chiş, 2013).

The construction of training situations implies the methodological establishment of the instructive path that must be followed towards knowledge, with emphasis on the extent to which the theory becomes a training strategy, the extent to which knowledge becomes learning. Any training situation must generate learning experiences that will determine knowledge for the preschooler

as a knowledge-learning activity (starting with informative learning, then moving on to analysis, interpretation, action, creation and self-creative learning). From a structural and functional point of view, the construction of a training situation must provide answers to the following questions: who benefits from it?, why?, what does he/she need to know?, how will the training be carried out?, what are the necessary conditions?, how to assess?; from an action point of view, the design and organization of training situations aims at completing the following steps:

1. Establishing the targeted operational/behavioural objectives;
2. Selection of learning and training experiences that contribute to achieving these objectives;
3. Designing and organizing the training approaches: selecting and structuring the contents, specifying the work task, establishing the type of strategy, choosing and combining the teaching methods, choosing the means of learning, establishing the form of organizing the activity of preschoolers/pupils, describing the learning approaches of pupils;
4. Finding the generated learning experiences and evaluating the efficiency/relevance of the training situation, by following the acquisitions and the cognitive and non-cognitive progress registered (according to Bocoş, Chiş, 2013).

In designing a training situation, customized for preschool education, we can go through the following steps:

1. Choosing/formulating the dimensions of development/competences specific to the targeted experiential fields;
2. Formulation of the behaviours/operational objectives of the training situation;
3. Content selection and structuring;

4. Choosing the training strategy (type of learning experience, methods, teaching aids, form of organization) and time resources;
5. The context of communication and the relational context;
6. Learning environment;
7. Product evaluation.

## **5. Conclusions**

Training management represents the integrative-explicit paradigm of designing the elements and resources of the training activity – organization, coordination, continuous and formative assessment/regulation – which includes a set of principles, functions, norms and a specific methodology of action aimed at achieving success in education. The managerial activities applied to the training programs, through the training strategies used, orient the whole process towards achieving well-established goals, but the educational reality requires the adoption of training strategies complementary to the classic ones to capitalize on the benefits of virtual environments and computer-assisted training on cognitive development of preschoolers, also ensuring the optimization of their performance.

In early education, training management relies on the effectiveness of the use of training strategies and their exploitation for the benefit of optimizing the instructional-educational process, which are largely dependent on the skills and experience of teachers. We can, thus, highlight a series of good practices regarding the management process of training in early education, in order to develop the cognitive abilities of preschoolers:

- the pedagogical design activity must capitalize on the actions and operations of anticipatory definition of the objectives, contents, learning

strategies, assessment tests and especially of the relations between them in the conditions of a way of organizing the training process;

- the integrated approach of curricular contents starting from the dimensions of development and behavioural indicators, which represent the premises for the formation of late key competences;

- building training situations that generate learning experiences through three types of activities that are fundamental in kindergarten: exploration, experimentation and play. Through these three types of activities, children accumulate experiences that are significant for their development and satisfy their age-specific needs;

- the use of constructivist strategies in order to develop cognitive skills, without minimizing the importance of using traditional, classical or active-participatory teaching methods: learning through deductive discovery; collaborative learning; multimedia learning through the use of modern educational technology or e-learning: computer-assisted training, educational software, interactive games, learning platforms; stimulating the intrinsic learning motivation for preschoolers (process orientation and involvement of active participation), the feeling that they have managed to carry out an action alone can motivate them to carry out others and, implicitly, to learn new things;

- the assessment must aim at identifying the progress made by the preschooler taking as a starting point the results of the initial assessment (individualized assessment).

Training management, through specific design-implementation-assessment activities, through the use of constructivist training strategies, capitalizing on computerized technologies in the instructive-educational activity, reconsiders its dimensions regarding the conceptualization of training in early education, application methods targeting both managerial activities and also

strategies aimed at developing cognitive abilities and improving preschoolers' outcomes; the diversification of the methods and procedures used, their adequacy to concrete conditions positively influences the cognitive acquisitions, but also the conduct and attitude towards learning of preschoolers.

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