

Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași

**Perspective istorice și culturale în
analiza educației din spațiul românesc și
european**

Teză de abilitare

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Abstract

A cursory and quick glance on my professional concerns stemming from teaching, research and publications, reflects an ongoing interest in two basic thematic threads: one targeting historical research in education and pedagogical thought in Romanian and international contexts and second, to place education within a diverse axiomatic framework, resulting from connection to political ideologies and cultural influences which sometimes even pervert the educational discourse and the education policy. Both concerns are rooted in my personal history and, perhaps, the history of a generation of experts in education sciences with which I identify, reflecting ideational tensions and epistemological dilemmas in the Romanian pedagogical and educational discourse in the 1990s, with the background of political and cultural changes that led to redefining higher education.

Unjustly abandoned lately by pedagogues and associated only or mainly with historians, the historical method has an important tradition in education research in the Romanian academic community, particularly at the University of Iași. By contrast, the international community of our field firmly established research structures approaching education history. Perhaps the most relevant example from Europe is the European Association for Educational Research, which assumes histories of education as an independent academic path, and fosters regional historical studies and research programs, in order to highlight the history of education in less known cultural spaces and topics of great interest, as adult education and education of ethnic minorities. Connecting to the European community of specialists in the field of education history is still an aim to be fulfilled.

The habilitation thesis is designed with the aim of pleading for historical research and cultural approaches in education, and turns into account thematic structures already profiled in my previous research and publications.

Concerned with the recovery of traditions in education research and the historical dimension of knowledge in general, I completed several historical studies aimed at education, school system and pedagogy in the Romanian and European cultural context. An important part of this work highlights topics of historical research in education and pedagogical discourse, such as the analysis of major historical stages in national and local higher education environments and institutions, and several themes of interests for contemporary pedagogy from a historical perspective. The choice for historical research in education emerged out of a need for professional redefinition, and for honest assessment of the state in education research and pedagogical discourse in the 1990s and early 2000s, as the field was quite isolated in

comparison with the European and international academic community. My research and publications have shown a constant interest in the scientific pedagogy in different historical and cultural contexts. I analysed the difficulties faced by pedagogy, as a research field and academic subject in historical periods included in this time frame, as well as the changes in epistemological status as a result of political interference in the sphere of academic life, and the attempts to preserve research traditions and openness to new directions and trends, connected with the evolution of education and research worldwide. Thanks to these efforts, pedagogy came in the 1990s in a process of "reconstruction", of rethinking the discourse, of recovering forgotten traditions and of diversifying research directions. My research aimed to uncover the development of education sciences in the academic community of Iași; the corresponding case study focused on the period between 1945-1955, and was based on University archives analysis, as well as documents preserved in the Rector's Office and Personnel Office, the University Yearbook, legal documents and pedagogical works published in that time. The most important conclusion of this analysis is that, despite the strong political constraints, expressed more or less explicitly and depending on the specific social and political context, in the period 1948-1989 the academic field of pedagogy in Iași has made efforts to overcome the ideological condition, and to develop research in areas that have entered into academic tradition (history of pedagogy and education; education theory and pedagogy of values, general and applied didactics), but also to engage in new areas of research utmost importance to education in the global context (the issue of "new education", higher education, pedagogical problems of children with special educational needs, etc.). The historical approach to adult education in the context of Romanian culture from the XV-XVII centuries and the political changes in Romania after the Second World War, aimed to identify and recover some ideational premises and cultural practices relevant to the current state and future developments of the scientific research, education policy and practice in this field.

Another important theme in this thesis complements the historical analysis, and places education within the European and universal framework of values, in the area of cultural and political ideologies. The historical analysis of a theme becomes truly relevant only insofar as historical facts are accompanied by interpretations and acquire meanings that are built and reconstructed against the diverse cultural and ideological backgrounds. Issues covered in this part of the thesis illustrate the ideological pluralism in contemporary pedagogical discourse and education: nationalism and Europeanism, education and democracy, constructivism as an ideology of democratic knowledge.

The project of career development aims both plans of academic activities: teaching and research in their complementarity, and it is conceived as an enriched continuation of research projects outlined in the thesis. A first thematic direction targets current issues in education approached by the historical method: family life education, education and ideology of change in the history of pedagogy and education. This last theme constitutes an editorial project addressed especially to students, proposing a systematic analysis of pedagogical thinking and education in the historical perspective. Another direction of interest for further professional development is social pedagogy, as a research topic and as a field of academic professionalization.