15th Edition of the International Conference on Sciences of Education,
Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education, ICSED 2017,
9-10 June 2017, Suceava (Romania)

Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education

Early Education – Current Content Relevant to the Training of Trainers

Liliana STAN

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.icsed2017.39>

How to cite: Stan, L. (2017). Early Education – Current Content Relevant to the Training of Trainers. In O. Clipa (ed.), *Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education* (pp. 362-369). Suceava, Romania: LUMEN Proceedings.
<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.icsed2017.39>

© The Authors, LUMEN Conference Center & LUMEN Proceedings.

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

Early Education – Current Content Relevant to the Training of Trainers

Liliana STAN¹

Abstract

Early education has been world widely accepted as a strategic formative intervention for the last decades. Development of the required multidimensional action complex is founded on a determinative framework which is most frequently centred on people needs (subtly emphasised by humanities) and observation of the rights of each and every person (displayed mostly within international legal framework). Early education requires a whole range of interrogations and corresponding solutions which need a cognitive thorough study by several professional categories. This study explains acceptations of the syntagm early education and synthesises arguments – which for the generated themes in connection to it, would claim assignment of a substantial study area within the university curriculum (Bachelor's degrees, Master's degree, PhD Programmes and lifelong learning) of the faculties of educational sciences (and their concerned specialisations) in Romania. Arguments pro curricular enrichment that we keep on evoking comprises two relevant aspects: reconsideration of the early education by some international bodies and world states and application of some measures for significantly qualitative assertion and development of early education in Romania of the last decades.

Keywords: early education, elementary education, education for all, university curriculum.

1. Curricular Offer in Higher Education

Unlike other levels of the educational system, university possesses its own levers to update curricular offer, obviously in concordance/ correlation with the national framework having been accepted and structurally applicable on different instances at a certain moment. Curricular renewal represents an emerging necessity of the evolutions of lives on multiple plans having been equally reflected by the direction of knowledge and its application. To put it otherwise, academic programmes should provide their beneficiaries with direct cognitive relevance and concomitant professional training of quality, both being determined by the rhythm of knowledge

¹ PhD Prof at the “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iasi, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Iasi, Romania, lstan@psih.uaic.ro

development, on the one hand, and market requirements, on the other hand. In the case of the field *Educational Sciences*, specialisations *Pedagogy* and *Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education*, at least, update of the curricular offer requires careful watch for changes within educational level on national and international horizon, as well as initiation/sustain of a careful process of reflection, and eventually of managerial decision. In this study we emphasize some dimensions of the issue on early education to argument its possibly being considered one of the most consistent and pressing sources of structuring to the content of the training of the specialists to be in the mentioned field. More precisely, we appreciate that there are enough reliable premises that issues on current academic subject of Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, which is attended by students in the aforementioned specialisations, should be restructured in several components: *Early Education*, *Pedagogy of Primary Education*, *Pedagogy of Games* as compulsory disciplines, but also as *Activities for cognitive, sensory-motor and socio-affective development and activities for development of leaning skills to children from 0 to 3 years old*, *Hygiene*, *Parenting*, *Child's Rights*, *Services for child protection*, etc., as optional or at least elective disciplines. Also we promote the idea of required and possible establishment of a new specialisation directly related to early education.

2. Early Education /EE – A Concept of Present Interest

Everywhere in the world, more and more analysts show a significant interest in child education in his early age (ante-preschool and preschool years), a stage preceding child's entering primary education. Although the interval shown here generates a multitude of interrogations (psychic characteristics of children, features of formal, non-formal and informal curriculum for young children, identity notes of existential contexts optimal to achievement of formative influences of maximally productive contents through which short-term and long-term beneficial effects could be exercised, categories of dysfunctional situations that young child and his family cope with in postmodern era, etc.), one of the most pregnant issues having been recurrently invoked by people involved in debate aim at training of agents engaged in modelling of child's personality – parents and explicitly specialised staff (within specific institutions) to relate to younger children. Against the background of affirmation of new philosophies and policies on early education, (particularly) after the 2000s, ante-schooling next to pre-schooling have attracted solid investigative efforts from the part of the pedagogue, psychologist, paediatricians, social works, etc.

Concept of early education – ET (early education in English). Last decades, the syntagm *early education* is aimed at multidimensional and multifactorial action of person modelling between birth and the moment of school enrolment, the latter meaning, according to the country, ages of 6, 7 or 8. The concept has been widely imposed itself only after 1990 when the World Conference of Jamtien (Thailand) was held, an event which brought about the idea and the formula of *education for all – EPT (in English EFA)* as well as the message of *lifelong learning – EPIV (in English, LL)*. If the idea of early education is traditionally associated to preschool education (respectively to education within/ through kindergarten), after the moment of Jomtien, it aimed at younger children of 3 year old who are to be found in families, nurseries, day care centres or other forms /modes of surveillance, support, assistance. As an interval of learning whose effects are essential to the entire subsequent life of individuals, early education should be seen as comprehensive existential context having been established on a family level and extra-family context (which integrates specialised institutions such as nurseries, kindergartens, either public or private), implicitly communities, but also people and their actions, attitudes and values that human agents are practicing, material, organisational, managerial, etc. resources having been activated to support formation of children personality (Stan, 2014, p. 31). Philosophy of early education transmits the basic idea that early stages of life of individuals should be put into relationship with learning activity in a larger and more persistent way that it used to be up to the half of the 20th century. It is only through early learning (which means training, education) together with health maintenance, food provision, caring, surveillance, varied simulation, etc., that authentic multidimensional development, and respectively physical, psychic, social /socio-moral /civic, as well as emotional development are being advantaged. Whenever growth and development are being produced at certain parameters or standards, they turn into educative /educational contents through their content itself; the *IETC* programmes (*Early Childhood Education and Care – ECEC*) explicitly catch interdependence between these categories of intervention. Effects of early education are taken over and continued through elementary education, respectively through elementary educational system.

3. Early Education – An International Issues

As for the topic on early education, within actions of some international organisations, several extremely solid debates and considerations have been outlined; the UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, OECD and others have launched

the idea of early education, but they have also promoted and favoured concerns and measures to apply them. Concomitantly with the structuring of the content of the generic syntagm of early education some consubstantial idea-related aggregates have been asserted and we are attempting to emphasise them hereinafter, while still mentioning some contexts where they have imposed /affirm themselves (Stan, 2016).

- *Idea of respecting children and respect for child's rights.* Convention on the Rights of Child (New York, SUA, 1989) represents a document which has been essentially announced by the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (of 1924, Geneva, Switzerland). Meanwhile a multitude of international far-reaching initiative and actions intended to disseminate idea content we are aiming at. For example, in 2002 (between 8 and 10 May), the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children was held and 7000 people, including children attended it, and it was appreciated to be one of the most important international reunion on children in recent years. The document adopted – *A World Fit for Children*(2003) – constitutes a commitment of the international community to the idea of concerted action to solve important global issues and build a world fit for children. We also mention here within the same framework the *Global Movement for Children*, a generous context to put /re-put ten priority imperatives into the attention of governments, public opinion, government and non-governmental organizations: elimination of social exclusion and any discrimination of children, observance of children's rights, provide for the best possible start in life for children (boys and girls), fight against HIV /AIDS, freedom of speech for children and young people, right of children and young people to participate in decision-making process in relation to them, protect children against wars, protection of the earth and fight against poverty while investing in children (***,*Curriculum for Early Education for Children between Birth and 6/7 Years of Age*, 2008, p. 3).
- *Idea of Education for All – EPT (in English – EFA).*Statement of the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990).
- *Idea of Inclusive Education* – Salamanca Statement (Spain, 1994).
- *Idea of the multidimensional study, the research of practices of early education, implicitly the expression of required extension of valuable experiences.* Starting with 1996 and up to 2000, as far as this direction is concerned, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)

has initiated, in 20 countries, a development programme of strategies for children between birth and moment of their compulsory enrolment. Monitoring Reports Starting Strong I of 201 and Starting Strong II of 2006 has been largely spread and debated in numerous parts of the world.

- *Idea of early development or total development of each and any child (reflected by corresponding concept).* In the world support is being given to programmes aiming at *Early Development of Child – DTC* centred on the goal of helping psychic, emotional and social development of children and, on a longer term, on survival of the child. (*Strategy on Early Education*, p. 1). It is also to be noticed deployment of actions for *Early Childhood Care for Development- ECCD*, respectively structuring of actions for *Early Childhood Education and Care – ECEC* (Vrasmas, 2014).
- *Configuration of the finalist complex known as The Millennium Development Goals – MDG, targets to be met by 2015. The 2005 New York Summit.*

4. Early Education – From Idea to Practice in Romania

On the level of Romania, concerns on education have been clearly shown after 1990 on multiple plans: legal, social, supportive, pedagogical. Some aspects relevant to the interest in the issues we are confined to are to be reflected by the following inventory:

- *Structuring of the national legal framework on children, on respect of them and respect for the rights of the children.*
- Ratification by Romania has been done on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Law no. 18/1990), as well as endorsement of the unique law of children on protection and promotion of the rights of the child/ Child Act (Law no. 272/2004). The two documents stipulates that the rights of the child are part of the category of the human rights and that these provisions are extended to all children and not only to those in special, difficult or risk situations.
- By the Emergency Ordinance of the Romanian Government, in 2001, the National Authority for Protection of Child's Rights and Adoption – ANPCA with a view to provide for unitary administrative framework to promote, observe and guarantee the rights of the child. It was renamed (as for 1 January 2005), the National Authority for Protection of Child's Rights – ANPDC, and the duties of adoption have been taken over by the Romanian Office for Adoptions – ORA. Starting with 26 November

2009, ANPDC was dissolved. The National Authority for Family Protection and Protection of Child's Rights – ANFDC has taken over duties of the preceding institution.

- In 1997, the Law on Maternity/Paternity Leave for child rearing.
- It has been structured the legal framework for functioning of nurseries by a succession of legal acts: Law no. 236/2007, HG no. 1252/2012, Law no. 90/2014.
 - *Initiation of an acting complex* explicitly aiming at the child, respectively at his support, assistance and protection and promotion of the rights of the child.
- The first government strategy on the rights of the child (for the period 1997-2000) has been established and it marked the beginning of the reform of the child protection system in Romania.
 - *Structuring of an assembly of initiatives for affirmation of early education.*
- Ministry of Education and Youth with the support of the UNICEF in Romania has drafted in 2005 the *Strategy on Early Education*, a far reaching intervention designed p to 2015. Part of the *Convergent Strategy on Early development of Children*, this document clearly emphasise the idea of necessity to train professionals for early education. The nurseries system in Romania, this documents underlines, provides for certain forms of medical care “without any competence of early education” (*Strategy on Early Education*, 2005, p. 5). Training of competent staff to professionally manage the educational support, the psycho-pedagogical assistance required by children up to their enrolment to nursery *is not currently achieved by any component of the Romanian professionalization system*. “there no (initial or lifelong) training of the teaching staff in the field of early education, respectively for those who work with children with ages between 0 and 3 years” (*Strategy on Early Education*, 2005, p. 10).
- In the time period 2007 – 2011, the aforementioned strategy generated two representative projects: *Project for the Reform on Early Education (PRET)* and *Project of Inclusive Early Education (PETI)*.
- Based on the component of preschool education, several programmes have been developed to support affirmation of early education. The MECT Letter on the Method (2004), *Academic Year 2004-2005, the Year of Communication in the Romanian Preschool Education System* (addressed to the teaching staff within nurseries), would mention some of the initiatives of that moment:
 - The programme “Foundation of the Educational Offer

based on the Pupils' Needs for Personal Development from the perspective of Sustainable Development and Economic and Social Cohesion" • The programme „Quality Assurance in Teaching and Learning as well as in Educational Services” (*This is how We Teach, Resources Centres for Parents – Potential, Needs and Perspectives*); • The programme “Education through Extra-school and Extracurricular Activities (*Eco Kindergarten*). Also, in 2001, Romania adopted the *National Programme of Parental Education in Preschool Education System* (http://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/media_10530.html).

- On the same segment of the preschool education system, after 1990, an immense effort has been made to review the curriculum /syllabus for preschool education (Stan, 2014, pp. 38-42). After the 1991, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2005 versions, the *Curriculum for Preschool Education* (3, 6/ 7 years – cf. O.M. 5233 of 1 September 2008) was published in 2008 and concomitantly with the *Curriculum for Early Education of Children with Ages between Birth and 6/ 7 Years*.
- After 1990, in Romania the alternative preschool education has been organised. Groups of Waldorf kindergarten have been founded since 1990, a group of Montessori pre-schoolers was established in Bucharest, in 1991, Step by Step groups and other educational alternatives to the Jena Plan have been founded since 1994.
- After 1990 efforts have been made to organise private preschool education.
- Scientific and other types of events took place to promote the idea of early education. For instance, the Annual Conference of the Step by Step Association on Early Education was held Bucharest, in 2009 (14-17 October).
- Another remarkable fact having been configured since 2011 is given by the introduction of an assembly of measures for the training of the specialised educator –paediatric educator– on the level of the secondary school. In pedagogic secondary schools, the psycho pedagogical subjects provided to pupils who attend specialisations of educator – paediatric educator are the following: *grade 9* – Introduction to pedagogy. Early education - 2 hours, General psychology – 1 hour and Specialised traineeship – 3 hours; *grade 10* – Curriculum for early education – 2 hours, Specialised traineeship – 3 hours and Psychology of the child and relationship mother – child – 1 hour; *grade 11* – Education of children with special needs – 1 hour, Psychology of education. Activities for cognitive, sensory-motor, socio-affective development and development

of learning skills to children from 0 to 3 years of age, Specialised traineeship – 4 hours; *grade 12* – Differentiated education – 1 hour, Game and learning – 2 hours, Management of children group and relationships with families – 1 hour, Rights of children. Child protection services – 1 hour, Specialised trainee ship – 4 hours.

5. Conclusions

Having been recognised on international and national levels, both by theoretical and practical approaches, the issue of early education also requires being reflected by the curricular offer of institutions which provide for professionalization of teachers to be, both for initial and lifelong training. A graduate of higher education in the field of educational sciences would have more chances to get employed if he can prove acquisition of the thematic area we are referentially dealing with, while the teacher working with younger children could complete his psycho pedagogical culture through an extremely challenging and actual idea-related component

References

- ***, Curriculum pentru educația timpurie a copiilor cu vârsta cuprinsă între naștere și 6/7 ani (2008). Ministerul Educației, Cercetării și Tineretului.
- ***, Curriculum pentru educația timpurie a copiilor cu vârsta cuprinsă între naștere și 6/7 ani (2008). Ministerul Educației, Cercetării și Tineretului.
- ***, Curriculum pentru învățământul preșcolar (3-6/7 ani). (2008). Ministerul Educației, Cercetării și Tineretului.
- O lume demnă pentru copii. (2003). Documente asumate la Sesiunea Specială dedicată copiilor, ONU, UNICEF. Editura MarLink: București.
- Stan, L. (2014). Pedagogia preșcolarității și școlarității mici. Editura Polirom: Iași.
- Stan, L. (coord.). (2016) Educația timpurie. Probleme și soluții. Editura Polirom: Iași.
- ***, Strategie privind educația timpurie (2005). Accesat pe 15 mai 2015, la adresa http://str.calificativ.ro/news/preview/strategie_privind_educatia_timpurie-5582.pdf.