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(EDITORS)

**RESEARCH TERMINALS
IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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I. COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM

EMPATHY AND ACTIVE LISTENING IN THE HUMANISTIC SOCIAL WORK

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the role of empathy and active listening in social work, focusing mainly on the humanistic theoretical models, according to which active listening is a form of operationalization of empathy. Empathy is the human specific ability to psychologically transpose the self into the psychology of the other, through a phenomenon of resonance and emotional communication. Listening plays an important role in this process and generally in communication between people. Especially the active listening maintains the communication relations and contributes to mitigating conflicts in different social contexts. Moreover, empathy makes us more understanding, because placing ourselves in the position of the interlocutor limits our tendency to judge his behaviour without nuance.

Active listening means that the receiver of communication actively assumes this role, by expressly following the understanding of the transmitted message, manifestly showing his mindfulness, and immediately and explicitly offering the according feedback. In activities where communication and comprehension are essential, as is the case with social work, active listening is the most desirable form of response in the interaction between interlocutors. Besides outlining these aspects regarding empathy and active listening, especially from a humanistic perspective, in the paper the features and the main techniques of active listening used in social work are also delineated, explained and exemplified.

Keywords: empathy, active listening, humanistic social work, techniques of active listening in social work

Introduction

Empathy and active listening are fundamental concepts in many models of social work. They play a central role, especially in the practical models inspired by the humanist current, and particularly in client-oriented approaches.

Empathy is the human specific ability to psychologically transpose the self into the psychology of the other, that is, the imaginative entering of one individual in the thinking, experiencing, acting of another, through a “phenomenon of resonance, of affective communication” (Marcus 1997, 11). In interacting with others, empathy makes us more understanding, because placing ourselves in the position of the interlocutor limits our tendency to judge his or her behaviour without nuance and urges us to grant mitigating circumstances even to the facts and attitudes that shock us at first sight (Dinu 2004, 44).

In the humanistic theoretical and practical models, empathy finds its operationalization through active listening. This is a type of listening that involves a form of activism on the part of the receiver, which means an express pursuance of the full decoding of the received message, as well as giving an eloquent feedback in this regard. Active listening contributes to maintaining the communication relations and to mitigating conflicts in different social contexts.

The present paper addresses the role of empathy and active listening in social work, focusing mainly on the humanistic theoretical models, especially on the person-centered approach as developed by Carl R. Rogers (1951). After highlighting the place of listening in communication, as well as its forms and functions, the term of active listening is outlined, including the verbal and non-verbal messages that signalise or emphasize that somebody actively listens. Further, the client-centered or client-oriented approach is addressed, the main views of this perspective being highlighted, and the techniques of active listening used in the humanistic social work being delineated, explained and exemplified.

Listening – functions and phases

In communication, listening plays a fundamental role. According to M. Dinu (2000, 33), in a sequence of communication, more than half is listening. More precisely, 53% of the total communication sequence is listening, while only 16% is speech, 17% is read and 14% is written. Listening fulfils several

functions in communication (Watson and Hill 1993, 104): a) control of understanding; b) encouraging communication – any receiver must have feedback in the communication; at the transmitter’s level the reaction of the receiver is as important as the message transmitted; c) ensuring the correct feedback.

But not all the receptive behaviours that refer to or involve listening are similar. Such behaviours can be ranged on a continuum from simple hearing to active listening. The latter presumes that the receiver is active, he or she expressly following the full decoding of the received message and providing an eloquent feedback in that respect.

There are three distinct types of receptive behaviours that are similar and refer to or involve listening: a) “non-listening” – refers to a situation in which someone assumes the receiver status without actually listening; b) “listening”; c) “meditation” (or thinking) (Ștefănescu 2009, 57). Listening has its own internal gradations, being in fact a continuum that varies from non-listening to the level of thinking – in which case reflexivity also appears (Marinescu 2003, 39). Therefore, listening pursues the following phases:

- a) *hearing* – the automatic act of receiving and transmitting to the brain of the sound waves generated by the emitter’s speech; expresses the physiological impact that sound waves produce;
- b) *understanding* – the act of identifying the communicated informative content, recomposing the sounds heard into words, and words in sentences and phrases;
- c) *translation into meanings* – involves the memory, and linguistic, cultural, and speaking experience of the listener;
- d) *assignment of meanings to the information received* – it is performed according to the level of operationalization of the language, vocabulary, linguistic performances;
- e) *evaluation* – making value judgments or adopting value attitudes by the listener.

Active listening

Active listening is the form of listening that, in communication, provides the most significant gratification to the speaker. Moreover, it contributes to keeping the communication relations, informs about the expectations of other individuals, and can mitigate and stop many of the social conflicts. But although active listening is the most fulfilling form of

listening, it is not present in all communication contexts. In fact, in many social situations active listening is absent.

This type of listening means that the subject actively take part in the process of listening, being fully concentrated on what is being said, not just passively hearing the message of the speaker. In active listening not only the listener gives full attention to the speaker, but also he or she must be seen to be listening. The interest can be conveyed to the speaker by using both verbal and non-verbal messages or signs.

Among the most prevalent verbal messages or signs of active listening the following are included:

Positive reinforcement, by using words or phrases such as “indeed”, “very good”, “yes” etc. The best positive reinforcement is when the listener elaborates or explains why he/she is agreeing with a certain point transmitted by the speaker.

Asking questions, which means asking relevant questions or/and making statements that build or help to clarify what the speaker has said. By asking questions the listener reinforces that he/she is interested in what the speaker has been saying.

Remembering key points, names, details, ideas and concepts from previous conversations helps also to reinforce that the attention of the listener has been kept and that the messages sent by the speaker have been received and understood.

Reflection, by repeating and paraphrasing what the speaker has said, is a powerful skill that demonstrates attention and understanding and shows the comprehension of the listener.

Clarification, by using open questions which enable the speaker to explain or expand on certain points, shows that the listener ensures that he/she received the correct message or meaning.

Summarisation, by repeating, usually with own words of the listener, a summary of what has been said, back to the speaker. Such a feedback, through the reiteration of the message in a summarized, clear and logical way, not only demonstrates attention and understanding, but also gives the speaker the chance to correct some points of his/her message, whenever necessary.

There are also non-verbal messages or signs of active listening, which involve:

Eye contact, which can show the speaker that the listener pay attention; anyway, too much eye contact can be intimidating, especially for

more shy speakers, that is why the eye contact should not be too long and should be combined with other non-verbal signs of listening.

Smile can be also used to show that the listener is paying attention; combined with nods of the head, smiles can be used as signs that the message is listened and understood.

Posture is another important way to communicate feedback in interpersonal interactions. An attentive posture may include that the body is leaned slightly forwards or sideways while sitting, or the head is a bit tilted or is resting on one hand.

Mirroring or automatic reflection of facial expressions is also a sign of attentive listening, helping to show empathy or sympathy in more emotional situations.

Showing no signs of distraction: while active listening, someone manifests no tokens of distraction such as fidgeting, looking at the clock or the watch, doodling, playing with the hair or picking the fingernails.

The above-mentioned non-verbal signs are more likely to be displayed by those who actively listen. However, some signs may not be appropriate in all situations and across all cultures (SkillsYouNeed 2019).

Active listening has a number of qualities which include (Şoitu 2001, 160-163):

- a) Informs about a particular person and about the expectations of other individuals in relation to that person. The type of “Self” closed or open depends on the ability to listen actively.
- b) Contributes to the upkeep of the communication relations that are established with important persons from the point of view of the individual involved in the communication.
- c) Can mitigate or even stop social conflicts, because nine out of ten conflicts are or can be solved through communication.

Active and empathic listening in the humanistic models of social work

The philosophical current of *humanism* has exerted an important influence on the theoretical developments in sociology, psychology, and also in social work. The theories and models of practice in social work based on humanist views focus on the idea that human beings are trying to make sense of the surrounding environment and to understand the world they are experiencing. Humanist models take into consideration the fact that people’s

self-interpretations, as well as the interpretations they give to the social world, are valid and valuable. Therefore, social workers should help people acquire skills to analyse themselves and to explore the personal significations they give to the perceived world, and which affect them (Payne 2011, 208).

The client-centered or client-oriented approach is an important humanistic direction of operation in social work, initially used in counselling, but also in working with families and small groups. This approach is based on the idea that each client should be treated as a unique individual (Rogers, 1951), and social work should focus on the persons and their subjective experience (Wilkes, 1981; Goldstein, 1984; England, 1986).

Client-centered therapy implies *a way of being with persons* that promotes curative change and development. The central hypothesis of this approach is that the person has extensive resources in himself/ herself for understanding himself/ herself and constructively changing his/her behaviour and way of life (Rogers 1991, 187).

In this perspective, the social worker's approach should be non-directive, tolerant, involving "active listening", "pure empathy" and "genuine friendship" (Rodat 2016, 146). Humanistic therapy in social work should be based on discussions (Howe 2001, 76), because people, wherever they are, are looking for other people to listen to their problems, and to share their problems. But beyond listening, human beings must also feel warmth, love, understanding and empathy. In this vision, there is nothing intellectual or complicated in helping others; the basis is, in fact, simple: help is done out of love and goodwill.

In client-centered humanistic social work, social workers must therefore demonstrate:

- 1) honesty and authenticity;
- 2) warmth, respect and acceptance;
- 3) empathic understanding by the therapist;
- 4) unconditional positive regard of the therapist.

Empirical data confirm that these are the essential elements in an effective therapeutic relationship.

The key concept in Rogers' approach is "empathic understanding" (Katsivelaris 2012, 7). In order that his/her "inner framework" to be perceived "as precisely as possible" by professional helpers, the client should be nudged, with the aim of good "guidance", to talk about himself/ herself. To be empathic means to perceive the inner frame of reference of the

other as precisely as possible. The inner framework is the subjective world of the individual (Rogers 1987, 37).

Empathy as a technique of “guidance” also includes, by adopting a professional role, “to enter the private world of perception of the other and to become completely at home in it” (Katsivelaris 2012, 7). Empathy means “temporarily living the person’s life; moving cautiously in it without making hasty judgments” (Rogers 1980, 79). It includes that one communicates about one’s/his/her own feelings concerning the world of that person, because one looks with fresh and fearless eyes at things, that the other fears/ is afraid of. To deal with another person in this way means to leave one’s own views and values aside in order to enter the world of the other without prejudice (ibid.).

Empathy is the specifically human ability to psychologically transfer the ego into the psychology of the other, i.e. the imaginative entrance of one individual into the thinking, experiencing and acting of another individual, through a phenomenon of resonance and emotional communication (Marcus 1997). By placing ourselves in the inner world of another, or “getting under another person’s skin”, that is, being more empathetic, we become also more insightful and more kind, because this positioning limits our tendency to judge undifferentiated the attitudes and behaviours of others and induce us to mitigate the facts and points of view that shock us at first glance (Dinu 2004).

In Carl R. Rogers’ view, empathy finds a concrete and observable operationalization in the form of active listening, as a technique of interviewing. The goal of person-centered or client-centered therapy, the goal of its techniques of conversation, especially through active listening, as operationalization of empathy, is thus the optimization of the person – his/her best possible “guidance” – through empathy. Using the concept of empathy as understood by Rogers means, therefore, for social work, that the purpose of professional guidance through empathy is represented by certain changes in behaviour, in exchange for participation (Scherr 2004, 96).

Active listening should be carried out in social work with the greatest possible degree of neutrality and value-freedom and at the same time it should be appreciative towards the client, so that to keep open all understanding ways of the overall message. Otherwise, the social workers run the risk of not being able to perceive and gather everything that is relevant to the person involved, as a result of the individual filter that comes into play. This often leads to the fact that the person concerned – justifiably – does not feel sufficiently “understood” or heard.

Following Rogers' general ideas, other more recent authors (Wilkes, 1981; Goldstein, 1984; England, 1986) have developed client-centered approaches. The works of these authors have in common the orientation towards the person and the subjective experience. They use terms such as: person-centered, empathy, intuition, love, respect, sharing feelings. According to these authors, the only effective way to learn is experiential. In the spirit of this school of thought and practice, a good social worker is a creative person, and social work is an art (Howe 2001, 82). Therapy, counselling or any other form of social work can be reduced, in this perspective, to discussions (ibid., 76). People, wherever they are, are looking for other people to listen to their troubles, to share their problems. But beyond listening, they must also feel warmth, love, understanding, empathy and compassion.

Communication is a basic element of humanistic practice. It involves mutual activity, including reception and feedback. If communication is good, it leads to mutual understanding.

Techniques of active listening

In social work, what the client says must be appreciated and evaluated so that all relevant information is retained. Through active listening, the person in question must receive signals that he or she is sufficiently listened to and understood (Clausner-Landerer, 2005). That is why, when active listening is practiced, a number of techniques can be used (see also Şoitu 2001, 165), among which the most commonly used and effective are:

1) *Paraphrasing the speaker* – means that the listener reformulates the received message in his or her own words. It implies that, after receiving sufficient information, the listener re-communicates the message in his/her own words, in order to establish real points of communication with the interlocutor.

This technique enables the social worker to check whether he/she, in the context of “active listening”, has correctly heard, and secondly – provided that there is congruence – it gives the other person the feeling that he/she has been correctly understood/ heard. Ultimately, this conversation technique also has, to a certain extent, a structuring character, when it condenses what is listened. Ongoing paraphrasing also ensures that those involved in the counselling session do not lose contact with each other, but actually remain facing each other. Paraphrasing ensures a high degree of understanding in communication.

Example (Manual de bunepractici în asistența socială comunitară, 35):

“The client – Recently I get home late and I can’t talk enough with my husband and my children.

The social worker –If I understand you correctly,you have a busy schedule at work that does not allow you to take care of your family the way you want ...”.

Paraphrasing can also help to clarify some issues and aspects, and to increase the accuracy of what is communicated. As the practice reveals, often the statements of the assisted persons do not match what they have said before or even contradict their previous stories or confessions. By paraphrasing, these statements can be revisited,and the client can be given the opportunity to correct or clarify inconsistent or contradictory messages and reports.In this way, inconsistencies and contradictions are discovered and clarified promptly, and not only later, when it is possible that they have already influenced the general approach of intervention. Therefore, the social worker must address inconsistencies as soon as possible after their appearance, with determination, but at the same time with diplomacy, without judging or criticizing the client for contradictions, as in the following examples (Clausner-Landerer 2005, 5):

“Earlier you told me that... But now you say it was... I see a contradiction in this regard, can you clarify this ...?”.

“At the first meeting you said that you were not interested in the problem, but now you think that... and, at the same time, I notice a lot of anger in your voice; maybe it would be useful to talk again about... It would also help to tell me what makes you so angry...”.

2) *Verbalization*– is, along with paraphrasing, another technique of active listening, especially useful when it is necessary to assign an appropriate level of abstraction to client’s statements. Through this technique, the ideas or experiences of the client are expressed or formulated through the appropriate words and phrases, as only implicitly emerges from his or her stories. Example:

“The client – Anyway, there is no point in talking to him, I’m fed up. He doesn’t even understand how I feel.

The social worker – You doubt that a discussion with your husband would bring any progress in terms of... I understand that previous experiences in this regard leave you in doubt about the usefulness of a discussion. However, it would be important for you to present your point of view and your feelings, if you have the opportunity”.

3) *Asking questions*– is a necessary technique to discover the subtext and to understand exactly what the speaker wants to communicate (Şoitu 2001, 165). Active listening involves the investigative effort of the listener. This does not mean that the receiver has to often interrupt the interlocutor to ask questions, because that would fragment the communication and disturb the transmitter, who may thus lose the track of ideas. That is why it is recommended that the communication partner should be allowed to present all his/her ideas, and only after that the questions should be asked.

Depending on the nature of the clarifications or additional information that the social worker wants to obtain, the questions can be of various types:

a) *Open questions*– are the most frequently asked questions, used for factual issues and for obtaining information that could be relevant for understanding the situation of the client and for establishing the approach of the intervention. In this case, open questions, which involve narrative answers, are preferable, because in this way the person's overall situation can be understood, and/or his/her problem can be placed in a broader context. Example:

“The client – When I think of Wednesday last week, I see black in front of my eyes.

The social worker – What exactly happened last Wednesday?

Or – Please, tell me more about it”.

Other examples (Clausner-Landerer, 2005: 3):

“What exactly happened when... / at...?”

“Please describe exactly the situation/ state of affairs from your point of view...”

“Tell me more about...”

“Explain to me what you did... / what happened...”

“What concrete/ specific expectations do you have from me/ from the social work department/ from the organization...?”

“How do you represent my/our help...?”

b) *Closed questions*– are particularly useful when it comes to final clarification of the facts and corrections regarding the understanding of the situation. In this case, the interrogation process is less narrative and usually focuses on receiving specific information.

Example:

“The client – I'm afraid of the radical changes after the divorce.

The social worker – Would you like to discuss with our consultant in this regard?

Or – Would you like to consult the lawyer of our organization in this regard?”.

Other examples:

“Did you take part in the discussion from... / between...?”

“Were you present at the meeting... / when did it happen...?”

“Do you want to consult with X about...?”.

c) *Exploratory and diagnostic questions*– are the questions that have certain structuring elements and initiate a change of perspective of the explanations. They are suitable to bring the person who explains out of his/her own thinking process and to a certain extent integrate him/her in the thinking process of the social worker. Such questions are subdivided according to emotions, causes and motivations for events and actions, as well as according to past, present and future. Examples:

“How did you feel in that situation and how did the others react...?”

“What do you think, why did X behave like this...?”

“How did you react to this... / when...?”

“What do you want to achieve in the future in terms of...?”.

d) *Confrontational questions*– are also divided by emotions, causes and reasons, as well as by past, present and future. Through this type of question, the assisted person, especially when he or she asks for advice, is put in the situation to face the ideas, concepts, hypotheses, assumptions and options of the social worker and to deal with them. Examples:

“When you behaved like that... / you made the decision..., did you think it would lead to/ did you think about the consequences for ...?”

“Have you thought that your behavior can have these repercussions/ effects...?”

“Don’t you think you overestimate the situation...?”

“Do you think that in the future you could do/ not do... to change...?”

“Could you do/ not do... to avoid escalation...?”.

e) *Circular questions*– are used especially in systemic interview techniques and are particularly useful when looking for information about relationships between people and their different perceptions of facts. Such questions often focus on hypothetical events and behaviors. Examples:

“What options would you have if you don’t accept X’s proposal and how would it evolve...?”

“How would your husband behave if...?”

“How would your boss and colleagues react if you had... / if you would do... in the future?”

“We have been talking for a long time without reaching a solution, please think about what we could do to better understand each other”.

f) *Strategic questions*—have mainly a guiding intention. This type of questioning technique allows the social worker to influence the subsequent development of the relationship with the client. Strategic questions are particularly recommended if the consultation has got stuck or if there are one-sided, often unrealistic statements and behaviors. Examples:

“Why is it so important to maintain your objection, what does it mean to you...?”

“What is the significance for you of this point of view...?”

“Let us consider again together whether your information is sufficient to support your statement...”

“Let’s review together your previous statement regarding...”.

Asking questions as an active listening technique must always be adapted to and integrated into the intervention model used. Asking questions at the wrong time or choosing the wrong type of questions in a particular stage of the intervention (for example, a confrontational question addressed before developing a trusting relationship between social worker and client) can sometimes irrevocably affect the intervention approach.

Besides paraphrasing, verbalization and asking questions, other techniques of active listening are the following:

4) *Reframing*— is a technique of active listening that can be used as feedback when the statements of the client are very negative (either he/she perceives his/her situation very negatively or selects only the negative aspects from the surrounding reality, etc.). Client’s focusing only on negative messages can lead to blockages in the relationship with the social worker and, in general, can jeopardize the intervention.

The reframing or “new framing” of a situation or a statement means placing the events narrated in a different, new context, so that what seemed destructive is reinterpreted, through the new framework, as something constructive. Reframing can also be used by the social worker when he or she simply wishes to extend the frame of reference in terms of the form

and/or content of the intervention, which may allow the identification of additional alternatives that have not been considered before, and which, as a result of reframing, may emerge as potential options and viable solutions. Example:

“Client X – I can no longer cope with the situation, it’s too much for me, the family, the little child who cries all the time, the parents I have to take care of, the husband who doesn’t help me, and at work I have so many responsibilities and so much work that sometimes I’m sure I’ll crash and never recover.

The social worker –Indeed, you find yourself in a situation that involves a lot of responsibilities and stress. However, you told me that both family and career are important to you. Let’s start here: you already have both, even though you are so young. So, it is important to go through this difficult period and keep them. In a year or less the child will be able to go to kindergarten. For parents, you can use, at least for a while, the services of an organization that offers home help. It is important that you still have your parents close by and that you can enjoy their presence and advice. It is good to calmly talk more with your husband and explain to him that you need more support from him. If family is important to him too, I am sure he will understand. When it comes to your job, many responsibilities mean that you are needed, that you are appreciated, and that your bosses are confident in your work and skills. Not many people can say that they enjoy such an attitude at work. So, there are many positive aspects to focus on, both in terms of family and career”.

In using this technique, the social worker must consider that reframing loses its effectiveness if the client feels that the advisor is not taking his/her worries seriously. Before using the technique of reframing, the social worker should have convinced the client by addressing emotions and actively listening with empathy, showing that he/she takes the client’s view of matters seriously, accepts it, and is also aware of the negative aspects of the situation (Pantucek 1998, 18).

5) *Following the main ideas* – is a technique required particularly in extensive speeches and wide discourses full of information and details. Active listening should focus not on the unimportant things or on the details, but on the main ideas about which, eventually, additional information may be required (by asking questions, paraphrasing etc.). Also, the focus should

be on what is being said, not on what is not being said, as well as not on some side effects, collateral aspects or accidental consequences that may occur in the communication.

6) *Taking notes* – is a technique that can help the listener to more accurately track the ideas presented and allows him/her to develop his/her own sketch of what has been described.

7) *Expressions of interest* – means listening so that it is obvious that the speaker is being followed. It is recommended that signals in this regard are sent to the speaker. The signals can be both verbal and non-verbal.

8) *Understanding the speaker's actual state of mind and supporting him/her* – implies a positive and encouraging attitude on the part of the receiver/ auditor, to enable the transmitter to continue and to help him/her succeed in his/her approach. In the social work relationship, this means that the social worker must, in addition to the accurate understanding of the client's mental state, always have a positive attitude, encouraging the assisted person, so that communication with him/her to be facilitated and the relationship of trust to be consolidated. Such aspects may prove to have a significant contribution to the success of the intervention.

Conclusions

Active listening is the most desirable form of listening in social contexts since it facilitates keeping communication relationships and the interest to communicate further. Moreover, active listening informs about the expectations of other individuals and contributes to the mitigation and cessation of social conflicts.

Given the fact that the entire process of intervention in social work involves fundamental sequences of verbal communication, the importance of listening and, especially, active listening, is highlighted by most theoretical and methodological models developed over time in this field. Particularly in the models advanced from the humanistic perspective, and especially in the client-centered approaches, the undertaking of the social worker is seen as one that should be non-directive and tolerant, involving, in addition to empathy and friendship, active listening.

In the humanist view, the basis of social work practice should be the “empathic understanding”. Active listening can be seen as a form of operationalizing empathy, and the goal of the client-centered approach

should be to “optimize the person”, that is to support him/her, through appropriate, professional guidance, empathy and even friendship, towards constructive change in lifestyle and behaviour. Empathy, as a specific human ability to transpose oneself into the psychology of the other, can make social workers more receptive and understanding.

Active listening, as a form of listening that expresses empathy par excellence, must be practiced in social work by maintaining the highest degree of neutrality and value-freedom. At the same time, active listening should be appreciative towards the client, visible, continuous and effective. In this regard, various techniques can be used, the most common being paraphrasing, verbalization, asking questions, reframing, following the main ideas, taking notes, manifesting interest through various verbal and non-verbal signs, as well as the exact understanding of the mental state of the speaker and his/her support, through a positive and encouraging attitude on the part of the social worker.

In conclusion, active listening is fundamental in all social contexts of communication and is a basic sequence in the communication between social worker and client. The use of the techniques of active listening, together with treating each client as a unique individual, can lead to the fulfilment of the humanistic goal of social work, namely to make people able to use their own “personal power” to achieve their goals.

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GENDER RIGHTS EQUALITY IN THE MEDIA

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Abstract

In this article, we focused on the concept of feminism, on the liberal feminist ideas that influenced rhetorical studies, but also on content analysis. The intellectual style, the discursive voice, the specific feminine way of thinking differentiate women from the strictly masculine approaches: tonality, direct, concise, nuanced style.

Keywords: rights, feminization of journalism, media, contemporary journalism, intellectual style.

Introduction

Although we have set out to make a comparative analysis of gender equality in the media, the focus was on women's attitudes, and we will expand the debate in another article.

The field of communication sciences and media studies, coextensive with major professional developments (feminization of journalism and public relations), as well as major social changes (feminism *inter alia*), has experienced several important paradigm shifts in recent decades:

- gender mainstreaming at the three levels of construction of the media message (production, content, reception);
- investigating gender identity and positioning in the perspective of hegemony and parodying the "normative" gender;
- questioning and deconstruction of the gender category.

Since the media was no longer considered the “mirror” of society, but its symbolic construction, the feminist critique of news “objectivity” advocated either more neutral discursive constructions or a balance between women's and men’s voices and positions, or, finally, for the deconstruction of the patriarchal hegemonic discourse “what is perceived as true in a given situation is determined by those in power” (Stuart, 1999).

The gender dimension infrastructures both the pole of production (which produces the news, the show, the journal, etc.) and the pole of reception and the nature, the content (various facts, interviews, news with or about women).

Regarding the journalist actor, although there is a feminization of journalism and communication schools worldwide and an increase in the number of journalists (40% in the written press and 50% in television, according to a recent monitoring), the “glass ceiling” effect (the inability or difficulty of women's access to decision-making and control positions) continues to be maintained.

As news actors, women are systematically underrepresented, on the one hand because of male culture and networks, and on the other hand because of economic and political underrepresentation: “Women in the news are either anonymous examples of an uninformed audience, or housewives, neighbours, consumers or mothers, wives, daughters of men in the news, or, finally, victims of crimes, accidents, catastrophes” (ibid.).

Apart from the sexualist division of journalistic practice, the different discursive architecture must be mentioned: concrete, contextualized, empathic, focused on the human interest for journalists and abstract, universalist for journalists. Women's motivation to choose the profession of journalism has less to do with prestige or material gain than with the desire to create a better world:

“Women show more interest in and maybe more respect for their audience. They give them extra confidence. They also consider the receivers-readers, viewers, etc. - less naive and gullible than men. In addition, they seek less to influence public opinion and more to give ordinary people a chance to express themselves in the media.” (Pritchard, Sauvageau, 1999).

The post-communist Romanian media perpetuates the stereotypes regarding female identity and linguistic conservatism. Strategies for marginalizing the female experience, with the exception of the abject (unfit mother, prostitute witch, murderous woman), are doubled by discursive mechanisms of invisibility, such as:

- the use of prestigious professions only for men (“Mrs. Minister, Mrs. Rector”, on the one hand, but “secretary, postwoman, turner”);

- hypertrophy of gender identity to the detriment of professional identity (“notary Maria X”, resumed by the *woman*, while the aggressor who attacked her enjoys hearing his full name read several times in the news text);

- overestimation of physical and marital status clues (“the young woman”, “X's wife”) to the detriment of her own identity.

The main trends of contemporary journalism

The main *trends of contemporary journalism*: legitimizing perspectives, emotional personalization, cordialization of communication - in other words, favouring communication, relationship and not information, referential transfer are equally characteristic *trademarks of feminine culture* and the *postmodern condition* (Lipovetsky, 1997).

These *postmodern aspects* have replaced the *modern informative discourse* organized around four narrative nuclei: *conflict* (war, internal and international security, defense), *progress* (budget, economy, industry), *competition* (from sports, to culture), *accidents* (disasters, anomalies, innovations).

Female role models will function as benchmarks for both sexes (a candidate for the Faculty of Journalism will not be shy to say in 1998 that she takes the entrance exam to this faculty to become ... an Andreea Esca) and, contrary to other developments in diachrony of careers where feminization has led to devaluation or in any case non-exceptionality, it is possible that the feminization of journalism involves only the democratization and humanization of the profession (Brusse, 1998).

Femininity in the traditional vision (including the modern one, propagated in the media) is situated on the *isotopy: evil, emotional, insecurity, non-credibility*, in a post-modern perspective, femininity no longer means passivity and inferiority, but a new type of power and control, at least in the media.

Liberal feminism, in legitimizing women's political participation, had to contend with the ingrained view of the futility of educating women, considered as inferior beings (Rousseau recommends a completely different education, based on "arts and crafts": music, embroidery, sewing, but especially the art of being a pleasant companion to men).

In media research, liberal feminist ideas have influenced rhetorical studies (women as *public speakers*, as discursive identities) and content analysis (especially television programs and advertising). The proposals of these empirical studies were primarily aimed at improving the quantitative and qualitative image of women, as well as other underrepresented non-dominant groups.

Marxist and socialist feminism mainly analyzed the correlation between capitalism / patriarchy, the double exploitation (in the public and private space), the free and completely devalued benefit of the woman in the private space who assumes *free of charge* the task of reproducing the system.

Radical infrastructural feminism of the nature/culture dichotomy, and not of the reason/emotion antonymy of liberal feminism or the public/private space characteristic of Marxism, shapes the entire Western culture as masculine, anti-naturally oriented, essentially aggressive towards women and nature.

Culturalist feminism analyzes the spirit/body dichotomy that generated in Western thought the overestimation of the spiritual faculties of creation and the underestimation of the corporeal as an extension of the natural world, therefore of procreation. Defined in connection with nature and animals, women were predestined only to raise children and care for the family, and in the event of leaving their home, they could extend in public the same primary functions: medical and social assistance, education. In order to counterbalance the negative effects of supersaturation (in film, painting, media) with images of the female (nude) body, feminist theorists have “reinvented” the body as a space of complex, contradictory, but essential experiences in the formation/transformation of identity. They also emphasized the symbolic and linguistically preconstructed nature of the images of the female corporeality in film, advertising, photography (Brădeanu, Dragomir, Roventă-Frumușani, 2002).

Conclusion

In the contemporary society of the communication explosion, the media play an important role in the formation of public images, of particular interactions, maintaining or changing rules, representations, lifestyles, ideological presuppositions.

Three dimensions of the feminine must be highlighted: *the actantial role* of women in public and private life, *the image* (as perceived by women and others in various updates), *the discourses* (from discourses more or less congruent with the dominant patriarchal discourse, to the messages of the periphery: madness, magic, poetry, witchcraft).

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WAYS TO IMPROVE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Our approach is to present some ways in which organizational culture can improve its qualities. Indispensable in everyday organizational behavior, culture developed in corporations must evolve favorably to all involved in the process.

Key-words: corporate culture, evolution, improvement.

01. Modern societies have life cycles whose core is communicating. For the human being, communicating becomes the equivalent of existence itself. For a being in an organizational space, communication becomes an act that can trigger its existence, it can facilitate its expansion, it can lead to stagnation or even disappearance.

02. In the current managerial practice one can see an interesting phenomenon: when talking about corporate communication, each individual in the organization develops his or her own perception, often subjective over what this phenomenon means. It was found that there is no problem within an organization that is not based on deficiencies registered at the level of organizational communication, and these gaps are gradually turning into an aggravating element. It can also be said that there is no aspect of the manager's work that does not impose the communication. The real problem of corporate communication is that those in organizational spaces have to engage in this process by applying useful and efficient communication techniques.

03. As with day-to-day communication, organizational communication can improve and streamline its daily use through a range of means that must be known to all actors involved in this process: whether we are talking about managers or about audiences internal, intermediate or external to the organization.

04. We propose, in pursuing our approach, to describe some ways to improve the efficiency of corporate communication.

Knowing the act of communication

This direction of communication starts from the premise that the meaning transmitted is not sufficiently understood by the person to whom the message is addressed. For this, it is necessary for the transmitter to try to find out whether what he wanted to transmit was received exactly, that is to say, that the communication flow is closely monitored.

Regularity of information course

Within organizations, communication takes place both organically, based on formal and spontaneous flows, depending on the events or problems that may arise in everyday activity. This random part of the communication can lead to a communication overload. Thus, it is necessary to pay special attention to the process, in order to regulate information flows, in terms of quality, quantity and frequency of information. The regularity of the information process must take into account the fact that only important information of exceptional nature will circulate on the upstream hierarchy.

Feedback

The response of the receiver to the emitter's message, called feedback, is an important element of communication, in particular, its pragmatic aspect, namely, the effects of communication on the behavior of individuals and groups. Absence of feedback leads to ineffective communication, and this disruption immediately results in less effective leadership. In an organization, stimulation and follow-up of feedback should be done systematically, turning into a qualitative feature of the communication system. While face-to-face communication allows direct feedback, broadband and hierarchical channel communications introduce distortions in feedback. The same inefficiency of feedback can also be noticed when using an autocratic leadership style that inhibits the free communicative behavior of individuals.

Empathy

If in the general dictionaries of the Romanian language, empathy is defined as "a form of knowledge of another, especially of the social ego or something close to intuition; an interpretation of the ego of others by our own self "(DN), at the level of organizational communication, empathy is known as a receptor-oriented behavior. Such an attitude requires that the communicator be placed in the place of the receiver, but also the anticipation of the way in which they will be received, understood by the latter of the

transmitted messages. Empathy has the singular role of decoding, that is, the removal of individual barriers that the recipient can encounter. Empathetic ability reduces a large part of communication deficiencies and allows the person who transmits to encode the meanings in the appropriate languages, at the same time organizing a way of communicating openly, so that the organizational barriers are minimal.

Effective listening

Empathetic communication determines empathetic listening. Of the four dimensions on which the communication process is built: reading, writing, speaking, listening, very few people have developed listening education as a sign of respect for the interlocutor. To make communication more effective, individuals need to be concerned not only with the message, but also with the listening, understanding. Effective listening turns into a way of improving the communication act, because, besides respecting the speaker, it allows the decoding of messages, provides information on the transmitting person, allows the acquisition of information, new patterns of behavior. The ability to listen effectively can develop through a series of behaviors, such as: the attention given to the speaker, the interest in participating in the discussion, the manifestation of patience, the asking of relevant questions, the tempering of the critical manifestations. All these attitudes demonstrate that the receiver is interested in listening and that he wants to be an active participant in the act of communication.

Repetition

Tackling sometimes in daily communication, repetition is one of the ways managers often use to improve the organizational communication process. This importance derives from an extremely simple fact: in agglomeration of the information flow in corporations, it sometimes happens that a message or a fragment of a message is not fully understood. That is why filling this defective part of organizational communication through a similar message becomes beneficial for the communicative act. In many situations, repetition permits not only the quantitative improvement of transmission but also the widening of understanding of meaning, due to different ways of conveying the same subject.

Effective timing communication

Daily, every individual is assaulted by countless messages received through different channels. Many of them will not be fully decoded and well understood. Complex process, communication is made up of a variety of

messages, transmitted through various channels, creating an influx of information that risks not having the expected result. In such situations, achieving optimal communication performance can be done by planning time for communication. In situations of organizational crisis or when radical decisions are made about the existence of companies, the time allocated to the transmission of ideas, opinions, and dialogue partners must be properly managed.

Simplifying language

Of the many barriers that the act of communication has to overcome, some of the most difficult are complex languages. Drawing special features, depending on the scope of application, the language used at the corporate level can be transformed into a complex semiotic system with some autonomy. It derives from the general background of language, but its use and take-over presuppose specialized education. These complex languages should not only involve communication between specialists in the field, but must be addressed to any individual caught in that organizational space. For, in such situations, messages may not be fully retained, but only fragmentary, they cannot be decoded. The concern to simplify and adapt the language to the receiver's capability is one of the most important factors in the performance of the communication process.

Encouraging mutual trust

Trust has become a defining existential element in the contemporary world, an area of interdependencies and societal complexities. Encouraging mutual trust hides a huge capital that managers can exploit to gain an impressive force in achieving corporate goals. Of course, trust has played an important role in any public relations approach, leading to a more effective act. From the perspective of organizational communication, mutual trust becomes a value judgment that removes a series of impediments, such as: credibility of the source, psychological pressures, lack of time. If there is a mutual trust between the communicators, the climate built for communication will become a favorable one, and some more difficult behaviors can get positive connotations.

Using informal communication channels

In addition to the formal communication channels, it develops, a whole informal communication system, which complements the first one. Without following formal structures and lines of authority, informal communication means become true networks that managers should take into account. As long as the information transmitted through these means does

not load the daily flow, they are a form of flexible, direct communication with a high message transmission speed.

05. Presenting these ways to improve corporate communication performance is not exhaustive. From the wide sphere of elements that compose, direct, fluidize, or enrich organizational communication, we stop, in this approach, on those who, we believe, offer a clearer perception of the process itself. For, as is known, communication in general, but also its particular manifestation, the organizational one is a dynamic, easily identifiable act between two defined entities, a process that can be designed and coordinated.

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INTERROGATION AS A TYPE OF COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In this study, we propose an analysis of the type of media communication in the digital era. Our analysis focuses on how digital has changed the behaviour of communication actors and how this removed the predictability of the message from the mechanical determinism. The premises of this research refer to the fact that change and adaptability are the main conditions imposed by the new type of channel. These correspond to new types of behaviour of the communication actors: coding accuracy and decoding vigilance.

Keywords: media communication, digital, sender, channel, receiver, adaptation.

Introduction

Following the evolution of knowledge in the field of communication, we will discover that the change is the main epistemic constant. Between the axiom that “everything is communication” and the countless attempts to systematize, to describe a pattern, the meaning of communication is shown more and more clearly as a continuous process of reconsideration (Stănescu, 2016), of repositioning and reconfiguration and it has as reference system both the encyclopaedic complexity of actors, and the communication channels.

All the systematizations of the communication process are based on evolutionary, variable cores. "Sender", "receiver", "channel", "context" are the concepts that define both the references of the communication process, and the relays through which the waves of change are captured, the fixed points that permanently produce change. Communication is an open field, by definition, it is exposed to any influences. The communication process is defined by the effort to synchronize the interior with the exterior (Smarandache et. All, 2015).

Communication has to solve this tension between content and expression, between the epistemic core and the symbolic form and to transform cognitive results into social effects (Quffa, Voinea, 2013).

Time, space, the interiority of the actors (meaning the level of knowledge and the degree of emotional involvement), the constructs and social contexts name as many channels, as many windows that can feed/arouse /reflect potentialities of meaning.

Theoretical circumstances

We highlight the models proposed by Lee O. Thayer (1968) and Dean Barnlund (1970). The first focuses on the importance of the receiver in the act of communication. Communication is based on transactionality, and the success of communication comes from the skills, competencies and idiosyncrasies of the receiver. Somehow, the researcher understands the reception as establishing, completion of a meaning. The intention of the sender finds its fulfilment exclusively in the receiver's ability to recreate the meaning, respectively, to reify it. In the graphical representation, Thayer excludes the sender from the determinations of communication and gives it rather the status of an independent identity, without a relation with the gravitational zone of the receiver. The receiver creates a personal system of tools that allows it to decode the received message, according to its own interests, its own needs. The message does not exist outside the range of the receiver. I consider this perspective far from being transactional.

Thayer's receiver reminds of Hans Robert Jauss's aesthetic receiver, described one year later in 1969. Jauss described a reception aesthetic that also meant his separation from Gadamer's "eternal substantiality". Thus, the reception (of the work) was understood as an "active appropriation" of the work, of the object to be received. The immediacy of reception, as the aesthete observes, changes the meaning (it is selected and adapted, I would say), depending on the context of the reception (the horizon of expectation, says Jauss).

The network of the receiver's abilities and competencies converge in the direction of a "fusion of horizons" (ibid., P. 17) of the sender and the receiver. From this perspective, the meaning is an unstable result of the encounter between the subjectivity of the coding and the subjectivity of decoding, the last one representing, of course, the superior level chronology.

I see in chronology the essential argument of the "active appropriation of meaning" which, otherwise, would be in contradiction with the "fusion of horizons". Proximity and tension have different degrees of tension and, implicitly, different semantic results. We can advance the idea

that, according to Thayer's theory, the immanent subjective tension in the coding phase is predictable, immutable, equal. This *status quo* is interrupted only by the energy of decoding subjectivity. Is the sense available to the receiver? Also, the receiver is not a fluid interiority, whose skills and abilities are constantly changing. This organicist perspective on communication processes places the receiver in the same orbit as the sender, and the message is the territory shaped by the evolutionary currents.

It is important here to discuss about the transactional model of Dean Barlund, who, two years after Thayer, talked about three types of signals and, implicitly, three ways of reception. These typologies map, according to the researcher, three types of realities. The subject gives meaning to public signals (signals that can be received), but also to private signals, but external and not accessible to all, as well as to signals related to nonverbal behaviour, signals emitted consciously or not. I find Barlund's essential observation precisely in this attempt by the issuer to control these types of signals, which build its message and meaning. The quality of reception depends, says Barlund, on the transmitter's willingness to control the unpredictability of the signals and its effort to anticipate the waiting horizon. As can be seen, the message is under the accidental and random circumstances from the initiation phase. In order to simplificate and systematize, the researcher did not include in his analysis elements from the socio-cultural context.

Openness, proximity, immediacy of coding vs. availability of reception

The circumstance of the communication, the support and everything related to the logistics of the communication act also have an impact on the meaning. Therefore, communication is a product of the sender, receiver and communication channel.

We can talk about the role of the media issuer. This is the entity that catalyzes signs and symbols in a certain circumstance that it loads meaningfully, never definitively (Voinea, 2011). The meaningful investing is the first step in producing a message. The selection of signs, symbols, and accents is made according to socio-temporal, emotional and psycho-cognitive circumstances. The point that I would like to introduce here refers to the issuer's ability to adapt its selection criteria and construction principles to new technological realities. Digital means, in this case, functioning in an environment/on a medium that is characterized by: openness (*many-to-many*), proximity, immediacy. The media communicator can only anticipate

now to a very small degree and will have to monitor his message for a much longer time.

On the other hand, the media receiver is in the open field of reception and is exposed to the most diverse messages. The care that the transmitter must have, for a better emphasis of significations, meanings, connotations, it corresponds to the decoding speed that the receiver must cultivate. Media reception can mean (or, rather, the first level of reception means) the confluence and simultaneity of some messages that can be in consonance or dissonance of varying degrees with the ideological background, the waiting horizon and the degree of interest of the recipient. The digital environment has changed the availability of reception, negotiation, interrogation of the message (actually, messages) by the media receiver. To what extent does the openness, the possibility of the option mean fluency and accessibility, but also fidelity to the initial message? The coding conditions and circumstances correspond to the decoding circumstances. In addition, it appears the receiver's availability to decode.

We also wonder to what extent the transmission channel preserve/protect the message? From our point of view, today's media communication channel is the real open field on which messages from many senders to many receivers are found simultaneously and competitively. We do not overlap the channel and the message, we see in media communication, in fact, a double coding. Firstly is the selection of the issuer, its efforts to build the message and to match the meaning and significance. In the next level, the message is converted to signals. Transmission is accompanied, in classical theories, by noise, the interference that can affect the quality of reception. From our point of view, in the digital environment, is required a more insistent discussion on the circumstance, a term that does not have the same accidental load as "noise" or "interference". In this case we can speak about intentionality. The environment can change the message, it can bring new meanings, it can amputate meanings by the fact that the possibility of erroneous coding has increased.

Conclusions

In today's media communication, we are talking about interference at every stage, at every moment of the whole process. The message has an organic behaviour, so that coding and interpretation mean efforts of selection and concentration equal in intensity. The message of the digital environment can also have a function of attraction, like a magnet. It can spontaneously polarize meanings and expectations. Under these conditions, the sender and

the recipient must be into a daily process of information and adaptation to new types of messages and channels.

Therefore, change, as an immanent particularity of communication, corresponds to the pragmatic concept of adaptability, which can ensure to a large extent the dosing of the effects of change, the control of the degree of influence and change. Change and adaptability are, from our point of view, two concepts that ensure the actors of the communication process the freedom of doubt and interrogation, without thereby equating the concept of "communication" with that of "interpretation". The accuracy of the coding and the vigilance of the decoding are based precisely on this exercise of questioning, on the awareness of the immanent limits and the arbitrary openings.

The old "barriers" from the communication explanation chart become meaningful potentialities. Communication, institutional or individual, follows the natural logic of evolution, adaptation and transformation.

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TRANSITIONS AND CONCEPTS WITHIN DECENTRALIZED FINANCE (DEFI) SPACE

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Abstract

DeFi stands for Decentralized Finance, which is also known as Distributed Finance or Open Finance and is a financial business environment without any central endorsement body. Although we have had concepts like distributed and decentralized computing for decades, DeFi is in fact a new concept or an expansion of the application scope of blockchain or distributed ledger technologies (DLT) as infrastructure.

The proof of concept for DeFi, is to be able to offer almost all the financial services available as per Centralized Finance (CeFi).

DeFi can also be defined as blockchain-based financial services that mirror from traditional finance, creating new services or derivatives stemming from blockchain's unique features.

What began as a handful of DeFi projects has given way to a wave of experimentation and innovation in the space, including offerings of decentralized versions of mainstream financial products.

The scope of Decentralized Finance is to create a more open and transparent financial system, aiming to offer novel financial products while leveraging the key elements and functions of blockchain.

DeFi as an emerging sector spans across development in stablecoins, wallets, decentralized cryptocurrency exchanges and marketplaces, infrastructures, lending, custodial services, insurance and payments. The key components include smart contracts, protocols, decentralized applications and digital currencies.

The movement's very nature takes the issue of trust out of the hands of humans and uses the code it runs upon to create total security. By using blockchain technology, single points of failure are eliminated as the data is recorded instantly and spread across thousands of nodes, making malicious attacks or corruption nearly impossible (J.Wu, 2020).

This paper examines new transitions and concepts that are translated within DeFi from the traditional finance world, highlighting the advantages and new

features by removing legacy "trusted third parties" while keeping a transparent and tamper-proof ledger.

Keywords: Decentralized Finance, Centralized Finance, Blockchain, Distributed Ledger Technology, Smart Contracts, Decentralized Applications (dAPPs), Decentralized Exchange (DEX), Centralized Exchange (CEX) Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO), Stablecoin, Yield Farming, Synthetics, Zero-Coupon Bonds, FinTech.

Introduction

When compared to traditional financial services, Decentralized Finance brings numerous benefits through the use of smart contracts and distributed systems. As the ecosystems mature, deploying a financial application or product becomes much less complex and demanding.

From a DLT and Blockchain perspective, one of its greatest promises and drivers of value is the notion that it facilitates decentralized peer-to-peer transactions without the need for a third-party intermediary and their associated fees.

By bringing this technology into the traditional finance system, DeFi is the potential to create new avenues to access services and activities like: payments, lending, borrowing, funding or investing (A.Rossow, 2020).

Currently, the three largest functions of DeFi are:

- Translating monetary banking services (e.g. Issuance of stablecoins, payments);
- Providing peer-to-peer (or pooled) lending and borrowing platforms;
- Enabling advanced financial instruments such as Decentralized Exchanges (DEXes), Tokenization Platforms, Derivatives and Predictions Markets.

DeFi Principles

The DeFi principles are based on the creation of an innovative ecosystem of financial services, which is accessible to everyone without exception.

According to the crypto-community of Decentralized Finance, developers in this area adhere a number of principles:

- Products must be open source and compatible; Since this allows products to interact within the ecosystem from a technological point of view, which increases their practicality and popularity;
- DeFi projects adhere to financial inclusion; Decentralized Financial Services can be available to absolutely everyone who has access to Internet;

- Financial transparency is very important: at the user level, all information must remain confidential, while within the market, all data must be transparent.

The role of Smart Contracts within the DeFi Ecosystem

Contracts and agreements involved in DeFi services are governed by smart contracts. A smart contract is a self-executing contract where the terms and conditions are defined and enforced through automation and enacted autonomously and efficiently on the blockchain.

Most of the existing and potential applications of Decentralized Finance involve the creation and execution of smart contracts in a much complex form; as Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAO) or Protocols. While a usual contract uses legal terminology to specify the terms of the relationship between the entities entering the contract, a smart contract uses computer code.

Since their terms are written in computer code, smart contracts have the unique ability also to enforce those terms through computer code, this enables the reliable execution and automation of a large number of business processes that currently require manual supervision.

DeFi applications do not need any intermediaries or arbitrators as the code specifies the resolution of every possible dispute, and the users maintain control over their funds at all times. This reduces the costs associated with providing and using these products and allows for a more frictionless financial system (A.M. Antonopoulos, G. Wood, p67, 442-444, 2018).

Some of the benefits for using Smart Contracts are:

Automation: Contractual agreements are pretty complicated; this is what creates the need for lawyers, brokers and escrows services. All these entities do a lot of good, but in the long term, they cost a lot more and are sometimes not necessary. The use of smart contracts simplifies the process, clearing out all the many people needed to enforce a contract. This brings many benefits like speed, clarity, and precision with each contract.

Cost-efficient: The costs for engaging lawyers or other intermediaries to vet contracts and agreements can be high; this is quite expensive and might not be cost-efficient in the case of a business setting. Smart contracts are free as opposed to regular deals, and they also execute immediately once the terms that bind the contract has been fulfilled.

Autonomy: Smart contracts are self-sufficient; once they are entered into, the parties involved are not subject to external authority, only to the terms they agreed on. This feature also makes them free of manipulation, from either party, increasing the safety and security of contractual agreements.

Ever since the introduction of blockchain technology, smart contracts have been the highest form of its application. Added with its autonomous power, speed, and transparency, the potential for smart contracts to redefine the industry and the financial sector is limitless (K.Hu, 2020).

Smart contracts ultimately streamline traditional business logic by mapping traditional financial services and business conditions into the composition of smart contracts, as well as adding in external data or services, and/or interoperation of other blockchains like identity and other verifications.

Using smart contracts is faster, easier, and reduces risk for both parties, on the other hand, smart contracts also introduce new types of risks. As computer code is prone to have bugs and vulnerabilities, the value and confidential information locked in smart contracts are at risk (Binance Academy, 2020).

A relative concept echoing Traditional Finance

DeFi is part of Fintech as it incorporates emerging technology with the purpose of improving services to clients, bettering the financial industry as a whole. It can be defined as financial smart contracts, protocols, dAPPs executed on blockchains and DLTs, with the objective of changing how banking, lending and trading is done (N. Dalmas, 2019).

Development around Decentralized Finance is broad and divided into two main categories:

- The first are solutions that are actively empowering individuals by building products that allow them to better engage with decentralized systems as payments, trading, or lending;
- The other arm is trying to rope in traditional systems, building enticing products or services that change narratives by incorporating through effective and efficient blockchain-based options in their operations.

Mainstream Form of DeFi

From a traditional financial perspective, lending business and derivatives actually play the role of commercial/retail and investment banks;

Decentralized Exchanges play the role of stock exchanges / financial asset exchanges and brokers; and the Assets or Stablecoin Ecosystem is similar to the traditional Central Banks (L. Wangjian, 2020).

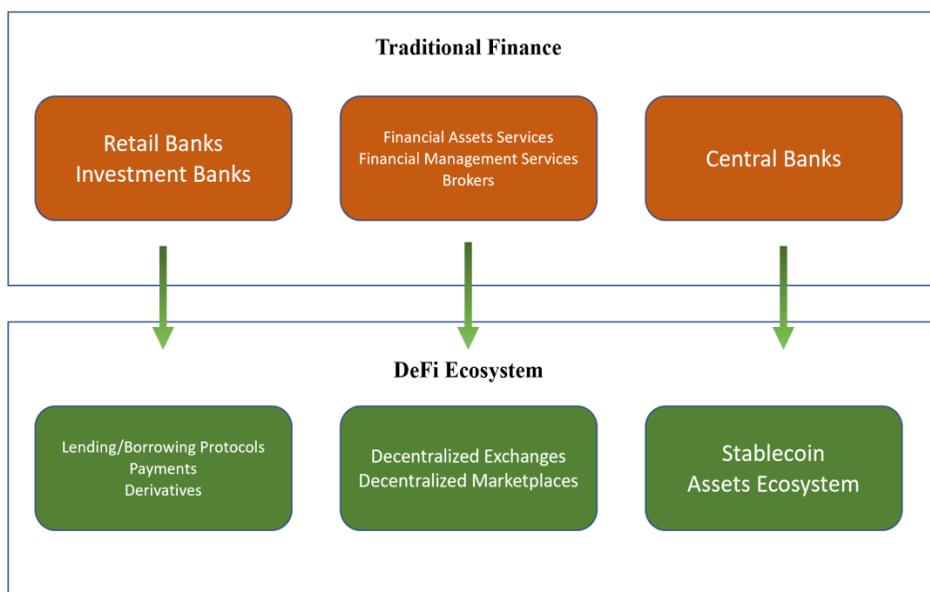


Fig.1 – Traditional Finance vs DeFi Ecosystem

DeFi Use Cases

Borrowing & Lending

Open borrowing and lending protocols are one of the most popular types of applications that are part of the DeFi ecosystem. These novel implementations have many advantages over the traditional credit system and include instant transaction settlements, the ability to collateralize digital assets, no credit checks, and potential standardization in the future.

Since these lending services are built on public blockchains, they minimize the amount of trust required and have the assurance of cryptographic verification methods. Lending marketplaces on the blockchain reduce counterparty risk, make borrowing and lending cheaper, faster, and available to more people (Binance Academy, 2020).

The lending/borrowing platforms and protocols offer various benefits for market participants:

For Borrowers:

- Borrow a utility: The borrower may decide to temporarily borrow a token to earn certain rights or power on the blockchain, e.g. governance rights.
- Ability to short an asset: A borrower can buy an asset and immediately sell it on any other exchange for any other crypto coin, thus shorting the asset. This replicates margin trading in centralized exchanges and also offers margin trading functionality into platforms that do not support it.

For Lenders:

- Long-term Investment Reward: A long-term investor can earn an additional amount from interest on lent assets besides capital appreciation or a buy&hold strategy.
- Earning opportunity from Stablecoins: Stablecoin issuers can have the chance to win incentives by distributing part of their revenue from floating interest rates collected on their bank deposits to users who support the circulating supply through these decentralized platforms.

For Both: This offers arbitrage opportunities across multiple platforms. An arbitrage opportunity exists if the borrowing rate is lesser than the lending rate:

- Arbitrage between DEX and CEX: A user, who has access to credit in US dollars (or any other fiat currency), can borrow dollars at a rate lower than the DEX's, trade it on a CEX for a crypto coin and lend it on the DEX to earn arbitrage fee. Usually, a platform with stricter KYC requirement offers this opportunity. However, insufficient demands, counterparty, and platform-specific risks are present.
- Arbitrage between DEXes: This is a rare opportunity as the lending and borrowing rates spread widely. To best perform an arbitrage of this type, here, two loans (different DEXes) must possess similar parameters such as the term duration and maturity dates. The risks may include different network environments, native inflation rates, changes in price, and optionality, prepayment, and liquidity.

Services such as *MakerDAO*, *Aave* and *Compound*, among others, all provide the lending and credit services that traditional banks do, but with a

few differences. These lending and credit services are similar to each other and even to the centralized services they emulate; however, the inner workings of each project are often very different from those of legacy services (A. Madeira, 2020).

There are different types of lending and credit platforms within the DeFi space, most of which make use of the Ethereum blockchain. These projects employ different strategies to allow users to borrow from and lend to each other with no central entity involved. This means that Know Your Customer identification or paperwork is not required. While there is less bureaucracy and control, it still ensures a certain amount of security for the lender and their funds.

Aave is a decentralized non-custodial money market protocol where users can participate as depositors or borrowers. Depositors provide liquidity to the market to earn a passive income, while borrowers are able to borrow in an overcollateralized (perpetually) or undercollateralized (one-block liquidity) fashion.

It uses a pool-based strategy where lenders provide liquidity by depositing Ether or ERC-20 tokens into a pool contract. This makes it possible to earn interest or even to use the funds deposited as collateral to borrow an asset. As a result, users get a short-term credit line for stablecoins or other tokens without having to liquidate their assets (Aave, 2020).

MakerDAO allows users to acquire its stablecoin, *Dai*, by locking up their ETH, although users need to deposit more Ether than they can withdraw, at a rate that can vary. This allows MakerDAO to maintain Dai's peg to the United States dollar, as it is backed by more than it's worth in ETH, which in turn protects the protocol from accentuated volatility in Ether.

The Maker Protocol employs a two-token system. The first being, *Dai*, a collateral-backed stablecoin that offers stability. The Maker Foundation and the MakerDAO community believe that a decentralized stablecoin is required to have any business or individual realize the advantages of digital money. Second, there is *MKR*, a governance token that is used by stakeholders to maintain the system and manage Dai. MKR token holders are the decision-makers of the Maker Protocol, supported by the larger public community and various other external parties.

Maker is unlocking the power of decentralized finance for everyone by creating an inclusive platform for economic empowerment; enabling everyone with equal access to the global financial marketplace (MakerDAO, 2020).

Compound uses a similar model as Aave, although it has a fairly unique reward mechanism that has led to the creation of *yield farming*, where governance tokens are rewarded to lenders and borrowers on top of the given interest.

Compound is a protocol on the Ethereum blockchain that establishes money markets, which are pools of assets with algorithmically derived interest rates, based on the supply and demand for the asset. Suppliers (and borrowers) of an asset interact directly with the protocol, earning (and paying) a floating interest rate, without having to negotiate terms such as maturity, interest rate, or collateral with a peer or counterparty (R. Leshner, G. Hayes, 2019).

Other platforms that evolve within the lending and borrowing DeFi space are: dydx, DDEX, Nuo Network, RAY, Dharma and bZx (Defipulse, 2020).

Crypto lending offers some key advantages over traditional financial products:

- Transparency in fund movements and the underlying smart contract;
- Price efficiency as prices are subject to market demand;
- Much easier access for users;
- Greater platform utility, speed, and flexibility in lending/borrowing;
- Censorship resistance and immutability.

Yield Farming

As we continue to watch the growth of exciting new financial primitives, we're beginning to witness an ever-growing trend of users being able to share in the upside of a protocol's growth. Whether it's something as simple as lending cryptocurrencies on Compound to something more complex like participating in liquidation auctions on Maker, it's evident that DeFi is unlocking a suite of new and exciting passive income opportunities (DeFi Rate, 2020).

The hot new term in crypto is "yield farming," a shorthand for clever strategies where putting crypto temporarily at the disposal of some startup's application earns its owner more cryptocurrency.

Compound released its governance token **COMP** in mid-June 2020. Tokens have been rewarded daily to borrowers and lenders on Compound. The result has been that enterprising DeFi users have been maximizing their COMP yield (e.g. "**yield farming**") by using DeFi mechanisms to unlock capital and then lending/borrowing on Compound.

Yield farming took the DeFi ecosystem by storm in the last weeks of the Q2 2020. Crucial metrics like ETH locked and daily active users soared after being fairly stagnant earlier in the quarter (ConsenSys, p 22 – 23, 2020).

COMP Farming

For the next 4 years, Compound is offering “liquidity mining” for liquidity providers. This means that anyone that borrows or supplies assets on Compound in this span will be rewarded with a proportional allocation of COMP, of which 2,880 are distributed daily.



Fig.2 – Compound Finance – Yield Farming. Retrieved from <https://defiprime.com/defi-yield-farming>

The start of this reward system caught the attention of plenty of traders. In the days since, many DeFi participants have moved their assets into Compound in order to start yield farming COMP distributions. Additionally, third-party projects are helping to facilitate COMP farming like the smart wallet project InstaDApp, which rolled out a “Maximize \$COMP mining” widget to help users easily hop in on the action in just a few clicks. Essentially, its mining is using a leveraged position: people borrow and deposit assets simultaneously in order to get more COMP (W.M. Peaster, 2020).

BAL Farming

Balancer is an Automated-Market Maker (AMM) that allows users to create liquidity pools composed of multiple ERC20 tokens in contrast to the 1:1 pool used by Uniswap. This makes Balancer a flexible protocol as its builders want its governance to be fully decentralized and also do some bootstrapping. For these reasons, the Balancer team recently kicked off its own liquidity mining campaign.

To that end, BAL is the governance token of Balancer. Of the 100 million BAL ever to be minted, up to 65 million have been set aside to reward liquidity providers. 145,000 BAL are now being distributed to these providers on a weekly basis, which has led to traders parking their funds in Balancer pools to yield farm the BAL awards (Balancer, 2020).

Monetary banking services

As DeFi applications are, by definition, financial applications, monetary banking services are an obvious use case for them. These can include the issuance of stablecoins, mortgages, and insurance.

As the blockchain industry is maturing, there is an increased focus on the creation of stablecoins. They are a type of cryptoasset that is usually pegged to a real-world asset but can be transferred digitally with relative ease. As cryptocurrency prices can fluctuate rapidly at times, decentralized stablecoins could be adopted for everyday use as digital cash that is not issued and monitored by a central authority (M.D.Maggio, N.Platis, 2020).

The idea behind stablecoins is to provide some of the advantages of both fiat currency and cryptocurrency worlds. Currently, stablecoins are mostly used as a hedge against the high volatility of cryptocurrency markets, but depending on the context, they can also be used as a stable currency that provides increased transparency and decentralization. Also, when compared to traditional fiat currencies, they present faster transactions and lower fees, with an average of \$0.2/transaction (Ethgasstation, 2020), making them quite useful for everyday payments and international transfers.

DAI

With its circulating supply nearly reaching 423M (CoinMarketCap, 2020), Dai is the leading permissionless stablecoin within the DeFi ecosystem. In essence, the ability for anyone to collateralize Ether and receive Dai effectively makes MakerDAO the world's first open, permissionless digital central bank.

It issues a stable currency (Dai) while being governed by a decentralized ecosystem of participants (MKR holders). MKR holders receive cash flows for governing the protocol based on the interest from the debt accrued from its global users minting Dai. Moreover, with the introduction of Multi-Collateral Dai (MCD), Maker offers a native high-yielding savings account for its users (MakerDAO, 2020).

The Dai Savings Rate (DSR) allocates a portion of the interest accrued from the system's outstanding debt into an open savings account,

allowing Dai holders to earn a passive income by depositing Dai into the contract (MakerDAO whitepaper, 2020).

While the DSR is one of the newer earning mechanisms within DeFi, we've also seen the emergence of a handful of other protocols establishing permissionless lending markets for its users to supply loans to earn a significant interest rate (L. Campbell, 2020).

USDC

Coinbase's USDC is a permissioned stablecoin backed 1:1 by a reserve of US dollars held in a custodial account. While it does not offer the same permissionless characteristics of Maker's Dai, it does act as a bridge between traditional finance and decentralized finance at large.

The permissioned stablecoin has been adopted by the DeFi community within a range of lending protocols. While these stablecoins are fundamentally different (Dai being permissionless and USDC being permissioned) they both have relatively liquid markets across a range of applications.

DeFi Insurance

Generally speaking, decentralized insurance acts as a safety net for the DeFi ecosystem. From wallet insurance to smart contract insurance, the comfort of knowing that your assets are protected in the case of a bug or a hack creates peace of mind for crypto investors.

Over the past decade, we have seen countless instances of crypto investors mishandling their private keys and numerous exchange hacks, ultimately resulting in the loss of billions in investors' capital. Moreover, many smart contracts in existence today, especially DeFi-based contracts, are valuing storing contracts that could be vulnerable to manipulation through loopholes. The most widely known instance of a hacked value storing contract was the DAO hack back in 2016 (D.Siegel, 2016).

While insurance is not commonly mentioned throughout the DeFi community, it is one sector that has a massive potential to provide investor protection and confidence. Legacy insurance is a multi-trillion-dollar industry with many unethical players. The transparency & trust nature of decentralized networks and DeFi is a perfect fit to disrupt the incumbent industry. In the end, decentralized insurance protocols will democratize the power of insurance and return to its historic roots of acting as society's safety net (L.Campbell, 2020).

Insurance on the blockchain could eliminate the need for intermediaries and allow the distribution of risk between many participants. This could result in lower premiums with the same quality of service.

Though ideally supposed to be risk-free, users have experienced loss of their crypto fund through exchange hacks, private keys negligence, and simply mishandling their crypto funds. And since the transaction nature is decentralized – fund recovery and user security are problematic, unlike banks or credit card firms in traditional finance. Hence, DeFi insurance holds a vital role in securing the fund of the user, thus drawing more investors to the DeFi space.

DeFi insurance protocols allow its users to take out insurance policies on smart contracts, funds, or any other digital asset through pooling individual funds to cover any claims. Though the crypto-insurance space is small, the market is untapped and as the need grows, more insurance applications would emerge in the future.

Decentralized Insurance Projects

Nexus Mutual

Nexus Mutual is creating decentralized insurance on Ethereum by using a risk-sharing pool. The pool is governed by its members where membership rights are represented by the NXM token. The mutual is initially launching with smart contract cover, allowing anyone to purchase insurance on any public Ethereum smart contract.

This means that DeFi users can now get protection on their funds being lent out on Compound or Dharma or their assets deposited in a Uniswap pool. Over time, Nexus Mutual claims will continue to expand outside of smart contract insurance into other crypto and legacy insurance products (H. Karp, R. Melbardis, 2020).

Etherisc

Etherisc is building a platform for decentralized insurance applications. The core team developed some common infrastructure, product templates and insurance license-as-a-service that allows anyone to create their own insurance products. With this, the Etherisc community has designed a suite of basic insurance products ranging from flight delay insurance and hurricane protection to crypto wallet and lending collateral protection (Etherisc, 2017).

CDx

CDx is a platform for tokenized, tradable insurance swaps and allows investors to insure deposits held on crypto exchanges and trade with confidence.

Crypto investors can now protect their funds from hacks on popular exchanges. Exchange insurance is likely one of the more needed insurance products given the numerous hacks over the past decade. CDx Swaps can be used for a range of use cases including trading swaps for a profit, protecting your crypto assets, betting against exchange security and others.

With the potential to disrupt the multi-trillion-dollar insurance industry, decentralized insurance has a promising future. The transparency and democratization of insurance provide substantial improvements over the traditional insurance companies currently leading the industry.

As the sector continues to mature, decentralized insurance will continue to expand its product range. The accessibility that DeFi offers creates an intriguing opportunity to address the underserved markets in developing countries. But for now, with the rise of DeFi and total locked value, smart contract insurance will likely come to the forefront in the minds of crypto investors as DeFi applications continue to accrue value in the underlying smart contracts.

Decentralized Synthetics

Synthetic is a financial instrument or product that is meant to simulate other financial instruments while altering their key characteristics. The functionality of a financial instrument can be achieved through a blend of different financial instruments, as well. These tools are made to offer flexibility, customization, and ease of use to suit the needs of investors and customers.

Synthetics allow an investor to buy the synthetic version of the asset with any other asset that the selling platform accepts and then sell it at the spot price in the future. In reality, on a synthetics platform when one trader buys the synthetic asset, this creates an arbitrage opportunity for market makers to buy the underlying asset if its price moves. This is the profit motive that keeps the price pegged to the underlying asset.

There are three primary things Synthetic tools offer:

- **Funding** – Synthetics can lower funding costs. For example, the Total Return Swap (TRS) is used as a funding tool.
- **Liquidity Creation** – Synthetics can be used to insert liquidity into the market, reducing costs for investors. Credit Default Swap (CDS) can be used this way to hedge credit exposure.
- **Market Access** – Synthetics can open up the marketplace to relatively free participation by recreating the cash flow of virtually any security through a combination of financial instruments and derivatives. CDS can be used to replicate a bond and offer it to the open market.

Synthetics address and solve four valuable areas that can help DeFi scale up:

1. **Liquidity** – Lack of liquidity has always been an issue in the DeFi space. Various players, especially market makers, deal with a large number of different types of crypto assets. There is a minimal number of financial tools available in DeFi space for proper risk management work. This is where synthetics can help the DeFi space scale up by protecting profits and hedging positions.
2. **Solving Tech Barrier** – Smart contract is one of the pillars of the DeFi space, yet it is still difficult to move assets across multiple blockchains as it requires direct access to assets across all platforms. This cross-chain communication issue poses a severe limitation of asset availability on a decentralized exchange. Synthetics allow this direct access to assets to traders, thus solving the tech barrier.
3. **Asset Scaling** – Bringing or connecting real-world assets like fiat currencies, gold, etc. to the blockchain platforms in a trustworthy way has always been one of the biggest challenges for the DeFi space. So far, stablecoins like Tether have taken on this role where fiat currencies are collateralized. However, a buyer having synthetic assets can deal with fiat currencies without really holding the same with a centralized agency. Thus, he is not directly exposed to the market risk. Therefore, synthetics provide a flexible mechanism to help in scale-up assets in DeFi space.
4. **More Participation** – Beside assets scaling, another area synthetics directly influences is investor participation. In traditional finance, synthetics are available to large and sophisticated investors, enabling them to create intricate risk management profiles. In contrast, smart contract-based blockchain platforms with their limited FinTech tools have managed to attract smaller investors in general. Synthetics in DeFi space mean bringing these large investors to the DeFi space.

DeFi synthetic assets allow a user to participate in any market with a price feed. This means that access cannot be limited to participants of any centralized agency's choice. Anyone can engage with synthetic assets as long as the market price is public.

Derivatives

In traditional finance, a derivative is a contract that derives its value from the performance of an underlying entity. This underlying entity can be an asset, index, or interest rate, and is often simply called the “underlying.”

Derivatives in DeFi offers immense flexibility across multiple assets and platforms. Smart contracts can issue tokenized derivative contracts which are executed permissionless and automatically. Though used for various purposes, there are two primary purposes of using a derivative:

- To protect oneself from price fluctuation in the future by signing a contract to buy an asset for a fixed price;
- To gain by speculating how the price of that entity is going to change in the future.

There are four types of derivatives:

- A. **Future** – Here a buyer must purchase an asset at an agreed-upon rate on a fixed date in the future. These are traded on exchanges.
- B. **Forward** – Similar to Future but more customizable and flexible to suit both parties.
- C. **Option** – Here a buyer has the right to purchase or sell the underlying asset at a specific price, but certainly not obliged to.
- D. **Swap** – These contracts allow two parties to exchange one type of cash flow for another – this is usually between fixed flow to floating flow. This swap is usually between interest rates and cryptocurrencies.

In DeFi space, Future derivatives are essential for traders to hedge positions and reduce the risk of crypto's price volatility. Various derivatives allow traders to gain from the price fluctuation of Bitcoin and major altcoins – buy now at a lower price and sell at a higher price later. But this is a very risky strategy as it is relevant only during a bull market (R.Mitra, 2019).

Another strategy is to do “shorting” which happens when a trader borrows the asset from an exchange or broker, then sell it on a downtrading market. As the asset price dips more, the borrower purchases back the same amount of asset at a lower price now, thus profiting from the lower trading rate. Based on the agreement they give a small profit portion to the lender.

Other platforms that evolve within the Derivatives DeFi space are: MCDEX, Erasure, Idle, Hegic, Oryn, Augur, ACO and Veil (Defipulse, 2020).

Zero-Coupon Bonds on blockchain via Yield Protocol

In traditional finance, a zero-coupon bond is a debt instrument that trades at a discount to its face value, only paying its holder at maturity. This means that you can buy it at one price, and if you hold it until it expires, you are guaranteed the opportunity to redeem it at a higher one.

Yield's whitepaper describes a standard for a token that settles based on the value of a target asset on a specified future date, and which is backed by some quantity of a collateral asset (A.Niemerg, D. Robinson, 2020).

The first application will be ERC20 tokens called *yTokens*: essentially Ethereum-based zero-coupon bonds. Once a contract for a given yToken exists, anyone can deposit collateral into a "vault" (a term borrowed from MakerDAO) to mint yTokens, which will be fungible and trade at a floating price.

To start off, the protocol will let users deposit ETH as collateral to mint "yDAI." Borrowers can issue yDAI tokens that are redeemable at different times – for instance, within a week, month, or a year. Interest rates over these distinct maturities can be used to create an on-chain interest rate curve, which could then be instructive for MakerDAO's monetary policy decisions, since it indicates future demand for leverage.

When a yDAI token expires, the ETH collateral in the Yield vault is automatically transferred to a MakerDAO vault, and DAI is issued against it. The outstanding yDAI tokens will be redeemable for that newly-issued DAI, while the borrower gets to maintain their debt position, albeit now at a variable rate (M. Orcutt, 2020).

Decentralized Marketplaces

This category of applications can be challenging to assess, as it is the segment of DeFi that gives the most room for financial innovation.

Arguably, some of the most crucial DeFi applications are Decentralized Exchanges (DEXes). These platforms allow users to trade digital assets without the need for a trusted intermediary (the exchange) to hold their funds. The trades are made directly between user wallets with the help of smart contracts.

Since they require much less maintenance work, decentralized exchanges typically have lower trading fees than centralized exchanges.

With the growth of DeFi in 2019, we've seen the re-emergence of decentralized exchanges (DEXes) as one of the vital pieces for autonomous liquidity on the backend of many dAPPs. Synthetix heavily relies on Uniswap, MakerDAO on Oasis, and dozens of wallets like Argent, have integrated Kyber Network as their back-end liquidity protocol (L. Campbell, 2020).

Other platforms that evolve within the DEXes space are: Balancer, Curve Finance, Uniswap, Bancor, Loopring, Kyber Network and DeversiFi (Defipulse, 2020).

Challenges that DeFi faces

DeFi has not reached its full potential yet, due to several challenges related to fraud, volatility, usability, and regulatory uncertainty. Applications that

evolve in this ecosystem can be vulnerable to fraud as well as to the proliferation of untested financial innovations (Y.Chen, C. Bellavitis, p.6-8, 2020).

Despite all of the promises and benefits, there are still some considerable challenges that lie in the path:

Poor performance: Blockchains are inherently slower than their centralized counterparts, and this translates to the applications built on top of them. The developers of DeFi applications need to take these limitations into account and optimize their products accordingly.

High risk of user error: DeFi applications transfer the responsibility from the intermediaries to the user. This can be a negative aspect for many. Designing products that minimize the risk of user error is a particularly difficult challenge when the products are deployed on top of immutable blockchains.

Bad user experience: Currently, using DeFi applications requires extra effort on the user's part. For DeFi applications to be a core element of the global financial system, they must provide a tangible benefit that incentivizes users to switch over from the traditional systems.

Cluttered ecosystem: It can be a daunting task to find the application that is the most suitable for a specific use case, and users must have the ability to find the best choices. The challenge is not only building the applications but also thinking about how they fit into the broader DeFi ecosystem.

Scalability, Usability and Liquidity

While the aforementioned projects are live, there are still some constraints when it comes to usability. For example, most platforms are not translated into multiple languages, which can make them hard to access, and they also require a certain degree of technical knowledge that some people simply do not have. Moreover, these DeFi protocols also require an Ethereum wallet and some tokens, which will usually require some form of banking to acquire. As such, DeFi is not as accessible in practice as it is in theory, at least for now.

When it comes to liquidity, there is no doubt that old finance is king. DeFi is a novel concept, so it's not extremely popular outside of the crypto realm. This means that there is almost no liquidity when it comes to these projects. Compound recently hit a major milestone with more than \$1 billion in funds borrowed, and it currently has around \$890 million in locked funds (DeFi Pulse Compound, 2020). Aave has more than \$700 million in locked funds (DeFi Pulse Aave, 2020). While DeFi is making progress, it does not compare to the size of traditional finance. Lack of liquidity can, of course, make it harder for users to get a loan or interest on a specific asset.

Also, the current congestion and scalability issues of Ethereum may soon hinder the use of DeFi. Fees can be extremely high and transactions can take a long time to process if there is congestion on the network. Although there are layer-two solutions available now, Ethereum 2.0 will still take years to fully develop and implement. Moreover, the lack of scalability can lead to future issues, and it poses a looming danger for DeFi projects and users alike.

Conclusion

DeFi, by leveraging Blockchain in their operations, solves a major pain point allowing users to not only access funds, but do so in a transparent manner thereby serving individuals that are under-banked, de-banked or completely unbanked. The decentralization concept via blockchain adds more efficiency as a direct route between the service and the client is built in a secure, global, cheap, and transparent platform.

DeFi services could end up being the best alternative to a digital economy stemming from a reliable blockchain (N. Dalmás, 2019).

From a technical perspective, what we're seeing is mostly the reimplementing of most traditional financial services: borrowing, lending, savings, exchanges, derivatives, futures and various forms of currency pegs.

While they're implemented in novel ways, the functions they are fulfilling, are basically the same. This will change accordingly as the technology evolves.

All technologies usually have as a starting point, a shadow of the previous technology model within, before they gradually evolve. This makes sense, as most of the financial services come from a centralized framework.

Over time, as the capabilities increase we're going to see more novel applications that expand the range of what is possible and start reaching outside of the box of centralized financial services and moving into applications that are simply not possible with traditional financial services.

With dozens of lending protocols emerging in recent years, we can begin to see these markets mimic traditional finance when looking at the risk-free rate and the risk premium.

Blockchain technology may also be used to issue and allow ownership of a wide range of conventional financial instruments. These applications would work in a decentralized way that cuts out custodians and eliminates single points of failure.

Security token issuance platforms, for example, may provide the tools and resources for issuers to launch tokenized securities on the

blockchain with customizable parameters. Other projects may allow the creation of new derivatives, synthetic assets, decentralized prediction markets, and many more.

Synthetics are exciting instruments that are full of promises and hidden potentials and there is no doubt that synthetics are important components for growing the DeFi space. It is still in its nascent stage, and therefore nothing can be predicted for sure. The DeFi synthetic space needs continuous research from developers and financiers to bring innovative instruments in DeFi space, thus allowing real flexibility and ease of access and use.

However, the data suggests the frenzy did not bring many new users into DeFi, demonstrating that DeFi's innovation must be paired with education and UX before we see the DeFi community grow beyond its current borders.

Ultimately, despite all the hurdles and political resistance, the success of DeFi would translate to a world of secure transactions, diversity, low transaction costs and financial inclusion since anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can access complex financial services or products previously meant for the affluent regardless of geographic location.

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THE MESSAGE AS AN EXAM

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Abstract

This study is a reflection of the message. It starts from the observation that some messages are built on the idea that what is to be said is under the imprint of "I have no words", "he left me speechless" and under the strong impression of the unknown, of ignorance, of lack of idea. Using the meta-analytical method, it is found that any communicator in the face of any need to produce a message experiences on the one hand the feeling that he has no words and on the other hand he feels that he no longer knows anything. These sensations are experienced similarly by students in exams. It turns out that any message is an exam that poses two problems: a) the problem of a language, of some words, sib) the problem of a thought, of a knowledge, of a stranger. The practical conclusion is that in order to formulate a message, one must prepare from the beginning some nuclear, central, main words and one or a few thoughts, one or a few ideas of communication. That is, only if you have at least a few clear words and at least an idea, then you can formulate a successful message.

Keywords: message-exam, communicator, communication idea

Introduction

The communicator plays the full force of thought on words. He has no choice, he must say first of all what has not been said, that is, the unspoken. He has to think without thinking. But who knows the orexis of the unspoken and the unthought? At first glance, the unspoken and the thoughtless mean nothing. The communicator starts from nothingness, from knowledge and judgment in its terms. Later, in the essential moments of his discursive enterprise, he relates to nothing primordial without provocation and without insidiousness. Nothing is outlined as a beginning, but as the background from which the cogitational figures rise. Communication

therefore applies to nothing. He finds in it an interrogative and aporetic limit. Communicational productivity not only experiences nothing as a dilemma or as a stalemate, but is based even on the detachment from nothingness of meanings that outline the fundamental experience that configures the communicative discourse. Communication probes the limits of what can be said and known. She is in constant contact with the unspeakable and ignorance. His approach is an exhausting struggle to experience linguistically and cogitatively the unspeakable and the unknown. Unattainable ideals of knowledge, they make up the tense forces of the two devices of the discursive device. Once the productive ferocity is gone, the discourse becomes repetitive and mundane. As it has lost contact with the unspeakable and the unknown, the message becomes a literary message.

Language and thinking

In order to count as a point of tension in the unspeakable, the cogitative spirit must use tools other than those of language in which the unspeakable closes and the unknown is blocked. A language and a cogitation that does not see the unspeakable as a language reserve currently unspoken, unspoken, and the unknown as a hitherto unknown. One does not have to look for the unknown as a hidden one in order to be taken out of hiding (Drămnescu & Enăchescu, 2018; Colhon et al., 2019; Roșca, 2020). One must not determine the word that leads to the revelation of a part of the saying that has not found its way to speech or the way back to the message.

The word and the thought must be sacrificed so that the unspeakable and the unknowable appear as they really are: unspeakable and unknowable. In this way, one and the same thing would be said in other words. What is beyond what is sayable and knowable must be captured in the message. Communication is made to rise above the suppression of language and thinking that have reached the limit of their gear availability. In order to see well, you must first not see at all. In order to think better, that is, over the unknowable, it is necessary to accept the unthinkable. Communication and message are thus forced to sacrifice ordinary comprehension in favor of unlimited natural comprehension. The message is aroused and occurs as a sacrifice of the unspoken and unthinking that borders on meaning (Teodorescu et al., 2015; Siminica et al. 2017; Barbu et al., 2019).

Communication struggles with its own helplessness. It articulates the unspeakable with unthinkable means. In this way, the thinking spirit

proves its seditiveness. Discourse provokes the unspoken and the thoughtless, thus attracting them in the course of speech. It stimulates them and causes them to get out of their condition of limited ineffectiveness. The obligation to break away from the impotence transferred to speech triggers in the cogitative spirit words that go beyond peace, silence and memory. The taciturn meditation as a spiritual exercise helps to overcome the dilemmatic condition of choice between speaking the unspoken and thinking the unthinking through procedures of utterance and thought that only the path traveled invents. To the unspeakable and the unknowable we cannot turn to the mundane instruments of the sayable and the known. The set of possibilities for incorporating the unspeakable is infinite. The multiplicity of his words fuels the chosen saying to advance to a new unspeakable. Therefore, any unspeakable proves its precariousness in front of another unspeakable. Ignorance must be treated with ignorance. To process the unknown with methods of the already known is to go to war according to the rule of going back. The unknown becomes approachable only through unknown methods.

The advance towards the unknown is not to be judged in the terms and philosophies of the known. The unspeakable has no words to be approached from the sayable area. It is therefore necessary to dive into the unspeakable without the consciousness of the unspeakable and to dive into the unknowable outside the lucidity of the delimitation of the unknowable.

The path of immersion beyond the limits of the sayable and the knowable is the path of the one who learns to swim. He doesn't know how to swim until he struggles into the unknown. Training on the shore does not help in terms of water comfort, but in terms of self-control. The swimmer plays his destiny on the destiny of the water. It integrates into the water according to the principles of water. Thus the unspeakable and the unknowable must be approached (basic & masuda, 2020; wei et al., 2020).

The fact that the principles of water, of the unspeakable and the unknowable are not similar must not lead to the abandonment of the established path. Saying unspoken things and thinking unthinking things are not options for everyone. He who will not impregnate himself with this fact will not be able to cross the limits which, the more strictly analyzed, the more they appear to be better consolidated. The path to the unspeakable is unspeakable. The road to the unknown is unknown. What we do know is that there is no similarity, analogy, or resemblance between method and object.

The method and the object live on their own, each one takes care of himself. What we also know is that the unity of the unspeakable forces the unspeakable to decompose into unspeakable elements. The unspeakable is constructed, like the unknowable, atomically. The compound has something of the essence of the elements. The name has power over the thing. If we call it unspeakable, this is not itself unspeakable. The word is exposed to say. The unspeakable is offered so as not to say. The unknowable gives itself as unknowable in order to remain unknowable. On the other hand, the word is also offered to hide, and the unspoken is also exposed to say. Every time the transparency gives way, the opacity that is established leaves room for it to become opaque as well. Transparency does not rule, but becomes a mystery of opacity. A secret and an enigma set in every time the unspeakable and the unknowable try to remain what they are.

The unspeakable lets a secret electron escape from their orbit. The unknowable yields to the pressure of the unknowable and releases an enigma. From the closings of the unspeakable and the unknowable emerge as mysteries, secret messages and riddles. They decompose according to impenetrable procedures, hidden by the very closures from which they escape. The state of the unspeakable and the state of the unknowable are eternal. They cannot be changed by impenetrable, enigmatic, secret and mysterious. Their end is an unattainable end. The road to the unspeakable through the unspeakable passes. The path of the unknown passes through the unknown. The unspeakable method is concealment. The method of the unknown is the secret and the enigma. The way in which the method works is according to the model of obedience to ... X-ray is the subjection to X-rays. The unspeakable is revealed as an obstacle to language.

The unknown is revealed as a secret and as an enigma in the cogitative. The movement of thought into the unspeakable and the unknown is a work in which the establishment and support of such disordered procedures are detected, which we can deny, but not avoid. And inattentive to the signals coming from the unspeakable and the unknown, we cannot fail to denounce as outdated the return of the unspeakable to the unspeakable and the unknown to the unknown through obstacles, secrets and enigmas.

We can consider secrecy as the method and form of the unknown. The whole is approached by the method of the part. "The whole, E. Morin points out, does not function as a whole unless the parts function as parts" (1977, p. 126).

In the unspeakable and the unknown, hermeneutics works unspeakably and unknowably. It no longer aims to obtain from the elements taken in part the meaning of the whole, nor to understand each element taken separately by the totality that passes through it and includes it. In this general situation, already clarified experiences are not applicable, new experiences are needed. The telling is a particular case of the unspeakable. Knowledge is a particular case of ignorance (Karim et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020).

The hermeneutics of the unspeakable is hardened in procuring from the obstacle of words a new meaning that escapes the power of wholeness. The hermeneutics of the unknown is hardened in detaching from the parts with secret characteristics one through which to decipher, to decipher the obstructed message of the whole. The secret is a part of the unknown. The unknown can be approached by the method of secrecy. The unknown has only itself as a program (Tetu et al., 2020). The secret is his self-decryption project. The secret is at the same time for the unknown *modus operandi* and *ars producendi*. The secret operates and produces the unknown. Unlike the known, a sovereign textual consciousness is far visible in the unknown: the unknown speaks of itself as unknown. He has not the impotence of saying, but the impotence of ignorance that has nothing to do with a knowledge that the expression would leave decoded by traditional logic. In the unknown, words have no synonyms, each living separately a unique and perennial destiny. Synonymy is the precariousness of the saying. In the unknown, every word is a rupture; since repetition is inadmissible, the unknown appears as a domain of difference. And the different is different. The informant no longer informs anything. Words live the unknown on their own. There are no accidents of ambiguity, because through secrets ambiguity becomes secret.

The language of the unspeakable will no longer be the essence of communication, but will make up its own self-assigned idiolect. This is not to say that the process of overcoming the word by working with the unspeakable takes us beyond the word (Tudor & Bratosin, 2020). The unspeakable does not cross nor is it at the end of the word. Every word has a part of the unspeakable that grinds it and makes it permanently unspeakable and only as an existing exception. Most of the time, words are parked in the unspeakable. As long as they are not used, they stay in the unspeakable area. Dicable is a small part, a particular case of the unspeakable. Words help the unspeakable more often than the sayable. Overtaking is consumed within words and only a few notice it. Words are transgressed to a new unspeakable even by appealing to them.

The destiny of the obstructed word and of the secret represents a proof of the ordinary course of the productive thought in search of the inner obstacle and of the self-secret.

What does "know thyself" mean, if not the unraveling of the enigma of the self, the revelation of the unknown on the idea of decryption by way of secrecy. The specular inscription itself highlights the self-secret. The unknown within us is a secret through which we can decipher the unknown to the extent that time allows. Not being in time, not truth and method, but unspeakable and unknown man is. The obstacle of language and the enigma of the unknown make the universe of being (Ramodike-Thovhakale & Thomas, 2018; Kandasamy et al., 2020). These two approaches are uncontaminable. Wittgenstein's ideas of deception and clarification are private undertakings. He doesn't see the forest either unspeakable and unknown. The forest does not have the essence of trees, but the tree has the essence of a forest. The Baudelairean "forest of symbols" has the dimension of the unknown that the thinking spirit manages to avoid when it sees each symbol separately. Whoever fails to bypass a tree will not succeed in de-secreting it as a forest (Jerripothula et al., 2020; Onofrei; Bengtsson et al., 2020; Jones, 2020), when he takes care of the trees. Cut down trees by deforestation, without realizing that the edge of clarification refers to the forest essence of the tree. The tree is tellable and familiar, the forest is.

But what does the unspeakable contain as unspeakable? What does the unknown include as the unknown? What is hindered by language? What's the secret? What is the enigma? All these questions have only one answer: the message. In the unspeakable, the unspeakable is the message. In the unknown, the message is unknown. Language obstructs the message. The message is the secret and the enigma. The dianoietic spirit witnesses in the unspeakable and unknown the very fundamental act of signification. The discretion of the logos is bankrupt by the message as an inability to keep the secret. The message exists only as a promise that is fulfilled at the end. The adventure of communication has nothing in the final message that is unspeakable and unknown. Until it becomes a message, the message is unspeakable and unknown. The only access to the message is the unspeakable and the unknown. Before the message, everything is unspeakable and thoughtless. Finally, the message dampens the unspeakable and the unknown in the message. The unspoken unfolds in obstacles of the message called clues,

signs, signals, codes, numbers. The cogitative register demonstrates the unknown of discourse. The method is based on a message past. Teaching, education, culture, science are messages. Everything is based on the message. If there was no idea of a message, there would be nothing to say.

Conclusions

The world is messageable. The discourse of the world finds its way to the message through interpretation. Hermeneutics manages and generates ways to access the message. It manages de-messaging. Communication and message means that between communication and message there is a path called interpretation which before proclaiming itself as interpretation proclaims that any communication goes to a message. Some communications do not get real messages. Interpretation, however, hermeneutics does not account for these. At first the message is pre-lost in the indeterminate and indefinite in the unspeakable. In communication, a discourse is established that is de-messageed. Communication brings a message to the presence through speech.

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FACILITATING ACCESS TO CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH CULTURAL MEDIATION AND TOURISM. CASE STUDY: EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE TIMIȘOARA 2021

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Abstract

Reflecting on history and cultural heritage in Europe, in the context of globalization and understanding their role and meaning in our daily lives is of primary importance. Migration, change in population's structure, postmodern revolutions, are just a few among the many factors determining people to isolate from their heritage. Cultural heritage, as a discursive construction has a formative effect on our identity. Transmission of memory from the past in a reflexive manner gives space for new negotiations, mediations, interpretations. Individuals and professional in the cultural heritage field have an active role in the mediation of the meanings of heritage.

In our investigation we start from the following question: How are cultural mediation and tourism going to facilitate access to cultural heritage in the context of Timisoara 2021, European Capital of Culture? This paper intends to focus on the role of cultural mediation and tourism in the programme European Capital of Culture, with emphasis on Timisoara 2021.

Keywords: identity, cultural heritage, cultural mediation, cultural tourism, active cultural participation

Introduction

The alert lifestyle, increasing migration, demographic decline in some parts of the globe, changes in population structure and multiculturalism tend to isolate us from our cultural heritage. Reflecting on history and cultural heritage in the context of globalization gives us a renewed perspective on the transmission of memory from the past, creating space for new “negotiations, mediation, motivation” (Skrzypaszek 2012, 1497). We understand cultural heritage in the context of this paper as a cultural and social process, a discursive construction, through which we assign value and meaning to our surrounding space (Smith 2006). According to UNESCO’s manual for the management of the cultural heritage (Vujicic-Lugassy and Frank 2013), there is a shift towards viewing the heritage audiences “as active agents in the mediation of the meanings of heritage”.

Moreover, tourism, in its essence it is regarded by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as a form of mediation, implying translation of the meaning of heritage to a specific audience. In 2017, the General Assembly of the WTO held in China referred to cultural tourism as an activity through which a visitor is motivated “to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination”. The cultural attractions cover a wide range of features, such as: “arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures” (World Tourism Organization 2017).

Unlike modernity, where the emphasis was on form and function, postmodernity brings to the fore in tourism the search for authenticity and a different reality. Postmodern visitors are more concerned with the aesthetic part in their activity and in the same time search for such activities which contribute to the development of their self (Richards2002).

Despite crises of all kind, of linguistic, ethnic and national diversity, culture is the dome that brings together all European states, whether members of the Union or not. In order to counteract the growing disparities, at the level of development among the Member States, in 1985, the European Union decided to award a prize to one city in Europe, a different city each year, for cultural performances. That was the starting point of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title. The prize was originally awarded as the City of Culture.

Starting from the previous statements, this paper intends to focus on the role of cultural mediation and tourism to facilitate access of a larger audience to the cultural heritage in the context of Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture.

Research methods

Some hypotheses from which we have started in our research are due to our systematic observation (Patton 2014) as participants in focus groups (before and after Timișoara won the title of European Capital of Culture), observation as participants in cultural cafes, cultural mediation workshops organized by Timișoara2021 Association or other cultural organizations, or as promoters of some locations from Banat area through documentaries and the practice of the tourism guide profession. An extensive part of our research implies an auto ethnographic undertake and the ethnotextuality method (Gabor 2019). The research is a qualitative one, applied on European legislation in the field of Cultural Capitals, the city's application file for the title (bidbook), relevant evaluation reports of Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture, jury reports, press articles, public interviews with the representatives of Timișoara 2021 Association, relevant literature in the field of cultural studies and urban regeneration.

Relevance of the research

Romania holds the European Capital of Culture title for the second time, after Sibiu2007. As positive, immediate effects for Sibiu of holding the title of European Capital of Culture, we could list: increasing the visibility of the city, positioning on the international map as a tourist destination of the city itself and its surroundings, doubling the number of tourists compared to the previous year, renovated buildings, the increase of the feeling of local pride, to which we could add the economic advantages. The bidbook of Sibiu established as primary objectives for 2007 to increase the city's visibility at European level and to support the development of the city through culture. Regarding the European dimension of the cultural programme, that objective was achieved through European co-operation, especially with Luxembourg, the area which held the ECoC title in the same year and through the involvement in the cultural production and performance of international cultural actors. The level of exploration of European themes was not high in the cultural programme of Sibiu (Richards and Rotariu2007).

The positive effects for Sibiu are more visible on the long run. In 2019, the International Institute for Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT) has designated the Sibiu County as a European Gastronomic Region. Due to the capacity of organizing big events in the city of Sibiu and the offering

surroundings in 2019, the city hosted also two important European events. On 9th of May 2019, 27 European leaders and 400 high-level guests gathered in Sibiu for the European Union Summit. Later on that year, in October, the Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe chose Sibiu as the venue of their event. Next year, in 2021, if the COVID 19 pandemic will permit organizing big scale events, Sibiu will become the European Capital of Rambling through Eurorando, the largest tourist event for hiking, culture and continental nature. This event would bring to Romania three million people, from 60 mountain organizations from 30 countries, which would cover approximately 30 routes in Sibiu County.

The European Capital of Culture legislative framework has changed several times since its origin: new objectives, as well as new selection criteria and a chronological list of countries selected to hold the title, set a few years before, have been added. In 2006, EU introduced, in addition to the initial criteria, two new criteria: the European dimension and the highlighting of the collaboration between the city and its citizens. Why was the European dimension of the project necessary? First, through the European dimension the jury can observe the intended cooperation of the candidate city with other cultural operators, artists and other cities from EU member states. Secondly, it emphasized the richness of cultural diversity in the EU. Thirdly, its purpose was to bring together the common features of European cultures. This criterion had, as a central objective, to raise awareness among the population of a given country about the cultural diversity in Europe.

Unlike 2007, when the city of Sibiu was designated ECoC, Timișoara participated in a selection process, along with 14 cities in Romania, the jury designating this title in 2016 based on an application file. The winning concept was based on the metaphor of light, encapsulated in the slogan: “Shine your light, light up your city!” the main focus being the public involvement. The other cities from Romania which participated in the competition for the ECoC title are now part of a European network of candidate cities and continue their collaboration under this framework with Timișoara 2021 and different candidate cities from all over Europe. The evaluation process took into account five dimensions, such as: the European dimension of the cultural programme of the candidate city; the cultural and artistic content of this programme; capacity to deliver; the outreach and the management of the proposed cultural programme for the ECoC year. In the same time, the selection panel evaluated how the title contributed to the long-term cultural strategy of the city and the legacy was leaving behind after the ECoC year.

Cultural mediation and tourism in Timișoara 2021 ECoC

Before looking for more arguments in favour of our question, we consider it is necessary to clarify the concept of cultural mediation, given that in the Romanian space it is sometimes assimilated to the concept of cultural management. In Romania, since 2006, the legislation specifically stipulates that the management of cultural institutions should be carried out through a cultural project. Cultural management only concerns the administration of the institution and the management of resources. Unfortunately, the legislative framework does not include criteria for remunerating performance and its specific request (Croitoru and Becuț 2015).

The concept of cultural mediation is an umbrella concept, which emerged in the 1960s in France, in the cultural field; it covers a wide range of activities, from audience development to community and participatory art. The term was later imposed, in the 1980s, in the world of museums and libraries, which had as their object the transmission of knowledge and education. Here, mediation was used in a classical sense, that of disseminating literature, art and cultural heritage (Quintas 2014, 1-2).

Cultural mediation mainly aims at extending the sphere of participation of citizens in public cultural life and facilitating access to cultural spaces. Access and interaction do not equate to participation; these are just its conditions of possibility. Participation implies a decision-making process and an egalitarian and balanced character in power relations. By increasing participation, cultural institutions become institutions of reflective knowledge. In a broad sense, cultural mediation designates the activity of each actor who participates in a cultural event (meeting), by creating that event or as an audience that loves culture, being considered a content-producing partner, cultural mediator, who helps spread culture and takes care of its circulation. In a narrow sense, the field of cultural mediation includes professionals in the cultural field, from public or private cultural institutions, regional or local authorities in urban areas, cultural societies or creative industries, cultural education departments and cultural centres.

The argumentation starts with the direct benefits of cultural mediation in the development of a democratic society, in the formation of reflexive and involved citizens with ethical and moral values, equipped with critical thinking, communication and presentation skills, and in the cultural sphere playing a key role in democratization of cultural policies, guarantying increased access and participation of all categories of audience to culture. On personal level, mediation leads to facilitating a person's encounter with

him/herself, establishing his/her identity, equipping him/her with the skills necessary to meet with the other, recognizing the differences and then managing them, awareness of the daily political, cultural, symbolic and natural practices, addressing discrimination and accepting diversity. The ultimate goal is to open our minds and hearts (Simionescu 2020).

Mediation is the symbolic representation of the dialectics between the individual and the collective. Society can only exist if each member is aware of the necessity of a dialectical relationship between his own existence and the existence of the community (belonging and sociability). Through mediation, individuals give a symbolic form, translate into language, political and institutional structures, and fulfil their social contract. Forms of mediation are born in public space, because here is where dialectics is possible between collective forms and singular representation. Public space is, by definition, the place of cultural mediation. Here, identities and cultures are mixed and confronted, often appearing as an antagonism between the two ways of its habitation: between the one who lives and feels that it belongs to that space and understands its signs and the one who experiences a feeling of rejection, a true exclusion. Lamizet, based on Lacan's central thesis, on the stage of the mirror, claims that in the public space, one is always confronted with the identity of the other, in comparison with which he is structuring his own identity (Lamizet 1999).

From a philosophical point of view, cultural mediation represents the relationship between the subject and the world. This concept tends to become a marketing concept that brings in a fixed form: the transitory, the fugitive or the contingent, with the risk of forgetting the nature of social relations (transcendence and the transmission of information in a symbolic form). The concept of mediation lies at the intersection between two axes: a horizontal one, which corresponds to interpersonal relationships, and a vertical one, which reflects the transcendental relations. Therefore, mediation as a social project can not only create ephemeral ties, but must also contribute to producing a sense that engages the community. The symbolic, aesthetic and pragmatic perspective of the cultural democracy is that of a heritage that is also transmitted by the involvement and expression of those whose words have not found yet the places of enunciation and reception (Caune 2017).

Practical activities in the field of cultural mediation raise the difficulties faced by those who conceive the cultural strategies when it comes to public involvement: issues of intentionality, if we have a pragmatic perspective and problems of structuring the action from a sociological perspective. We come to the understanding and explanation of an action of

the public by exploring intentions, whether explicit or not, and the many factors that lead to a decision. In the broad sense, cultural mediation means the activity of each actor who participates in a cultural event (meeting) by creating the event or as a public who loves culture, being considered a content partner, a cultural mediator who helps to disseminate culture and cares of its circulation. In a narrow sense, the field of cultural mediation includes cultural professionals, public or private cultural institutions, regional or local urban authorities, cultural societies or creative industries, cultural education departments and cultural centres (Dufrêne and Gellereau 2004, 199-206).

Nowadays, culture means participation, conversation and contribution. The various actors participate in the conversation, comment on the content, distribute it and become ambassadors. Cultural managers become moderators, mediators between the demands of different audiences and the demands of sponsors, politicians and those working in the creative industry. Cultural institutions, instead of providing something, education or simple dissemination of information, are heading towards a culture of sharing, where the cultural mediator must ensure that the moment of sharing, that meeting stimulates civic imagination (Holden 2006).

The action taken in the cultural mediation process aims to raise public awareness, contribute to the reception and transmission of information, stimulate and facilitate the expression and participation of individuals. Cultural spaces become meeting spaces, where people with certain information meet people who have other information. There are raised all sorts of questions about: sustainability, access to education, discrimination, inequality, etc. The role of cultural institutions is to help the public manage the pressure generated by the ambiguities present in the cultural space by facilitating access to interpretations rather than providing pre-defined solutions.

Active participation or engagement becomes a key concept in communication, especially after switching to popular Web 2.0. Through active cultural participation, we understand a situation in which individuals are not confined to passively absorbing cultural stimuli, but are motivated to put their skills at work. Thus, individuals are challenged to expand their ability to express themselves, to re-establish their expectations and beliefs, to re-consider their social identity (Sacco 2011, 5-6). Access and interaction is not equal to participation; these are just its condition of possibility. Active participation involves a decision-making process and an equitable and balanced character in power relations (Carpentier 2011, 27).

By increasing active participation of its audience, cultural institutions become institutions of reflexive knowledge. Postmodern society needs reflexive citizens. Instead of providing ready-made solutions for its public, cultural institutions should encourage and support the development of critical thinking and reasoning for its public, processes that later help citizens make informed decisions, increase their degree of awareness and the level of active participation, with the ultimate goal of creating a culture of sharing. Cultural mediation process facilitates access to the experimentation of cultural heritage, for those who live a feeling of exclusion, create a space for their voices to be heard and search in the same time to identify the motivation and drive of the passive audiences in order to actively engage them in the experimentation of cultural heritage. The ultimate goal of cultural mediation is creating a culture of sharing and development of reflexivity and empathy in the audience. The process of reflecting on the treasured memory from the past has an effect on readjusting our identity, in accordance to a certain space and contemporaneous time (Simionescu 2018, 95).

In tourism area, activities performed by tour guides are assimilated to cultural mediation practices. A tour guide is an interpreter of the cultural heritage and he/she impacts the audience through “what he/she says and how he/she says it”. The guiding activity is a communication practice and a performance in the same time. A conceptual model of interpretation of cultural heritage has three components: the phenomenon, the audience (participants) and the interpreter (or the media involved) focused on a specific theme (Ludwig 2015).

Cultural diplomacy adapts to the changing geopolitical and communication environment and, consequently, the cultural relations directed by states are replaced by peer-to-peer interactions facilitated by global tourism and the networking activity of cultural non-governmental organisations, besides other factors (CrossickandKaszynska2016).

The cultural program of Timișoara 2021 ECoC is a metaphor for a *Journey*, which offers the opportunity to move from loneliness to belonging, reaching from dark areas to the light. The traveller passes through six stations, on eighteen routes, which cross three territories. Territories are, in fact, the sum of the challenges encountered today in Europe, namely: *People*, *Places* and *Connections*. Passivity is a major problem in Europe today. The presented strategy in the bid book aims to work with emergencies to reactivate this passive civic energy. The implementation of the Timișoara 2021 project has three stages: the Start-up phase (2017-2018), Action/Production phase (2019-2021) and, the last one, Legacy (2022 and beyond).

The cultural mediation practices in Timișoara 2021 program covers three processes:

- *the process of developing cultural skills*: initiating the training/coaching/mentoring program, building and developing relationships and partnerships and study visits, dedicated to both the cultural and creative sector and the civic and social sector, needed to build and maintain the relationship with the public;

- *public involvement*: experimenting and testing tools and techniques to attract and involve the public in cultural and artistic interventions, in order to assess the current degree of perception and understanding of the cultural phenomenon and to identify relevant areas for the active public and potential audience, in relation to art and culture;

- *relations and communication*: ensuring the visibility and interconnectivity of the project, aiming to increase awareness of its advantages and benefits for the general public, building public confidence in the project and strengthening the networks built during the implementation of the program.

In the process of formation of the cultural mediation skills, Timișoara European Capital of Culture Association in partnership with *MetruCub Association - resources for culture* offered for those selected to participate in the training, the opportunity to learn together and practice new techniques and approaches to attract a more engaged and motivated audience for the city's cultural offer. In 2017, the training series included courses dedicated to cultural operators and the formation of a *European Laboratory for the Generation of Cultural Projects*.

A different form of cultural mediation between artists, the public and institutions were the cafes organized by Timișoara 2021 Association. The setting was an informal one, an invitation to a coffee and a debate through which ideas had been generated (Simionescu 2020).

In Romania and in the region, Timișoara does not position itself as a touristic destination. According to the progress and monitoring reports, starting with the designation of the ECoC title, here took place multiple meetings of the relevant actors in the tourism area and as a result of that, a tourism strategy had been shaped. Moreover, the integrated urban development Strategy for the Timișoara Growth Pole had been updated. Timișoara, as a Pilot City is now part also of the Agenda 21 for Culture.

The proposed cultural program of Timișoara 2021 is also part of the broader context of the European integration, through the cross-border

cooperation projects developed among Romania, Serbia and Hungary. The upcoming projects from this area try not only to restore infrastructural connections, but also the cultural ones. In this sense, the cultural region created by the context of the ECoC program, is an opportunity for cooperation in projects carried out under the auspices of the Danube Strategy, which makes the connection with ten other European countries bordering it, by extrapolation, with almost the entire European continent (Rădoi 2020, 547-559).

The strategies of the cities along the bank of the Danube River in the tourism area include various forms of tourism, such as: scientific tourism (gradually developed as a result of the discovery of several localities in the region, on both banks of the Danube Gorge, of numerous sites with geological structures or fossil fauna), cultural tourism, leisure and recreation tourism, rural tourism, eco-tourism, bird watching (it is a form of tourism that addresses to those passionate about photographing and tracking the behaviour, feeding, nesting and flight of bird species), forestry, speo-tourism, cycling, nautical and spa tourism. Unfortunately, not all the provisions in the strategies are really put into practice. This fact might change as a result of holding the titles of European Capitals of Culture for 2021 by two large cities nearby, namely by Timișoara and Novi Sad (Serbia).

From the point of view of regional integration, Timișoara proposed in its cultural program for 2021 a collaboration based on its geographical positioning, which took into account the role of the city in the administrative-hierarchical structure of Romania, as a polarizing centre of the West region. The application highlights the sentimental affiliation and connection of the city with the population in the diaspora. The surrounding area is part of the former historic Banat region and the DKMT Euroregion. This option is justified by the fact that the historic Banat region, naturally polarized by Timișoara, covers territories in Serbia, Hungary and Romania, each of them with its own particularities in terms of multiculturalism and cultural identities and, in the same time, all united under the umbrella of Banat identity (Rădoi 2020).

Unfortunately, for the European cultural projects, poetry ends when bureaucracy begins. The implementation of the European Capital of Culture project needed the adaptation of the European legislation to the local context, in order to receive the funding. The recommendations of the jury of experts in the final report of the jury of experts from 2019 and the monitoring reports

from 2017 and 2019 pointed out that the regulation of the organizational measures of securing funds with support from the national budget for the good development of the Cultural Program should be considered a priority for Romania. Thus, the Emergency Ordinance no. 42/2019, on establishing financial measures to support the development of the National Cultural Program Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture had been published in the Official Gazette no. 492 in 18.06.2019. The emergency ordinance regulated the financing of the Timișoara - European Capital of Culture Program in 2021, as a national cultural program, containing a portfolio of multi-annual projects and actions.

During restrictions on the organization of cultural events and tourists' movement caused by COVID 19 pandemic from the beginning of this year, funding for some projects of Timișoara 2021 had been adapted to the new conditions. Under the new circumstances, it had been hard to achieve the increase of civic participation, which is the central objective of the cultural project. On the 8th of April, people of Timișoara were urged to go out with lanterns or lights, to the windows or balconies of their homes, for a quarter of an hour, starting with 9 pm, in solidarity with those who were in the front line in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, as well as a message of trust and courage for Romanians staying at home. The initiative belonged to the Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture Association.

Due to the coronavirus epidemic, which has blocked cultural events in all European countries, there have already been discussions at European level to postpone cultural capitals from 2020 and 2021 by one or two years. Timișoara sent a letter to the European Commission in June informing it that it is ready to be the European Capital of Culture next year, but if events are postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, the city is ready to host events for the European Capital of Culture in 2022 or 2023.

Conclusion

Cultural mediation and tourism are catalysts of change in the European Capital of Culture program, Timișoara 2021, facilitating the access to cultural heritage for a broader audience. In the last four years, it has been a visible change regarding the shaping of city's profile as a cultural and touristic destination. We can observe an increased number of initiatives in the areas of culture, tourism, urban regeneration, as well as debates around the implementation of the cultural project.

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APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN A DOCTOR - PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

Media play crucial role in disseminating health information. Health communication can take many forms, both written and verbal, traditional and new media outlets. While you might be excited to get started with your new program, you must first develop a sound strategic plan. All strategic communication planning involves some variation on these steps.

Keywords: health, communication, strategy, medical journalism

Introduction

Communication has played and continues to play an important role in the complex equation of human existence, which is why the variety of perspectives approaches complement the broad picture of areas where communication is vital. Communication within the medical system is a necessary condition without which the world we live in could not exist and function as we know it today.

A well-mastered and professional way of communicating can bring efficiency, safety, understanding, compliance. Communication is vital in the medical system, because health is the value that ultimately reduces everything. Medical and health issues are of interest to most people and are commonly reported, as they have an impact on medical behavior and awareness. Medical journalism also makes contributions to medical practices, health care usage, and government policies.

The role of communication in health

Health communication necessarily promotes health information usually through public health campaigns, health education. It includes the relationship between doctor and patient as well. Key purpose of communicating health information is to influence personal health choices. And the best way for health journalists to achieve this purpose is by

improving health literacy. Public health is more than ever a concern for all governments of the world, both in developed and developing countries. In today's world, nothing is more international than health; no other aspect of modern life is as profoundly impacted by globalization as public health.

Research surrounding health communication can facilitate the development of preparing effective messages about health-related information through different media (print, electronic and new media). Media tools are very strong assistants here besides interpersonal relationships in health communities. ¹Health journalists can communicate to inform and educate people about ways to enhance healthy living in all sorts of countries – developed, developing or undeveloped; besides, they are powerful enough to encourage a people-friendly health policy and/or health communication strategy through many a measures such as: increase the level of knowledge and awareness of a health issue among a certain audience influence and/or change behaviors and attitudes towards a health issue educate healthy practices demonstrate the benefits of behavior changes to public health outcomes increase demand and support for health services help the concerned authorities understand the necessity of increased numbers of platforms (i.e., websites, software/ apps) to be initiated, and increase access to them increase ethical and responsible reporting on health-care issues widely covering issues regarding best and accurate use of medicines Keeping the society aware of issues regarding the broad context of medicine use, risks of medicine use, non-drug alternatives etc”

Communication management is such a complex and challenging phenomenon, especially in the century of speed and social networks, marketing development and public relations, if I consider that a doctoral research in this field can open new perspectives. Nothing is possible today without communicating effectively. Whoever masters communication, its subtle techniques, can lead and control. ²The challenge of coordinating the complex set of functions at different levels can be overcome by a systematic approach and employing a solution oriented perspective. Health communication has always

¹ Ghose Bishwajit¹*, Yang José², Renato Peneluppi Junior³, Sajeeb Sarker⁴ and Sandeep⁵, Role of Health Journalism in Promoting Communication among Stakeholders in Healthcare Sector, 2016, Google Scholar

² Turner KE , Fuller S . Patient-Held maternal and/or child health records: meeting the information needs of patients and healthcare providers? Online J Public Health Inform 2011;3.doi:10.5210/ojphi.v3i2.3631 Google Scholar

been facing countless challenges especially regarding designing and disseminating health messages. Although problems can be attributed to many a factors in this area, but the most critical issues usually evolve around the gap between health literacy and health communication, difficulties and inefficiency in communicating through the tools and channels of mass media, and the lack of well-trained professionals”

Particularities of communication in the medical field

Communication is especially important in healthcare, given that patients or clients are emotionally vulnerable, lonely and often scared of what to expect. Good communication is essential in this whole accommodation process, because it contributes to ensuring, in safe and efficient conditions, the medical care that patients need, both by providing quality services and by performing the appropriate procedures.

Public health is the science of promoting health, preventing disease and regaining health, where appropriate. In other words, the goal of public health is the same to prevent disease, reduce discomfort, reduce premature death and especially increase the quality of life. Communication to the target groups must thus be a care to follow an efficient process and to allow the measurement of results. „The mainstream press has an agenda which is not primarily to investigate things from a scientific or a balanced point of view. Most of the press is looking for stuff they can make into news, which they can sell to a public who have been acclimatised to celebrity-based news. They are not actually looking for stories in which you can explain more complicated things. That’s not what they do, and you have to really battle to get more complicated stories into the mainstream media as a result”³

Communication made correctly and consciously of all valences and can increase the level of confidence in the medical field, in medical equipment, can increase the medical business, results on patients' health, but also the satisfaction of doctors at work. „It is equally important for the healthcare team to have the communication skills to provide health information that is easily understood by patients, families and caregivers. In this sense, health literacy is a shared function and responsibility: The patient must communicate effectively with the healthcare team, and the clinicians

³ Kessels RP, Patients’ memory for medical information. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 2003;**96**:219–22. CrossRefPubMedWeb of ScienceGoogle Scholar

must be skilled in and committed to providing the education and support the patient needs to understand the illness and treatment decisions. It is relevant that the level of health literacy of a patient is the single most important indicator of health status. It directly impacts patient's adherence to treatment regimens and health outcomes"⁴

Methods for improving communication in medical practice

- guidance and recommendations to be given at the beginning of the meeting;
- to use sentences and short words;
- the communicated information to be provided in clear sentences;
- to have data and information written to the patient, in order to be able to orient when it is the case.

Health journalism is typically defined as a subsection of science journalism. Science news, in turn, is often divided into two main categories: news that popularises scientific findings and news that discusses scientific issues within a broader societal context (Summ & Volpers 2016, 778). Health journalism plays a key role in educating, culturalizing and promoting health services, information that can educate the population on the prevention and diagnosis of certain diseases.

The role of medical journalism

Health journalism specialists must be based on serious training on how health systems are organized, how budgets are repaired, but also on the needs that health systems have for me. Health journalism is a sensitive field, which requires compliance with certain rules of ethics and deontology.

The way in which health topics are presented must be specific, adapted and, obligatorily, correct to the public. An important role that the media and the health journalist have is to contribute to the medical education of the population, to inform the population about the methods of diagnosis, treatment, prevention.

A people that is healthy and properly informed is an evolved people that can and wants more. Over time, many of the articles, reports,

⁴ World Health Organisation. Communication during patient hand-overs. Patient safety solutions 2007;1:1-4 CrossRefGoogle Scholar

investigations, campaigns made by journalists specializing in health have changed things for the better, changed laws in favor of patients, led to increased budgets for hospitals and information and awareness campaigns.

Media logic also governs through restrictions, such as advertising pressure and space and time limitations. Respondents discussed how certain resources helped them overcome these obstacles. Getting around sourcing barriers, specifically public relations departments and risk-averse health systems, requires inventive strategies to obtain needed information.

The problem of unbiased information arises when journalistic work and media campaigns interfere with the interests of pharmaceutical companies (which have an interest in helping promote products) or large private hospitals and clinics, which have an interest in making money, seeing health as a business. The correctness of the information is extremely important, especially in the health area, where we talk about people who get information to understand what they have done about the disease they suffer from. Medical advertisements and campaigns must comply with certain ethical rules, which are required for the protection of patients.

⁵Social media is a new and constantly evolving area. While there is a growing body of research on health information and social media, most is focused on how it can be used by advertisers to attract new consumers. Much more needs to be known and shared about how best to use social media to achieve public health outcomes. Action research focused on "learning by doing" and sharing lessons among peers across the globe is vital. Public health professionals should also be aware of web-based analytical tools such as Google Insight and analytical tips from the social media community".

Medical communication is extremely important, and the media are the means by which useful information, provided by medical specialists, can reach as many people as possible. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the advance of information communication technology, including the widespread of mobile devices and social media, has been changing the quality of life in the global world. Among all the many parties affected, health care, its process, system and many related activities are the domains with fundamental changes.

The role of the media is a defining one in campaigns such as those on vaccination, HIV-AIDS, hepatitis, cancer, communicable diseases. The

⁵ Google Insights for Search [Internet site]. Available from: www.google.com/insights/search/

communication campaigns carried out by the media, the information about these diseases, how we can prevent them, would not have been known and assumed by the population.

Medical communication and medical journalism are important areas of interest to the population. They require a more careful study and the development of techniques and strategies adapted to the reality in which we live, the development of new media, the transfer of information to the online area and social networks. Like all information and those in the medical area are extremely accessible in the online environment, where the presentation must be adapted. The information must be as clear, concise, consistent, impactful and, above all, accurate as possible, informed from reliable sources.

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CRITICAL THINKING TESTS USED IN PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

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Abstract

The direct benefits of applying and developing critical thinking tests on employees in modern companies, both in the selection and recruitment process, and later in the regular assessment and increase of critical thinking skills, necessary to perform daily tasks are increasingly evident in a dynamic and still somewhat competitive market economy. Modern companies are under pressure, both from the outside, due to increased competition in the economic environment and changing criteria for purchasing products and services among customers, and from within, due to the changing value system of employees, especially millennials. By studying the various reports made on modern companies, it turns out that millennial employees want a better balance between personal and professional life, and when choosing companies where they would like to work, personal values applied to the organizational culture of the company prevail. Thus, the process of staff retention and increasing performance in the work environment is of increasing importance in private companies. The starting point is to find a set of critical thinking skills needed to test, recruit and effectively select staff in modern companies and the hypothesis is that critical thinking skills and abilities are a key tool in the initial assessment of employees and is it is necessary to develop them along the way in order to increase the degree of successful solving of daily tasks within a company.

Keywords: critical thinking, HR strategy, professional growth, personal retention.

În companiile moderne se pune tot mai mult accentul pe dezvoltarea gândirii critice a angajaților, care reprezintă utilizarea acelor abilități sau strategii cognitive care măresc probabilitatea obținerii unui rezultat dorit. Conceptul de gândire critică este folosit pentru a descrie gândirea care este direcționată, motivată și orientată spre un scop - tipul de gândire implicat în rezolvarea problemelor, formularea de deducții, calcularea probabilităților și luarea deciziilor atunci când angajatul folosește abilități de gândire eficient

pentru contextul particular și tipul de sarcină dat. Gândirea critică implică mai mult decât procesul de gândire aplicat asupra propriei gândiri sau să faci judecăți și să rezolvi probleme; utilizează abilități și strategii care vor crește șansele de a obține "rezultatele dorite". Deciziile cu privire la rezultatele dorite sunt încorporate într-un sistem de valori⁶.

Partea "critică" a gândirii critice denotă o componentă de evaluare. Uneori cuvântul "critic" este folosit pentru a transmite ceva negativ, ca atunci când spunem: "Este o persoană critică". Cu toate acestea, evaluarea poate și ar trebui să fie o reflecție constructivă a atributelor pozitive și negative. Când ne gândim critic, evaluăm rezultatele proceselor noastre de gândire - cât de bună este o decizie sau cât de bine a fost rezolvată o problemă. Gândirea critică implică, de asemenea, evaluarea procesului de gândire - raționamentul care a dus la concluzia la care am ajuns sau la tipurile de factori luați în considerare în luarea unei decizii.

Gândirea critică este uneori numită gândire îndreptată deoarece se concentrează pe obținerea unui rezultat dorit. Nu este nici tipul de gândire care stă la baza obiceiurilor noastre de rutină, care, deși ținte direcționate, implică o evaluare foarte puțin conștientă, cum ar fi ridicarea dimineată, piererea dinților sau adoptarea unei căi obișnuite la școală și la locul de muncă. Acestea sunt exemple de gândire nedirecționată sau automată.

Acest tip de gândire s-a născut din nevoia unei aplicări mai bune a logicii la realitate. Logica formală este esențială, dar există contexte în care forma nu este suficientă pentru a evalua un argument și în acest fel au început să se contureze logica informală și gândirea critică.

Gândirea critică necesită atât abilități ușoare, cât și complexe iar aplicarea lor este dificilă dacă individul nu deține cunoștințe generale sau specifice dintr-un anumit domeniu. Creativitatea implică procesul de concepție, în timp ce gândirea critică evaluează și analizează ceea ce a fost deja produs. Aspectul interdisciplinar este considerat necesar pentru un gânditor critic, deoarece el trebuie să observe dacă ceva este inexact în informațiile pe care le întâlnește⁷.

Atunci când abilitățile de gândire critică sunt învățate astfel încât să se transfere în mod corespunzător și spontan, gânditorii critici se pot

⁶Halpern, Diane F., *Thought & Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 2003

⁷ Babii, Alexandra-Niculina, Neculau, Bogdan-Constantin, *Gândirea critică în educația contemporană: o abordare istorică*, Universitatea "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Iași, 2019.

concentra pe structură, astfel încât caracteristicile care stau la baza devin semnificative în locul caracteristicilor de suprafață specifice domeniului.

Aptitudinile de gândire critică sunt acele strategii pentru a găsi modalități de a atinge un obiectiv. Desigur, împărțirea procesului de gândire, care este fluid și continuu, în abilități discrete, este artificial, dar este necesar să distrugem subiectul masiv al gândirii critice în bucăți ușor de manevrat.

Testele de gândire critică sau testele critice de reînnoire sunt teste psihometrice utilizate în recrutare la toate nivelurile, absolvent, profesional și managerial, dar predominant în sectorul juridic. Cu toate acestea, nu este neobișnuit să se găsească companii din alte sectoare care utilizează teste de gândire critică ca parte a procesului de selecție. Acesta este un test intens, ce se focusează în primul rând asupra aptitudinilor analitice sau critice. Unele teste sunt încă efectuate pe hârtie și stilou, dar, la fel ca și alte teste psihometrice, testele de gândire critică sunt administrate în majoritatea cazurilor pe computer într-un centru de testare.

Gândirea critică implică gândire rațională, intenționată și orientată spre scop, folosind anumite abilități cognitive strategii. O absență sau o lipsă de abilități critice de gândire ne poate determina să credem lucruri care nu sunt adevărate, deoarece nu am analizat și criticat suficient informațiile pe care le-am primit sau le-am folosit pentru a formula și a testa independent teorii și idei. Pentru a gândi critic sunt implicate trei părți-cheie: o atitudine de a fi dispus să ia în considerare într-un mod atent problemele și subiectele care intră în sfera experiențelor, cunoașterea metodelor de cercetare logică și raționament și unele abilități în aplicarea acestor metode.

Cel mai comun test de gândire critică îl reprezintă *Evaluarea critică a gândirii Watson Glaser (WGCTA)*. Această evaluare este considerată ca un bun predictor al productivității muncii și în identificarea candidaților cu un potențial bun de a deveni manageri și de a ocupa alte funcții manageriale. Dezvoltat de Goodwin Watson și Edward Glaser, testul Watson Glaser este favorizat de firmele de avocatură, dornice să măsoare abilitățile oamenilor de a raționa, de a ajunge la concluzii și de a ști când s-au făcut salturi în logică. Întrebările din fiecare din cele 5 secțiuni vizează evaluarea capacității candidatului de a: aduce inferențe corecte, identifica momentul în care a fost făcută o ipoteză, utiliza raționamentul deductiv, realiza concluzii logice, evalua eficacitatea argumentelor.

Un test de gândire critică evaluează capacitatea în cele cinci domenii cheie menționate mai sus, ipoteze, argumente, deduceri, inferențe și informații de interpretare, adesea, în această ordine. Un scurt paragraf de text cu câteva

fraze lungi sau o singură propoziție este folosit ca punct de plecare. Cele cinci secțiuni presupun, în detaliu:

Dacă se folosește un test de gândire critică Watson Glaser în primele etape ale procesului de aplicare, este probabil să fie folosit ca instrument de screening. Aceasta determină o presiune asupra candidaților pentru a atinge un punct minim de trecere, ceea ce le va permite să fie selectați pentru a trece la următoarea etapă a procesului de selecție. Dacă este folosit într-o etapă ulterioară a procesului, rezultatele acestuia vor fi combinate cu performanța în alte evaluări, teste, exerciții și interviuri.

Pentru a putea performa la capacitate maximă în îndeplinirea unui test de gândire critică, trebuie respectați următorii pași:

Nu sunt necesare cunoștințe anterioare - Punctul cheie este că testele critice de raționament măsoară capacitatea de gândire sau metoda utilizată pentru a ajunge la o concluzie. Prin urmare, nu sunt necesare cunoștințele anterioare pentru a răspunde la întrebări, acestea fiind astfel formulate încât să nu fie nevoie de cunoștințe de specialitate. De exemplu, nu se va aștepta să cunoașteți formule matematice sau legi ale naturii și să răspundeți la întrebări cu aceste informații. Dacă vi se dă formula și descrierea acesteia în întrebări, trebuie să utilizați aceste informații pentru a ajunge la răspuns.

Respectarea instrucțiunilor - Există cinci secțiuni la cele mai multe teste de gândire critică și fiecare va evalua o abilitate ușor diferită. Este de așteptat să citim instrucțiunile și înțelegem ce este de așteptat pentru a răspunde la întrebările din această secțiune. Există o diferență destul de mare între secțiunea Ipoteze și secțiunea Deducții, de exemplu. Aplicarea regulilor de la o secțiune la alta ar duce doar la ghicirea răspunsurilor și, astfel, la apariția mai multor erori.

Respectarea timpului alocat - Aceste teste sunt complexe și poate apărea situația în care să rămânem blocați la un răspuns, alocând astfel mai mult timp decât este necesar. Se impune astfel o analiză a complexității testului și o distribuție uniformă a timpului între întrebări. Această gestionare a timpului se aplică tuturor testelor, dar este deosebit de importantă pentru testele de gândire critică, deoarece mulți oameni cred că au o perioadă atât de mare de timp, dar subestimează numărul de întrebări pe care trebuie să le răspundă.

Erorile logice - Identificarea erorilor logice este cheia multor aspecte ale acestor teste, iar cercetarea diferenței dintre logica sunetului și cea eronată se va dovedi utilă într-un test de raționament critic. O eroare este o

eroare în raționament din cauza unei concepții greșite sau a unei prezumții, iar un argument care folosește o eroare oficială, o eroare logică sau o eroare deductivă în raționamentul său devine un argument nevalid. Cercetarea diferitelor tipuri de erori poate fi de ajutor în a le găsi în test, conducând la răspunsuri corecte la întrebări.

GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test)⁸, reprezintă un test general de aptitudini de conducere, folosit de școlile de afaceri și colegii, ce are drept scop testarea capacității de gândire critică a elevilor. Întrebările de gândire critică sunt scrise într-un context de afaceri sau de finanțare.

Testul de admitere pentru managementul absolvenților, sau GMAT, este o parte importantă a procesului de solicitare a școlii de afaceri. GMAT este un examen standardizat cu alegere multiplă, bazat pe computer și adaptabil la computer, care este adesea necesar pentru admiterea la programe de afaceri absolvite (MBA) la nivel global.

GMAT-ul este dezvoltat pentru a oferi școlilor de afaceri măsuri comune de pregătire a solicitanților pentru lucrările universitare la nivel de absolvenți. Comitetele de admitere la școlile de afaceri analizează scorul GMAT, împreună cu experiența de muncă, dosarul academic și materialele de sprijin, pentru a evalua disponibilitatea pentru rigurile unui program de MBA.

Examenul GMAT măsoară cunoștințele de aritmetică de bază, algebră, geometrie, analiză de date cu mai multe surse și gramatică. Mai important, măsoară capacitatea de a analiza și evalua materialul scris, de a gândi critic și de a rezolva problemele. GMAT este în primul rând un test al abilităților tale de gândire critică. Să știi să argumentezi și să analizezi informațiile este cheia unui scor GMAT excelent.

Participanții la teste GMAT pot alege ordinea în care dau secțiunile de testare, existând trei comenzi din care se poate alege:

1. evaluare scrisă analitică (AWA), raționament integrat (IR), cantitativ, verbal
2. raționament verbal, cantitativ, integrat, evaluare analitică
3. raționament cantitativ, verbal, integrat, înțelegerea citirii, evaluare analitică

Secțiunea de analiză scrisă analitică a GMAT este notată separat de la 0 la 6 în pași de jumătate. Secțiunea de raționament integrat este, de asemenea, notată separat pe scară de 1–8, în pași de un punct. Secțiunile

⁸Testele Kaplan , <https://www.kaptest.com>

cantitative și verbale au fiecare un scor de 0–60. Apoi sunt combinate pentru a genera un scor pe scara 200-800, cu creșteri de 10 puncte. Scorul pe scala 200–800, în pași de 10 puncte, reflectă nivelul de dificultate al întrebărilor la care s-a răspuns corect folosind un algoritm.

GMAT este un test adaptabil la computer care se adaptează efectiv la performanțele evaluatului în timp ce acesta face testul.

Pentru început, computerul presupune că un scor mediu și oferă o întrebare de dificultate medie. Pe măsură ce se răspunde corect la întrebări, computerul pune întrebări mai dificile și crește estimarea capacității. Și invers, pe măsură ce se răspunde incorect, computerul pune întrebări mai ușoare și scade estimarea capacității. Scorul este determinat de un algoritm care calculează nivelul de capacitate bazat nu numai pe ceea ce s-a răspuns corect sau greșit, ci și pe nivelul de dificultate al întrebărilor la care s-a răspuns.

Testele SHL⁹.SHL este un editor global de teste psihometrice, consultant în măsurarea talentelor și specialist în psihologia ocupațională. SHL operează în peste 30 de limbi, implementează soluții în peste 150 de țări și menține o prezență în peste 50 de țări. Clienții includ corporații FTSE 100, companii Fortune 500, precum și numeroase IMM-uri și întreprinderi locale din întreaga lume. SHL are o prezență uriașă pe piață în industria testelor psihometrice și produce unele dintre cele mai frecvent întâlnite teste psihometrice în Marea Britanie și în întreaga lume. Datorită dimensiunii și popularității SHL și a produselor sale, candidații sunt cel mai probabil să întâlnească teste SHL în timpul proceselor de recrutare.

Oferă teste de abilitate psihometrică, inclusiv teste de raționare numerică, verbală, diagramatică și inductivă, utilizate în mod obișnuit pentru screeningul candidaților și la centrele de evaluare. La fel ca și scorul general, viteza, acuratețea și prudența sunt evaluate în timpul examenului și sunt obținute cu punctajul final al testului. Testele psihometrice SHL sunt disponibile la toate nivelurile de poziție, de la administrarea nivelului de intrare la executiv senior, iar testele de abilitate SHL pot fi utilizate pentru evaluare, dezvoltare și selecție. Cele mai utilizate teste de aptitudine SHL utilizate de către recrutați sunt: teste de raționament numeric, testele de raționament verbal, teste de raționament inductiv, teste de judecată situațională, teste de raționament mecanic, testele de înțelegere a lecturii, teste de raționament deductiv.

⁹Testele de evaluare a aptitudinilor practice, <https://www.assessmentday.co.uk>

Testul de gândire critică Cornell. Este un test care îi ajută pe profesori să determine abilitățile de gândire critică ale elevilor lor. Dezvoltată pentru prima dată în 1985 de Robert Ennis, de la Universitatea Illinois din Urbana-Champaign și Jason Millman, de la Universitatea Cornell, seria Cornell Critic Thinking Test oferă două niveluri de testare: nivelul X pentru clasele cinci până la douăsprezece și nivelul Z pentru clasele zece până la douăsprezece . Testele pot fi, de asemenea, utilizate la nivel de colegiu. Ambele teste îi ajută pe profesori, părinți și administratori să prezice performanțele viitoare ale elevilor, pentru examene de competență, admitere la facultate și chiar într-o situație de carieră. Testele pot fi, de asemenea, utilizate pentru a ajuta elevii în programele de plasare supradotat sau avansate. Nivelul X include 71 de întrebări cu opțiuni multiple care evaluează abilitatea elevilor în inducție, deducere, credibilitate și identificarea ipotezelor. Nivelul Z include 52 de întrebări cu opțiuni multiple care acoperă abilități de inducție, deducere, credibilitate, identificarea ipotezelor, semantică, definiție și predicție în planificare. Pentru a finaliza examenul, limita de timp este de 50 de minute. Testele de gândire critică Cornell sunt disponibile atât în format computerizat cât și în format de hârtie.

Teste specifice de raționament critic verbal și numeric. Există teste care se concentrează fie pe abilități numerice critice de raționament, fie pe abilități verbale de raționament critic. Aceste teste vor cere doar întrebări numerice sau numai întrebări verbale pentru a evalua aptitudinile într-o anumită zonă.

În concluzie, putem afirma că, gândirea critică este disciplina de a putea folosi dovezi și rațiuni pentru a crea argumente puternice și de a identifica unde alte argumente sunt slabe. Este o abilitate folosită de toată lumea de la filozofi și politicieni, la avocați și oameni de știință și este vitală în viața de zi cu zi pentru a putea gândi pentru sine. Gândirea critică sau raționamentul critic este importantă pentru angajatori, deoarece ei doresc să vadă că atunci când un angajat are de-a face cu o problemă, este capabil să ia decizii logice fără a implica emoții.

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“RESIDUAL COMMUNISM”: BETWEEN MEDIA SPECULATION AND ACADEMIC DEBATE¹⁰

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Abstract

The topic of this article is the ways of manifesting the so-called "residual communism" at the level of the collective mind of the elderly in Romanian society. We will review, for the beginning, some terminological differentiations and ways of knowing the social representations, coming from the sphere of social psychology. Subsequently, we will present the results of a sociological survey based on a questionnaire, applied to a number of 130 people over 60 years of age in Craiova. The purpose of the research was to know the remaining representations derived from the communist ideology and their influence in the evaluation of the post-December social realities. To determine the dominant profile of the nostalgic, we associated the perception of returning to communism with the degree of collectivism, the degree of religiosity, the degree of satisfaction with the economic situation, PCR membership, presence / absence of children, age and sex.

Keywords: residual communism; social representations; communist remnants; nostalgia; collective mind.

1. Introduction

Discussions about the communist regime occupy a privileged place at the level of different communication media in Romanian society. At the academic level at least, research on the old regime has seen a prolific debut since the early stages of the highly controversial transition. The results of the university's work have materialized in encyclopedias, treatises, books of

¹⁰ This study was previously published in Romanian, in extended form, in Vlad Ovidiu Cioacă. 2019. *Viața cotidiană în România comunistă*. Beladi/Sitech:Craiova.

great documentary value, scientific articles difficult to inventory, voluminous reports, the establishment of research institutes, etc. Most theoretical achievements and investigative approaches, coming mainly from the area of historiography, are they lose in a very detailed diachronic description of developments in the political and economic spheres. The psychosocial dimension has been and is always taken into analysis as a variable dependent on the changes consumed at the level of macrostructural levels.

The postulate from which our research is claimed is that, without the complementarity of social sciences, the historiographical approach is lost in an inventory of heterogeneous data uncorrelated with the psychosocial dimension of the communist project, that of forming the new man and creating an egalitarian society, with the attempts at identity remodeling from the pre-December period and with the particularities of the social memory and the social context after 1989.

2. Ideologies and social representations: contemporary orientation in social psychology

The influence of the ideology on the social reality manifests itself by the configuration of a community of ideas, capable of reconstructing this reality by putting into circulation and in the social-political practice of ideal constructions, which regulate the desirable models of organization and management of the city. The intrinsic character of ideology is rarely discussed: like ideology, utopia offers a false projection of reality, being “dynamic enough to transform this reality according to one’s own image”(Berger, Luckmann, 1966/2008: 21). But what are the mechanisms and consequences of the reconstruction of reality? One of the theoretical questions from which we started is the way in which ideology, in its utopian forms, manages to reconfigure structurally and functionally the social system and, implicitly, the way of thinking and acting of the actors involved in the ideological processes. A satisfactory theoretical answer is provided by the paradigm of social representations, related to the name of the Romanian-French psycho-sociologist Serge Moscovici, which has known notable developments in recent decades in fields such as the psychology of politics, the sociology of crime or social ecology.

The concept of social representation is not an innovation of the thinker mentioned. This was consecrated by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who analyzes collective representations in contrast to individual ones and states a postulate of epistemic presence: “it is sufficient to say that representations, individual or collective, can only be studied scientifically if they are studied objectively” (Durkheim, 1895/2001: 21). The difficulties encountered in reaching this methodological expectation, as well as the ambiguity of the concept, difficult to operationalize, determined the followers of the verificationism to reject a priori the scientificity of such an approach, starting from the premise that what cannot be measured cannot enter the area of scientific concerns. For Durkheim, collective representations are the product of society, so “language, religious dogmas, customs, fashion, etc. are not the product of the individual psychic, but of entire groups of people. From this thesis, it was concluded that the sociological method is based only on the examination of such collective manifestations (by implicitly ignoring the individual manifestations of life: the opinions, attitudes, behavior of people.)”(Otovescu, 2009: 84). Inaugurated by Serge Moscovici, the psychological approach differs from Durkheim’s sociology by the following particular ways of understanding the defining features, structure and functions of social representations:

- a) sociology opts for a mechanistic approach of representations, similar to how atoms in heavenly mechanics or genes in traditional genetics were looked at: “genes or atoms existed, only that no one got used to understanding how they worked or how they looked”(Moscovici, 1997: 27).
- b) sociology attributes an extended sphere to the term, transforming it into an umbrella concept for very heterogeneous facts and phenomena, “a general class of ideas and beliefs”(Moscovici, 1997: 30): religion, science, fashion, myths, cultural elements are generally assimilated into the classical sociological approach to collective representations;
- c) from a psychological perspective, social representations are translated in common ways of understanding and communicating, being strictly linked to language, which gives them a double dimension - iconic and symbolic. Moscovici illustrates this characteristic through the social representation of the neurotic: “Thus, in our society, the neurotic is

associated with psychoanalysis, with Freud, being attached to the Oedipus complex and, at the same time, we see in neurotic an egocentric and pathological individual, whose parental conflicts have not yet been resolved. So, on the one hand, the word evokes a science, even the name of a classic hero, a concept, and, on the other hand, it evokes a definite type, characterized by certain features and an already-imagined biography.”(Moscovici, 1997: 28)

- d) durkheimist sociology analyzes social representations rather as static, immutable, crystallized entities for long periods, while Serge Moscovici's approach emphasizes the internal structure and dynamics of representations, the processes of genesis and representational transformation, the way in which some ideological elements are integrated into the structure of representation, while others are rejected;
- e) the psychological approach focuses on the knowledge of social representations in contemporary societies, leaving the historical or anthropological concerns in the Durkheimist discourse in a second position: The social representations that concern me - says Moscovici - are neither those of primitive societies nor surviving in the basement of our culture. from prehistoric times. They belong to our societies today, to our political, scientific and human areas, which have never had the time to become immutable traditions and settle down. Their importance continues to increase, in direct proportion to the heterogeneity and fluctuations of the unifying systems - official sciences, religions, ideologies - and the changes that these must undergo in order to penetrate daily life, becoming part of the common reality.”(Moscovici, 1997: 29)

3. Research methodology

3.1. The aim of the research: to know the remaining representations derived from the communist ideology and their influence in the evaluation of the post-December social realities among the people of Craiova aged 60 and over.

3.2. General objectives:

- a) to identify the way in which communism is represented among the targeted age category;
- b) to identify the domains of daily life in which the social representations due to the communist ideology are manifested;

c) to know the influence of the remaining representations in the attitudinal reporting to the social institutions and practices from the post-communist period, in the context of their interference with the new fields

3.3. Methods and techniques: Sociological survey based on questionnaire

- Type of investigation: quantitative, objective, statistical.
- Research tool: the questionnaire, which included 21 questions with predefined answers. As particular research techniques we have integrated the attitudinal scales and the technique of free association.
- Type of sampling: exploratory lot selected in a semi-random manner, comprising 130 people (65 men and 65 women) aged 60 and over, residing in Craiova.

4. Results and conclusions

To determine the dominant profile of the nostalgic, we associated the perception of returning to communism with the degree of collectivism, the degree of religiosity, the degree of satisfaction with the economic situation, PCR membership, presence / absence of children, age and sex. Predictably, the majority of people with a dominant individualistic profile (23% of a total of 31% individualists) believe that a return to communism would have a negative influence, while this is perceived as a viable solution mainly by respondents who adopt a collectivist vision. And religiosity seems to have some explanatory power: most religious people oppose a return to communism. One possible explanation could be the theory of secular religions (Goodman, 1992: 288). People who practice a certain religious faith (and the scale we used measured especially the practical-action dimension) are aware that the paradise that the parents of communism wanted to establish here on earth is incompatible with the soteriological paradise designed by the Christian faith. Of course, we are not talking so much about a conscious assumption, about an intellectual, propositional reception of this contradiction, but, especially, about an implicit conformation to the perceptions of the religious, which pass under the sign of heresy any socio-political engineering with eschatological valences. Obviously, the explanation is strictly hypothetical.

Surprisingly, the subjective perception of one's economic status does not seem to have significant relevance: only 20% of a total of 54% dissatisfied with the current economic situation consider returning to the communist regime as a viable solution. Out of the total number of respondents who were part of the Romanian Communist Party (only 13%), the vast majority (9%)

evaluate positively the return to communism. In this case, the trend can be explained by the loss of prestige enjoyed by former party members before 1989. However, the very small share of respondents who worked in Party structures may be due to the prestige effect: respondents may decide not to disclose this information to adopt a desirable conduct.

Regarding the influence of gender on the potential return to the communist regime, women tend to have a rather favorable attitude (26% of a total of 50%) as opposed to men (only 13% of a total of 50%). And age influences the relationship to communism: most people who perceive the return to communism as positive are over 70 years old, while at the opposite pole predominate respondents aged between 60 and 70 years. It is possible that, with the awareness of the approach of the end of life, going back to a certain moment in the past may seem much more advantageous, even in spite of the shortcomings inherent in that period.

An interesting trend is found among respondents with children. They tend to rate positively the return to communism (28% of 61%) to a greater extent than people without children (11% of a total of 39%). As the exploratory group includes subjects between 60 and 74 years old, the use of age as a control variable does not significantly influence this regularity: parents are more nostalgic than those without children, regardless of age. One possible explanation is parental responsibility. The care of tomorrow is felt more strongly by parents, probably in the desire to provide security and stability to their offspring, via Hamilton's theory of inclusive fitness (Bourke, 2011). From this point of view, communism, which made possible the stability, security and predictability of everyday life, is a much more convenient system for parents, especially in terms of the social legislation it offered. Illustrative in this sense is the much more general theory of the American psychologist Richard Eibach (2003), who sees in nostalgia for the past a kind of evolutionary adaptation. Following successive longitudinal studies, Eibach concludes that it is much more beneficial to maximize the evolutionary potential for parents to adopt a rather cautious, suspicious attitude towards the present and the future, in the context of the inability to control and ensure their descendants protection in the face of dangers in the immediate environment.

Corroborating the information resulting from the correlation of the variables that we considered relevant, the hard nostalgic (who evaluates the return to communism as positive) is a woman, over 70 years old, a mother,

adopts a collectivist vision of society and the state, is not a (very) religious person, is or is not satisfied with the current economic situation. We cannot decide on the status of member of the Romanian Communist Party, taking into account that 92% of the few respondents who admitted their affiliation to the Party structures (only 13% of the total respondents) are male.

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THE IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST DURING COVID-19. LESSONS LEARND FROM HOME JOURNALISM

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Abstract

This article examines the importance and role that journalists have had since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in transmitting information to the general public, as interest in news has increased even three times globally for the subject. At the same time, the present paper also shows the way of working journalists who had to broadcast news from home without going into the field. In the research carried out, the working conditions of the lockdown were highlighted as well as the positive and negative effects of home journalism were highlighted. The legal aspect is also a subject this paper refers to, as the period knew some controversial cases, when the right to free expression and information was limited in Romania. The article also illustrates the importance of professional journalism in the context of the media market invaded by false information. However, looking at the complicated way of working in the pandemic, with many obstacles on the part of the state, with economic shortcomings, the conclusion of this paper is that no matter what conditions journalists engage in media institutions not served on interests of any kind, media is truly a stable pillar of democracy.

Key words: media, disinformation, Covid-19, journalism, freedom of speech

Introduction

Since the beginning of 2020, journalists from almost all over the world have started working under different conditions than they used to. Along with declaring global pandemic and state-level restrictions on limiting the spread of the coronavirus, the way journalists procured their information, transmitted news, or broadcasted radically changed (Berenson 2020). In Romania, after the first case of Covid-19, at the end of February and after the

closure of most institutions and firms, it was also the turn of the newsrooms to partially close. Many reporters had to work remote and only went into the field when it was absolutely necessary. Moreover, the fear that they will have to shut media institutions down, because of the infection of journalists, some trust owners decided that the newsrooms should be divided into two spheres: some journalists to work from home, others to come to the newsroom. The measure was taken to limit the spread of coronavirus in newsrooms, in the context where the main press materials were made on the subject of Covid-19, and journalists came into direct contact with people around those infected. Even with these measures taken, the inevitable occurred, and many journalists were infected while on duty. Moreover, according to the UN, from March 1st to May 1st 2020, no fewer than 55 journalists from 23 countries were killed by Sars-Cov2, most of them in Ecuador and the United States. There have been many cases of journalists infected with Sars-Cov-2 also in the newsrooms in Romania (Media Standard 2020).

So for journalists, too, the risk of infection was high in this period, which is why many had to learn to protect themselves. The mask was the first indispensable accessory for any reporter who went out even for a few minutes on the field. Journalists had to learn to go live broadcasts or conduct interviews with masks on their faces or gloves in their hands.

During this period of restrictions, many journalists from Romania had to work from home, and in this context some authorities adapted and began to provide content for news or broadcasts, so that reporters would not have to go to the field. Image advisors and spokespeople took over the work of reporters and transmitted images and interviews from events or conferences attended by institutional managers. At least during the state of emergency, journalists accredited to the Strategic Communication Group, (the one who transmitted information about the spread of COVID-19), provided information through the Romanian Television, the other media institutions only took the signal transmitted. In addition, important releases were transmitted to WhatsApp groups. In addition, ministers of the Romanian Government had to stay in isolation because they came into contact with an infected person. Government meetings were held online, and the media took them as such from the platforms indicated by the press officers.

Moreover, during this time of crisis, journalists used their persuasion skills and led many doctors or other authorities to whom they did not have easy access due to legislative limitations, to film themselves or to turn to the

support of close friends so that the public could have access to images and information with a strong impact, but absolutely necessary for the correct information of the media consumer. Many of them have succeeded. That is why, during the period of restrictions, the broadcasters provided images of intensive care areas in the supportive-Covid hospitals, showing images that they could not have filmed due to the risk of infection. In addition, interviews have moved from street or institution offices to online platforms. The authorities or medical professionals accustomed to informing the public during this period adapted to the new conditions and agreed to be filmed in internet broadcasts, which on the one hand kept them and journalists safe, on the other hand, the public had access to information from sources directly involved in combating this virus.

Effects of home journalism

Media managers have found a number of benefits of home journalism, and the first positive effect is cost-related because travel-related expenses are eliminated. Secondly, news can reach the target audience faster, because it generally eliminates the waiting time for the people who should be interviewed. Some benefits were also found by journalists who performed better, from home because they did not waste time to get on the field, to return later to the newsrooms. The advantages were few compared to the negative effects of the practice of home journalism. A negative effect of journalism back home was the loss of sources. It is very clear that most sources are made by walking into field, interacting with people, and the lack of this socialization has led to a loss of these information providers. Sources are made every day according to the reported events, and the absence from the field over such a long period will have effects over time for each field journalist, with the risk of vulnerability. And in terms of old sources, there can be losses because a lot of people are afraid to make disclosures over the phone, as the fear of interception by the authorities is present, so they prefer to provide face-to-face information to journalists. In this moment where all people are afraid of infection this approach becomes increasingly difficult to achieve.

Another effect of journalism done at home is related to the quality of press materials. In this moment, when the interviews are conducted through internet, people may fake or lack some emotions, which they would not normally do when facing a ground reporter. Journalists always know to express themselves or use a specific tone in order to guide an interviewed person from

tears to joy or happiness. Or interacting to a smartphone or other smart device is a difficult thing to accomplish. Not to mention that the quality of professional images taken by a cameraman in comparison to some amateur footage.

However, covering the subject of the coronavirus pandemic requires, above all, accuracy thorough information and increased attention in the selection of information. Media outlets trying to report responsibly on the growing health crisis "face the task of conveying their seriousness without causing panic, of keeping up with a torrent of information, while many remain a mystery." (Associated Press, 2020). The problem becomes more delicate as the coronavirus pandemic has erupted at a time when elections are taking place in many parts of the world, so all this health crisis has been turned into the main theme of political disputes.

And another important effect of home journalism due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic was that of truncating information. The information came in the form of press releases, videos or photos only made by media specialists working in public institutions. They were processed, and journalists got only the information providers wanted. The reporters were no longer able to fully complete their tasks, they were unable to ask questions to all the parties involved, or to seek the answer behind the news delivered as such. Normally, real journalists do fact-checking even if they receive the information from official sources, which should also be credible. This time, however, it was not always possible. "Independent media allows the public to demand accountability from public authorities, and helps ensure an evidence-based policy" (UNESCO 2020). There is no talking of fake news, because the provided information came from official sources, but it could not be checked from all possible sources. Examples of the news provided by the authorities were in this respect. For instance, the manager of a hospital officially announced that the medical unit he was running had no problem with drugs stock and the staff could handle the situation, but the patients managed to call TV stations and complained that few medical staff had passed their threshold and did not receive any drugs at all. If the journalists had had access to the hospital, they could find out from other sources who was really right. In this context, the news was presented with both parties perspectives, without any real verification in the field being possible, due to the lack of access to the support-Covid hospitals.

Fighting disinformation in lockdown

If in the case of news received from official sources there was a risk that they would be truncated, journalists were also put in the face of a new situation. For example, they had to check information from unknown sources, mostly based on interior images taken from medical facilities. Incidentally, the first fake news related to Covid appeared in mid-February, when a credible publication published details of the occurrence of the first case of coronavirus in Romania, although the first Covid-19 infected was confirmed on 29 February (Average Standard 2020). Sometimes misinformation has come to the social pages of some politicians. During the lockdown period politicians from opposition parties were fake news providers. Even if politicians are not the ones who propagate the most false information, the large number of followers makes them become key factors in the spread of false information (Reuters Institute for Journalism). According to a study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, "about 20% of false claims about Corona Virus belong to celebrities, but their posts account for about 69% of all engagements on social media" (N. Newman 2020). In this context, journalists had to do a thorough background check in order not to fall into the trap of politicians. In addition, as a news, journalists have faced an aggressive phenomenon of transmitting information on Whatsapp platform. Most of them targeted different treatments against the new coronavirus which were obviously false. Moreover, messages of this kind have been transmitted in this way in almost all European Union countries affected by the Sars-Cov-2 virus.

Journalists from television around the world also had to deal with so-called deep-fake, totally fake videos. This technology makes it possible to create audio and video of real people who say and do things they have never said or done. "Machine learning techniques escalate technology, making deep falsehoods more realistic and increasingly resistant to detection" (Chesney, Robert and Citron, Danielle Keats, 2018). In Romania deep fakes did not pose a danger, however in the public space came information attributed to important people on the European political scene that were totally false and greatly influenced public opinion. For example, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a politician attributed a statement to the Greek prime minister that Romania would provide false data on the number of people infected with Sars-Cov-2 in order to obtain more money from the European Union. The information turned out to be false, but it was retrieved up by several publications with a large number of readers.

Freedom of speech in lockdown

In the coronavirus pandemic, freedom of expression was limited in many states, including Romania. According to the report "Fundamental freedoms under siege. Exceptional states create dangerous history for the Romanian press" by the Centre for Independent Journalism, "A number of measures of state institutions have affected fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and information and have called into question respect for journalistic principles." (Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent 2020). During the state of emergency, the information rights of some media publications with a direct effect on freedom of expression were suspended by controlling the news feed. 15 online publications were suspended and two others were required to delete certain information. The measures were taken on the pretext that those websites provided untrue information.

Precisely because of this unclear information, the Ombudsman made a request to the Strategic Communication Group, which decided together with ANCOM to close these websites and asked for clarification on the referral procedure and the one concerning the monitoring and the emergence of fake news in the context of the Corona Virus crisis.

The decisions of the Romanian authorities mentioned in the Presidential Decree also attracted the attention of some international institutions. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has announced its concern about the measures introduced in Romania by the Presidential Decree. The OSCE stressed out that the free movement of information is an essential component of the right to expression. (OSCE 2020) The Centre for Independent Journalism also noted in the report that the state's financial interventions following public procurement of media services through an advertising fund questioned media equidistance.

Moreover, they have vulnerable state democracy in a context where a free press is a pillar of support for this value. With regard to the right to information The Presidential Decree declaring the state of emergency introduced several elements that obstructed media access to information. Article 56 of that normative act doubled the deadline for public institutions to respond to public requests, i.e. from 10 to 20 days in the case of simple requests, from 30 to 60 days in the case of complex requests (Precidency.ro 2020). In many cases, however, media representatives faced total negligence on the part of the authorities in providing information of public interest, and the given answers came when no longer needed.

The European Parliament also expressed concern about the media sector, severely affected by the Covid-19 crisis, noting this sector finds itself at a moment in time when "it plays a crucial role in providing accurate information and combating pandemic misinformation." (www.europarl.europa.eu 2020) Parliament acknowledged that the media is facing a massive drop in advertising revenue, and expressed concern that the worsening financial situation could mean that "news organisations are no longer able to provide clear and factual information and counter misinformation about the coronavirus pandemic." (www.europarl.europa.eu 2020) In a resolution adopted on 17 April 2020, MEPs mentioned that misinformation on Covid-19 is a major public health problem, that all people should have access to accurate and verified information, and that an independent and sufficiently funded free press for democracy is needed.

The report "Journalism, press freedom and COVID-19", by UNESCO, states that "threats to press freedom and the safety of journalists come at a time when the economic stress of the crisis is pushing many media organisations to the brink of extinction, at the very moment when they are most needed." (UNESCO 2020)

Financial effects on journalism in the Covid-19 period

The International Monetary Fund predicted that "the worst economic recession since the Great Depression since the 1930s" will occur, and the International Labour Organization has announced that it expects more than 195 million jobs to be lost worldwide. (International Monetary Fund 2020) In this context, media organisations have been affected and continue to be increasingly affected by this phenomenon. Since the advent of Sars-Cov-2, first in China, then around the world, news consumption has increased exponentially, in some cases there has been talk of a doubling or even tripling of the audience. However, this has not led to an increase in revenue in the media industry. Advertising revenue has fallen a lot, according to the Global Forum for Media Development. Some members saw 70 percent decline in advertising revenue. "Revenue losses from many media companies have led to layoffs and pay cuts in media organizations around the world." (www.en.unesco.org 2020) This also happened in Romania, some journalists were sent to work from home, but for that period their salaries were reduced. In some cases, the measure was taken by the end of the year (www.paginademedi.ro, 7 May 2020).

Media institutions that have succeeded in surviving this economic and social phenomenon may remain at risk as long as advertising revenues fall. Moreover, in many countries the sharp decline in private advertising revenue has made media institutions increasingly dependent on government advertising. "Some have been the victim of "media barons" who use their purchases for political purposes. The current crisis could aggravate these trends." (www.en.unesco.org)

The role of the journalist in the Covid-19 period

The Study of Audience and Internet Traffic (SATI), conducted by the Romanian Audit Office Transmedia (BRAT), analyzed by Digi24, indicated that in the week of 23-29 March 2020, compared to a normal week in Romania "news site audiences had increases of two and even three percentage figures". The coronavirus crisis has led many people to turn to credible sources when they need to learn about a particular topic. Many began to fear the wave of false information, so they began to subscribe to the newsletter of media institutions known as providers of verified information. Many independent journalists have tried to support voluntary donations on the site, urging readers to contribute money to support quality journalism. This cannot support all expenditure in context where in the pandemic many people have been left without income or with their wages reduced. Thus, in this context, the journalist as a verified information provider and opinion-maker has fully proven his role in society and the media is increasingly proving its effectiveness as a protector of democracy. But it needs financial resources to be sustainable, increasingly difficult to access resources in the economic crisis envisaged by the International Monetary Fund.

Conclusions

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, journalists who worked from home have radically changed their way of working and verifying information. If before the pandemic, they could go into the field to learn directly from all sources involved in managing an event, during the pandemic and lockdown, many had to work from home. Many of the materials provided at home did not have the same quality as in the past, but at least they were checked from official sources. During the pandemic, journalists learned that sometimes some interviews can be done quickly,

through state-of-the-art technological means, and this lesson could be useful in the future especially in the conditions of breaking news for example. They have learned that field travel can be reduced, where it is not absolutely necessary, so they can lower the production costs for journalistic material. Even though there were also positive lessons learned from the practice of home journalism, the main lesson learned by the whole society was that the role of the journalist in society is indispensable, especially in crisis situations. The European Union institutions have also highlighted that the free media must be helped to survive in crisis situations, otherwise we risk the very democracy of states if we end up with a media that is served by political and economic interests. So, at a time when fake-news has become an increasingly difficult phenomenon to combat nowadays, quality journalism needs to be sustained.

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CONSIDERATIONS ON EDITING AND DELIVERING RADIO NEWS CONTENT

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Abstract

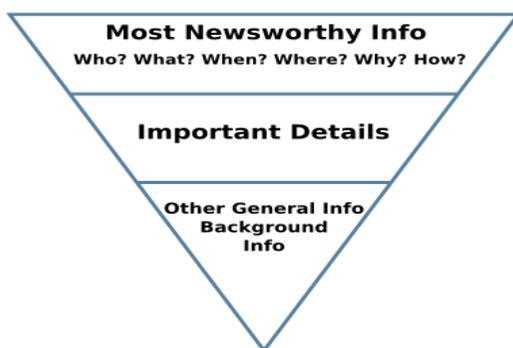
Writing content for radio news bulletins must comply with a set of rules in order to fulfill the fundamental goal of clearly informing the public. Because the texts are written exclusively for audio reception, they must be constructed having always in mind that the listener has only one chance to receive the message, as the texts cannot be revisited. Thus, clarity and concision are two of the most important aspects of radio news and the editor and the presenter should consider revising texts at any time if they don't meet the standards needed for a consistent and vivid communication. Applying the inverted pyramid technique in radio news writing is also essential, as the most important information should always be placed at the start of the news in order to raise the awareness of the listeners and keep the audience focused until the end of the broadcast. Clearly writing and presenting radio news represent the cornerstone of a programme which aims to reveal the most important events in a professional manner that leaves no room for doubt and confusion.

Key words: radio, news, writing, presentation, rules, techniques

Radio is a swift, dynamic and direct medium that uses short news stories to inform listeners about various events and radio news is meant to inform with accuracy, objectivity, and conciseness. A complete news story must contain answers to the five "W's" and one "H": "What?", "Who?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?", and "How?". If the text fails to answer to some of the four "W's", then the news must be considered incomplete and not included in the bulletin.

A radio news story is a short, factual, accurate report about an event and its main function is to inform in a straight and unbiased manner. Radio news shouldn't contain an opinion or commentary and must use the inverted

pyramid writing technique: “A standard radio news story is made up of around five sentences and is around 20 to 25 seconds long. A radio news story is similar to all other forms of news media, in that the most important information comes first. Following the most important and current information come sources, background information, and other developments - these proceed from most important to least important. The least important information comes at the end”¹¹.



This golden rule of news writing for radio editors is also stressed by the Unesco Associate-Expert Paul De Maeseneer: “The arrangement in newswriting is the reverse of the literary form. In the conventional literary form, first comes the introduction, then the facts of increasing importance, building up to the climax and conclusion. The flow is chronological. The flow in newswriting is the reverse of the literary form. The lead or climax of the story comes on top: What is the news? Often the second paragraph sets the scene. Who is the main actor, where did the event take place? On what occasion? Then it's time to give the other elements of the story and to give important supporting facts (the inverted pyramid)”¹².

The newsroom must be structured as efficient as possible, taking into consideration the members of the news desk, their skills and responsibilities. Andrew Boyd provides the relevant information about organizing the newsroom of a radio station in the most efficient way possible: “The news editor will be responsible for the running of the newsroom and its staff. A duty editor may be delegated to take charge of day-to-day news coverage. The sports editor feeds items into programmes and bulletins. Producers

¹¹ <https://sswm.info/water-reporting-and-journalism/radio-stories-water/the-radio-news-story>

¹² *Here's the News. A Radio News Manual*, compiled and edited by Paul De Maeseneer, Unesco Associate-Expert, p. 2.4 1

organize particular programmes, from commissioning items to overseeing their presentation on air. Programme or technical assistants operate the studios. Newsreading and presentation may be divided among reporters and producers. Support staff include the newsroom secretary”¹³.

To properly write and present radio news one must have a sixth sense, the sense of language which is a quality difficult to acquire and which can only be cultivated through intense reading and learning. Aside from this requirement, the radio journalist must assimilate the essential notions regarding the ways of writing news *for the ear*, which implies different rules than those applied when writing newspaper, TV, literary, and academic texts. The words in a sentence must be arranged in a simple and normal way, a rule easier to comply with for English language editors because the order of words in an English phrase is less flexible than in other languages, e.g. Romanian. A sentence with numerous parentheses and a twisted word arrangement leads to an incomplete or totally failed reception from the listeners of the radio programme, which is an intolerable outcome for a responsible newscaster.

The radio news content must be constructed by the members of the news staff team in order to be understood instantaneously, the text should be coherent, cohesive, and perfectly legible: “Writing news for radio is unlike writing for the newspaper, academic, literary and business worlds. There is far less space available in a radio news bulletin and radio writing has to be short. It is harder to write shorter – but less is often more effective. The English writer and intellectual Cyril Connolly once said, ‘Literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice; journalism is what will be read once’. And in radio that means heard once. Your aim must be intelligibility – immediate intelligibility. A carelessly turned phrase, an ambiguity of expression, a complicated sentence and an illogical sequence of events are all fatal to news on radio. Radio must be understood, otherwise we are wasting our time. There is no room in a bulletin for complexity, vagueness or obscurity. You must know what you want to say and say it with directness, simplicity and precision. The job of radio is to put out information quickly and concisely. When you hear it on the radio, it is news. When you read it in the newspapers, it is history”¹⁴. The long, arborescent sentences should

¹³ Andrew Boyd, *Broadcast Journalism Techniques of Radio and Television News*, Fifth Edition, Focal Press, 2001, p.132

¹⁴ Paul Chantler, Peter Stewart, *Essential Radio Journalism. How to Produce and Present Radio News*, A & C Black Publishers Limited, London, 2009, p.95

always be avoided when writing radio news content, as well as the neologisms and the complicated, not frequently used words. Clarity is essential for a radio product which is meant to comprehensibly inform the public. In that respect, news presenters must read the text at a medium pace, not too slow, not too fast, emphasizing the key words within the phrase.

Paul Chantler and Peter Stewart also pinpoint in their book *Essential Radio Journalism. How to Produce and Present Radio News* what they call “writing essentials” for radio news editors, the golden rules for adequately constructing the news stories in order to be able to present them as clear and exact as possible:

1. Tell a story
2. Write as you would speak to your friends
3. Keep it simple and short – for the ear not the eye!
4. Write in the present tense where possible
5. Speak out loud as you write to hear how your words sound.¹⁵

Another fundamental element for adequately editing radio news content and structuring the news bulletins is the selection of information and ranking the news in the bulletins. The importance of the news for the audience of the station is the key factor during the selection process taking place in the news desk and it is related mainly to the temporal, social, emotional and geographical proximity elements. The audience must identify with the context of the events, the background should be familiar, because there is a common psychological reflex for individuals to be more interested in facts taking place inside their familiar area, geographically and emotionally speaking. An event unfolding in their region significantly raises the attention of the listeners and also the scale and the consequences of that particular incident. The key factors in item selection for radio and TV stations are emphasized by Andrew Boyd in his well-known book dedicated to broadcast journalism techniques and the author identifies eight such essential criteria:

1. The significance of the story
2. The material impact of the story
3. Audience reaction (the human interest factor)
4. The topicality of the story (the lemming factor)
5. The immediacy factor (the yawn factor)
6. Sport/specialisms

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.96

7. Linking items

8. Actuality/pictures.¹⁶

Of utmost importance for a successful news broadcast there are also the talent, the voice, the charisma and the skills of the presenter. The newscaster's main qualities are the authority, personality, credibility, professionalism, clarity, a good voice and the warmth, the perfect "weapons" to be used in order to "conquer" the public and establish a solid and long lasting connection with the listeners: „Successful communication is largely a matter of presentation, and that depends on the way the copy is written, and the way it is read. Good newsreaders are ones that establish rapport with their audience. Such rapport defies satisfactory definition. It is a kind of chemistry that exists between newsreaders and their audience. Where it is present, both presenter and audience are satisfied. Where it is absent, the information seems to fall short or fail to connect, and the presenter, cut off behind a barrier of electronic hardware, will usually be aware of the fact. (...) Each listener is an individual who has invited you into his or her home. You are a guest; an acquaintance or even a friend, and you have been welcomed in because you have a story to tell. Newsreaders, particularly in radio, can easily forget about the audience. Cocooned within the four walls of the studio, they can begin to sound as though they are talking to themselves. They are going through the motions, their concentration is elsewhere and their newsreading will begin to sound stilted, singsong, and insincere. The solution to strident anonymity or mumbling into the microphone is to remember that you are not reeling off information or reading from a script, but *telling* someone a story”¹⁷.

The news bulletins represent an emblem or a business card for a radio station, they are the best way of getting an unequivocal, long lasting identity and connecting the station with its audience. And this is a fundamental goal for a media institution that aims to permanently link with the community it serves: “The news is an important way for stations to connect with their audience, particularly regional and local stations. Through story selection and a particular style of delivery, news bulletins can reinforce the bond between a station and the community where they broadcast. Nick Wilson,²

¹⁶ Andrew Boyd, *Broadcast Journalism Techniques of Radio and Television News*, Fifth Edition, Focal Press, 2001, pp. 138-140

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.174

news editor at Heart 106 FM in the East Midlands recognizes this: ‘News is important because it’s the way we provide a service for the community. A commercial radio station is there for the music and people listen to the station for the music. The news is where we become local and that’s absolutely crucial – we touch the community through the news. We have the responsibility for providing what we think everyone needs to know not just in their community but for the whole world’¹⁸.

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¹⁸ Carole Fleming, *The Radio Handbook*, Third Edition, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2010, p.107

EDITORIAL DIVERSITY AND STANDARDIZED INFORMATION IN THE LOCAL MASS MEDIA

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Abstract

The local mass media occupies an important place in the media system and it is characterized by the fact that capitalizes the information and the social reality from a small geographical area in terms of spatial planning. The distribution area of the local mass media was relatively small, but the development of technology in recent decades has generated opportunities, both to promote its content brand, more easily, including at national level, and to expand its area of assertion and create new development strategies. However, the professional organizations of the media industry have been drawing attention for many years to the situation of the local print media in Romania, which they consider to be critical, affected by the general problems of the Romanian media, but also by a series of specific problems. New technologies have led to an increase in the number of local publications, to an editorial diversification, but not to a content diversity. In this regard it is observed that there is a tendency to standardize the information. This article presents the results of a focus group on "Local Press and Community Expectations", attended by journalists and representatives from various socio-professional backgrounds, opinion leaders, of different ages, students, a total of 14 people. Research framework: The relevant criterion by which the participants in the focus group were chosen was the degree of knowledge of the local media environment in a certain area, either as actors involved in creating and managing a media institution, or as beneficiaries or analysts belonging to this environment. They were invited in an informal space, to an informal, unstructured conversation on the topic "Local press and community expectations".

The discussion has being focused on issues related to : local media funding sources; transparency of funding; the relationship between the local

press and public authorities; politicians who decide to allocate resources from local budgets for advertising in the local press; factors influencing editorial policy; the type and quality of the products created; consumer's perception and expectations.

Excerpts from the discussion:

"The local mass media has failed to establish a strategy to turn threats into opportunities, using the tools at hand. Revenues from advertising and sales of circulation have decreased, and the local press now, depends heavily on sources of funding from local budgets, thus becoming dependent on the political factor, becoming under its influence and thus reducing its role as a watchdog. Although several local online publications have been set up in recent years, their content is not diverse, many of which are limited to publishing press releases of public institutions, the positions of local authorities on certain topics. The local press has almost given up producing investigations, critical materials on certain decisions, reporting problems within the community and working in the field of social journalism. The online environment has developed, participatory journalism has grown, producing a number of changes and the local press did not adapt yet and did not come up with new products and approaches corresponding to its the role and status. We must not forget that it is a very important link in the media system and in the democratic system, a link that if it breaks, the whole system can collapse. Several studies have shown that the local press has preserved its audience, interest and trust and has the opportunity to easily diversify its content distribution channels, attract a larger audience and enter new markets. But it needs qualified staff who can take advantage of all these opportunities."

"Recently, many publications have appeared and they are promoted on social networks. But if you go to their sites you don't know who is the owner, who assumes these publications that seem to have been set up as a weapon for some local quarrels: unsigned, non assuming materials that leave a feeling of frivolity. The journalism approached is not the informative one, but one that is meant to be interpretative, the information is closer to the rumor, gossip peddling, which does not induce the consumer's feeling of credibility. I think there is a need for a coagulation of the local press and the realization of projects in a unionized system. "

"The local press should assume both the function of information and, equally, the one of watchdog. Unfortunately, it gave up the second one,

which is why in all the local newspapers in an area we read the same press releases, the same information. The local press is enslaved by the local politicians and businessmen and does not want to bother, to make waves. The time has come for a new renewal of the local press, a radical reform”.

"The press is part of society, so just as society it is, so is the press. I think that there is no more local press in Romania, because it has suffered due to enslavement to funding sources, and this current is also manifested online. If the community wants a strong local press, maybe they should understand that they have to pay subscriptions for it. But the press must also, become more responsible in terms of fulfilling its obligations in relation to the public opinion in the name of which it carries out its activity".

"I do not work in the press, but it seems obvious to me that the role of the press, including the local one, is primarily the one of a watchdog and so it must remain. On the other hand, although information is important and it seems that you can't go wrong by promoting it, you can also deal here with lying, more precisely, lying by omission. And therefore, day by day, the press is moving further and further away from its real mission that it should have for the community. "

"Usually, people, who have not worked in a field, know best how things should work there. I suggest to those who are in this situation, to try to make their own newspaper that will survive financially and, within a year to meet again and show us the example as a good practice.

The local press should not choose between information and watchdog, i.e. instead of "or ..or", it is preferable "and... and". Only the journalist from the province chose his variant, a pseudo-business. Indeed, in a cold analysis we realize that in order to function, the press business needs to meet at least some important criteria: information, profitability, compliance with standards of morality and education, watchdog. It could be said that by choosing from these criteria, we were all wrong. And so it would be if we did not grant each other the presumption of good faith. Massive and manipulative information, lying by omission, profitability at any cost, even at the price of the common good, are topics that the press should meditate on more, because the effects of these actions will not be long in coming. They have already begun to see each other. Isn't the watchdog part exactly what is more important as a service to society by the press? And isn't the Romanian press mediocre even when it is profitable and informative, precisely because it remains far from the most important of criteria? ”

"Journalists must understand their rights and obligations, as this is the only way to professionalism. Unfortunately, however, it is not enough for the employees of such institutions to adopt a code of professional ethics, to respect some rules. Employers should also understand their social responsibilities. Otherwise, the local media, and not only, will continue to be a factory of black money, enslaved to various interests. "

"Fortunately, studies show that so far the local press has preserved its audience, interest and trust, but must find ways to attract other audiences. The reliable capital of the local press is superior to the national one, the local press having an audience at least double than the national one at the level of its own broadcasting areas. The decrease, suffered by the local written press in the last decade, is much smaller compared to that of the central press, both in terms of circulation and audience. The local press can easily diversify the distribution channels of its content, having well-known and respected brands that it can derive using other distribution channels besides the press, preserving the public interest, consolidating the brand and 'monetizing' the content".

"In terms of funding sources, in order to overcome the critical situation, the local print media needs to be supported from government's sources, and this funding must be transparent. The local print media, whether in print, or online, is the only source of local news, increasing its importance for local communities. Funding sources should be transparent to increase the responsibility of the media and the public. It is said that 'who pays, it orders', and the discussion on these sources is old in terms of the pressure that the financier can exert on the publisher. It is important to have quality, well-documented, equidistant, or at least balanced materials and publications with different visions, so that the public can have access to different sources of information.

Focus-group conclusions:

The sources of funding have influenced both the type and quality of information transmitted by the local press, and the way in which journalists in this area choose to address the public.

The local mass media has a wide range of activities, but has failed to identify all the opportunities that could be exploited in quality materials that would benefit it in all respects. Weaknesses include lack of expertise, lack of exchange of experience with similar media outlets in other countries, the need to create a medium and long-term management strategy and its implementation, lack of market research and impact studies. All this could be done much more easily and would find sustainability if professional organizations of the local media, which is extremely divided, were created.

Despite the emergence of more and more local online newspapers, growing competition has not prompted the local press to reform.

The conclusions belong to the focus group participants, represent their opinions and attitudes, and cannot be considered mandatory measures that would be required.

The context in which the local mass media operates

In June 2017, the Romanian Press Board - ROMEDIA and the Press Broadcasters Board - PDP addressed a memorandum to the Romanian Government requesting the adoption of a government program to support the written press that includes the development of a law on subsidies for publishing, distribution and dissemination of the written press in Romania and amendments and completions to the fiscal code. "On all continents of the world, democratic states have adopted government programs to support the written press. Thus, in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland (indirect subsidies) and France, Norway, Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland, Sweden (direct and indirect subsidies), as well as in other states, regardless of the nature aid (direct or indirect), financial support from the state has proved to be the most important measure to ensure the viability of the print media, the distribution and dissemination of publications. "and "The distribution chain through which the written word reaches readers is also vulnerable due to the programs recently launched by local authorities in municipalities and cities on modernizing street trade. Moreover, in some localities (including Bucharest), public domain rental contracts were abusively canceled, without offering alternatives for relocating kiosks and shops selling publications "were two of the 15 arguments"¹⁹ with which ROMEDIA and the PDP supported their request. The initiators referred to the written press, which also includes local publications, which also suffered as a result of decisions by several councils by which the media outlets were abolished. For example, in March 2014 the Craiova Local Council approved the termination of the two association contracts with the company with which it jointly operated a press distribution network in the city, and following this decision over 50 newsstands were closed and subsequently demolished.

The management of Craiova City Hall motivated the proposal to terminate the two contracts by the fact that the Local Police found that the

¹⁹<https://www.cotidianul.ro/program-guvernamental-de-sustinere-a-presei-scrise-in-romania/>

company did not respect the object of activity of the association, in the sense that in addition to distributing press, books and stationery, it also sells products of tobacco, or soft drinks, which are not the subject of the association agreement. In September 2017, most of the central newspapers published, on the same day, on the front page, a protest article against the disappearance of several newsstands in the Capital, especially in Sector 4²⁰. The article, entitled "Black Day for Romanian newspapers", pointed out that dozens of newsstands had been picked up untimely by the City Hall of Sector 4, without a clear communication of reasons, deadline and solutions. At the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, three broadcasting companies that owned about 1,500 kiosks across the country announced the insolvency. On the other hand, the average situation of the revenues of Romanian newspapers and magazines shows that from the cover price, the publisher has about 38% left, 9% goes to the state as VAT, 33% represents the commission of broadcasting companies, and 20% is lost due to bankruptcies.

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HOW MEDIA LITERACY CAN HELP FILTER INFORMATION FROM DISINFORMATION ATTACKS

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Abstract

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media. It is a set of skills that allows people to become more critical consumers of media. Media literacy is important because it helps people understand how media messages are constructed and how they affect us. Researchers have also noticed that “*as we witness a further major shift in information and communication technology (ICT), a new form of literacy is emerging, uneasily termed computer literacy or internet literacy.*” (Livingstone, 2004, p. 1) Fake news represents the phenomenon of mass media, especially social media, that is fraudulent, false, or misrepresented. Numerous studies have examined how the public perceives media, and while the content of the coverage differs among groups, there is increasing evidence that large segments of the public believe information that it is fake. Moreover, fake news is often perceived as more credible by those with a strong ideological orientation. In the present paper we will explore the relationship between media literacy, information, disinformation and fake news and present opportunities through which disinformation attacks can be minimized. Although the real-world consequences of fake news have not yet been fully documented, public concern regarding the effects of fake news are highly debated. (Jang & Kim, 2018, p. 295)

Keywords: media literacy, journalism, communication, fake news, disinformation

1. Introduction

Studies show that those with greater identity with their own partisan groups showed greater self-other disparity over the perceived influence of fake news. “*Strong Republicans and Democrats believed that other party members are more vulnerable to the effects of fake news*” (Jang & Kim, 2018, p. 299). Indeed, the polarization of beliefs makes more people

susceptible to click-bait articles that work as political arguments. These people would even likely further divide themselves by digging deep into ideas and making more “belief-based constructs” (Rhodes et al., 2004, p. 392) We also argue that complex, multifaceted and multilayered behaviors are rarely coded using a single scale that represents all beliefs and practices relevant to the behavior. Most of the belief-based scales that we have come across seem to represent the relative strength of belief versus practice and are unlikely to capture aspects of actual belief or practice.

2. Social media, fake news and disinformation

Social media are increasingly popular platforms used by individuals, professionals, and organizations to communicate and distribute information. As a consequence, various bad actors and irresponsible users are spreading false news, information and misinformation on social media. This phenomenon was recognized as a serious issue in the mainstream media in 2016 and it prompted various debates on the responsibility of social media platforms to deal with false information on their platform. Fake news (and viral hoaxes) refer to intentionally false information disseminated on social media with the aim of increasing website traffic and consequently website clicks, but often for ulterior motives such as the publication of false information in a competitive environment or by means of nefarious activities to defraud users. Fake news are often created by people, but in some cases they can be fabricated and published by media corporations, who want to increase readership or, more recently, even by AI – “neural fake news”.(Zellers et al., 2019)

We first consider what the purpose of an article of news is, and define “news” to mean (i) observations of facts, (ii) what happened, and (iii) what could have happened. We then consider the reasons that an article of news is deliberately false. We conclude that intentional falsification of the news content is the sole reason for making an article of fake news. We also identify the characteristics that constitute a fake news article and define the characteristics of fake news, in terms of its content and intent, in accordance with our definition of fake news—“*Fake news is a news article that is intentionally and verifiably false.*” (Shu et al., 2017) Another researcher states that “*fake news is the deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design.*”(Gelfert, 2018, p. 108), bringing emphasis on the scope of the fake news and the intentional “design” of the fake message.

Studies on misinformation are increasingly tying political polarization, partisan media, and national identity to citizen mis-information. A variety of factors have been proposed to account for individual citizens' ability and motivation to spot mis-information, for instance: person-specific processing, informational resources, task-specific processing, need for social norms, and socialisation. Many of these explanations align well with established explanations of why people might become misinformed, e.g., political polarisation, fact-resistant agendas, or cultural, social, and personal life experiences. However, citizen mis-information also seems to be driven by broader contextual and social factors. Moreover, our understanding of individual information processing needs to be further expanded, including the crucial contribution of social networks to the context of individual information processing. (Dodge & Rabiner, 2004, p. 1003)

Scheufele and Krause note that it is important to note that “misinformation” can be broadly defined as information that is incorrect, possibly by accident, while comparatively, “disinformation” has sometimes been used to denote a specific type of misinformation that is intentionally false, while the distinctions between these terms—as well as terms like “rumor” or “fake news”—have not always been clearly drawn in research pertaining to these topics. (Scheufele & Krause, 2019, p. 7662)

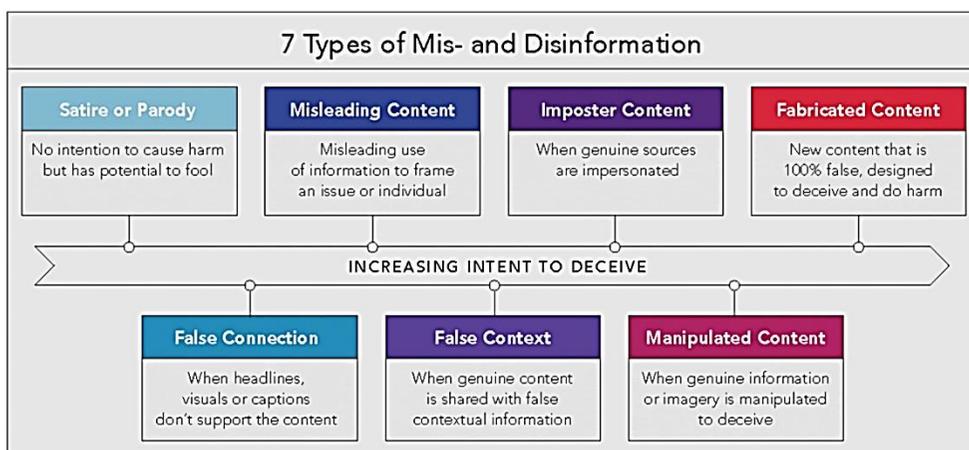


Figure 1.7 Types of Mis - and Disinformation, according to Claire Wardle, modified by Lucy Reading (artist). Source: (Waldrop, 2017)

Even though the term became widely used after Donald Trump started using it as a political message, fake news has been studied since the

20th century. A recent definition and taxonomy identified the following issues (*Disinformation and 'Fake News': Interim Report - Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee - House of Commons, n.d.*) :

1. *Fabricated content: completely false content;*
2. *Manipulated content: distortion of genuine information or imagery, for example a headline that is made more sensationalist, often popularised by 'clickbait';*
3. *Imposter content: impersonation of genuine sources, for example by using the branding of an established news agency;*
4. *Misleading content: misleading use of information, for example by presenting comment as fact;*
5. *False context of connection: factually accurate content that is shared with false contextual information, for example when a headline of an article does not reflect the content;*
6. *Satire and parody: presenting humorous but false stories as if they are true. Although not usually categorised as fake news, this may unintentionally fool readers*

Modern societies require institutions capable of informing and educating the masses, empowering them to participate in the public square and engage in public debate. But over the past two decades the Internet has completely remade the power balance, exacerbating and diversifying the divide. "*Today's technologies, with their elaborate infrastructures for uploading, commenting, liking, and sharing, have created an almost ideal environment for manipulation and abuse—one that arguably threatens any sense of shared truth.*" (Waldrop, 2017) And that technology is only evolving and growing in usage. Thus, a response is required to help modern citizens distinguish information that has a degree of certainty from one which is misinformation or disinformation. This is a process that can be approached from both a technical and a social standpoint, but the solution will probably come from a mixture of both areas.

3. Proposal of possibility - media literacy as an instrument against misinformation

Information literacy is the ability to find information and evaluate its value. Anyone who is concerned about being able to sort fact from fiction should develop their information literacy skills. "Media literacy" is used to describe the knowledge of media literacy competencies that learners acquire

to analyze and deal effectively with a wide range of media texts and artifacts and to navigate the networks of communication and material flows that allow discourse to take place and information that circulates. Broadly, literacy involves “*gaining the skills and knowledge to read, interpret, and produce certain types of texts and artifacts and to gain the intellectual tools and capacities to fully participate in one’s culture and society.*” (Kellner & Share, 2005). Researchers agree that education and literacy are intimately connected. Media and cultural studies have helped us to understand how media are often used to reinforce political and social inequalities, as well as racism, sexism and homophobia. This is not to say that all forms of media have necessarily become more dishonest, corrupt or corrupting.

The social problem of media literacy today is not simply a theoretical problem for critical media studies. It affects us personally. It is related to the trust we have in our political and cultural institutions and the way the democratic process functions, as media is considered an important part of the modern democratic state.

When teaching media literacy, The Center for Media Literacy (CML) has identified five core concepts that can help create a framework accessible both to students and teachers (Kellner & Share, 2005, pp. 374–377):

1. Principle of Non-Transparency: *All media messages are “constructed”*
2. Codes and Conventions: *Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules*
3. Audience Decoding: *Different people experience the same media message differently*
4. Content and Message: *Media have embedded values and points of view*
5. Motivation: *Media are organized to gain profit and/or power*

All the core concepts are related to a basic issue – the one of trust in media, and how that trust should not be always offered.

Teaching students to be critical consumers of information and to be skilled readers, writers, editors, social communicators, and critical media activists will allow them to be an informed and evolved part of their communities in the digital age. Teaching students how to research, evaluate, and critically interpret information, which will be integral to their digital literacy, will also ensure that students are able to comprehend, evaluate, and

critique ideas through their understanding of the message and the possibility to differentiate from information and disinformation. Learning these new areas of study will allow students to think critically about the politics and practices of the media and social networks in the digital age.

This approach has been previously suggested: *“the media literacy approach, which is the main subject of this article, focuses on the audiences’ critical ability to process fake news.”* (Jones-Jang et al., 2019), researchers predicting that a higher degree of media literacy improves the chances of identification of fake news stories. This highlights the importance of a clear understanding of media literacy, and the need for a shift from a focus on objective knowledge to a focus on people’s complex engagement with media and information. Research shows that people have difficulty discerning what is true and what is false (Wineburg et al., 2016) and suggest that attempting to define the validity of information, or seeing media as “objective,” risks constraining people’s thinking and deepening their pre-existing opinions and perspectives on their personal and collective identities.

Research has shown, though, that critical understanding of media messages and media systems (media literacy or news literacy) is not as important in identifying fake news as skills to navigate and locate information with efficiency and accuracy (information literacy). In other words, to identify fake news stories, it is crucial that individuals are equipped with the skills and competencies to sustain and update their access to rapidly changing information systems. (Jones-Jang et al., 2019). It’s also true that the more you consume information, the more you are able to discern between accurate and inaccurate information.

A key challenge with analyzing headline accuracy and article perception changes in response to specific articles is that the sources of the content we are analyzing do not always make clear which claims made in those articles are accurate or not. The vast majority of people share stories with little regard for their accuracy and that accuracy may be irrelevant to the motivations for sharing these articles. But there is also good news - research found that *“a simple, scalable media literacy intervention can decrease the perceived accuracy of false news content and help people to better distinguish it from factual mainstream news in both the United States and India. Moreover, the improvement in headline accuracy rating performance we observe does not depend on whether the claims in question align with respondents’ political predispositions.”* (Guess et al., 2020, p. 15543). The aforementioned study found

that the media literacy campaigns helped reduce the perceived accuracy of false news stories and the likelihood of clicking on them. Media literacy “inoculation” campaigns can be effective at reducing the perceived accuracy of false news stories, helping users more accurately gauge the credibility of news content they encounter on different topics or issues.

Media culture and pedagogy are inseparable. Social debates, media criticism, new forms of education, critiques of scientific and educational paradigms, and critiques of the nature of communication in societies in process of restructuring are the dynamic interplay between social, cultural, scientific, and educational contexts and the conditions and contents of pedagogy that directly affect individuals, groups and institutions. *“It is highly irresponsible in the face of saturation by the Internet and media culture to ignore these forms of socialization and education.”* (Kellner & Share, n.d., p. 5), because *“media literacy education makes visible what are often invisible structures, with a goal of creating watchful buyers, skeptical observers, and well-informed citizen.”* (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 12)

Media literacy combines academic study of media from multiple disciplines, with applied practice from pedagogy and curriculum, providing students with the most up-to-date methods of studying and understanding how to consume information and mass media. Online media are viewed through a new lens, of political, economic, and social influences, and students become more familiar with social networks and the subtle, yet pervasive psychological biases in media content.

4. Conclusions

Media literacy is important for all citizens who intentionally, or without knowing it, consume media, the presence of which has become wider and more diverse with the new digital technologies and the growing participation of laypersons. Media literacy thus has to find its role both in primary, secondary and higher education either on its own, or presumably – with more likelihood – as part of some kind of multiple or multimodal literacy. (Koltay, 2011, p. 219). Thus, through an improved system of media literacy education we could increase the chances of our students and citizens to discern valid information from mis- or disinformation attacks. Research has shown that *“the greater one’s knowledge about the news media—from the kinds of news covered, to the commercial context in which news is produced, to the effects on public opinion news can have—the less likely one*

will fall prey to conspiracy theories." (Craft et al., 2017, p. 9), that "critical media literacy [...] would better equip young citizens with resilience to 'information disorder'" (McDougall, 2019), bringing even more arguments to the importance of the introduction of media literacy studies.

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A LOOK AT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This study is limited to intercultural communication. It is an ontological reflection on intercultural communication in the context of globalization. The method used is a meditative-meta-analytical one. The conclusion reached is that the development of means, methods and procedures of communication, awareness of communication processes to the specifics of the context, increased attention of the communicator to others, otherness has led to the emergence of communication that takes into account the cultural affiliation of communicators. intercultural communication.

At present, intercultural communication is progressively imbued with globalization and digitalization.

Keywords: intercultural communication, intercultural message, intercultural context, globalization, digitalization

Introduction

Naturally, naturally, the man of the third millennium leaves his country, travels. Paradoxically, the farther and farther away they go, the more and more rarely they are abroad. The man leaves the country, but is still in the country. The alienation is progressively reduced. The individual feels every day that goes farther and closer to home (Milivojevic, Coman & Sturzeanu, 2016).

The ratio between the great foreign country and the small home is decreasing exponentially. The alien loses ground in front of his home. The "home" is expanding irrepressibly. The unity of the authenticity of man as a human being makes, in his unity, the world progressively become more at home. The unity of being shapes the unity of the world. Communication in the intercultural, transcultural and multicultural typology had an essential role: previously it had it voluntarily, that role has it voluntarily, pre-

programmed at the present moment. From this perspective, multilingualism and multiculturalism, intercultural communication contributes to the unity of the contemporary world, to globalization. Aware and accepted, cultural diversity, on the one hand, helps to raise awareness, develop and strengthen multiculturalism, and on the other hand, cultural diversity mobilizes energies towards a targeted tolerant multicultural unit. Emigration, immigration, migration, occur on a large scale in the perimeter of the same large unitary culture that includes multiculturalism. Multicultural expectations are now amplifying and the shocks, surprises and strangeness of isolated, separate cultures are diminishing. Intercultural communication ends up taking place in a co-cultural regime (Craig, 2018; Craig, 2019).

A multicultural world

The multicultural world requires cross-cultural knowledge and dependence on intercultural skills. Globalization induces intercultural behaviors. On the one hand, Intercultural Communicology thematizes and provides terms, notions, concepts, categories and principles for describing, understanding and prescribing intercultural activities. It thus provides a theoretical perspective oriented on multicultural enterprises and practices, in the idea that as Einstein decreed "theory is what decides what we are able to observe" (Apud Watzlawick, 1980, p. 56).

Thirdly, intercultural communication sets the basic foundations of intercultural skills, thus mobilizing its purely theoretical part in opening itself to fundamentally intercultural acts, facts, activities and actions. Intercultural communication operates an impure theoretical approach. It imposes a set of concepts in the articulation and in the dimensions of which it orients predetermined practices: it describes, conceptualizes multicultural phenomena, and later directs towards multicultural skills. Intercultural communication is also a cross-cultural and an intercultural exhortation. We delimit two dimensions of intercultural communication: the protreptic dimension and the exhortatory dimension (koetaan, 2020; karim et al. 2020; anton et al. 2020).

In our world there is room for all people. Time increases the scale of culture. New areas of investigation are delimited, new objects of study are individualized and new sciences and theories are grounded. Moreover, the old fields, objects and methods are diversifying and expanding. The framework of interdisciplinary research is also diversifying. They expand through new searches and discoveries throughout their research. In short, the cultural is expanding; moreover, the intercultural develops in the intercultural.

Promoters of paradigmatic cultural development movements meet in the field of research, in the field of negotiation, in various cultural activities that constitute the routine and surprise of everyday life (Frunză & Grad, 2020; Sandu et al., 2020, Sandu, 2020). Culturally, people are in touch. Over time, the extent of their cultural contacts increases. They meet with an increasing frequency and at levels of increasing cultural depth. People from different cultures thus come into contact with the particularities of the cultures they belong to. Exactly, people come into contact with the area of universal culture, and later they reach a deeper contact that puts into action the specificity of the cultures of origin. The two stages of communication would be universal culture and cultures of belonging.

People from different cultures come into contact with the cultures they belong to (Ionescu, 2018; O'Regan, 2019; Талалаева, 2020). There is a contact of different cultures. Increasingly accentuated communication in the context of universal culture leads to the arousal of intercultural communication. In order to communicate more deeply, people move beyond universal culture and bring particular cultures to communication. This is how communication becomes intercultural (Smarandache, 2018; Smarandache, 2019).

Not only does the level of culture rise to new levels, but also the cultural quality of people rises to new levels. Cultural contacts are increasingly occurring outside the borders of the culture to which they belong. Communicators from different cultures come into contact. Through them, the two cultures come into contact. Their communication takes place in a bi-cultural setting (Hațegan, 2019; Kadioğlu, 2020). Their communication occurs as cross-culturality: this communication that takes place in the cross-culturality of communicators is an intercultural communication.

Involuntarily, in a situation of multicultural communication, communicators behave cross-culturally, and communication that ultimately occurs has an intercultural character (vargas-calderón et al., 2020; aslan et al., 2020). Contacts and needs make people interdependent from an economic, cultural, professional, technological point of view. States thus come into contact through some of their citizens. Thus, states become subsidiary operators in the field of communication development, in the face of the globalized economy, in the context of the expansion of interpersonal relations.

Conclusion

Obviously, access to culture has increased. People are taking advantage of the new ways of communicating and improving the traditional ones. Cultural phenomenology is developing, which makes cultures have a more accurate description, and people are more aware of the specifics of the culture they come from. They take advantage of knowledge and self-knowledge; they all learn the lesson of respect for each other and the lesson of tolerance and non-discrimination. The nuclear idea is that in today's world there is room for everyone.

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I. EDUCATION SCIENCES

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND THE PROGRESS IN PRESCHOOL LEARNING

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Abstract:

This article approaches experiential learning in relation to educational progress; we first deal with the concept of learning and educational progress individually, then we analyse the particularities of experiential learning, the role of educational factors, techniques, methods or strategies in its context. The study is mainly devoted to experiential learning in its relationship with progress in preschool learning and, at the same time, to outlining the benefits on the child's development and facilitating the achievement of the formative and educational goals.

Key words: experiential learning, constructivist learning, learning strategies, monitoring progress

Introduction

In a wide meaning, the issue of learning is described as a universal phenomenon in the life of organisms, a process of acquisition of one's own behaviour experience, with the final goal of adaptation; it is not limited to acquiring skills, abilities or knowledge, but also includes the development of motivation, attitudes, feelings. Again, in a wide meaning, learning is seen as an evolutive process, of an informative and formative nature, that results not only in behavioural changes, but also in continuous improvement. Thus, learning is a multidimensional phenomenon, referring to the entire existence of a human being and having a strong influence on its development.

In terms of learning, progress is "the level of theoretical and actional training of the beneficiaries of education, compared to curricular content – the ratio between the achieved results and previous results". One can speak of educational progress when the teaching process yields results.

Several factors contribute to learning progress, such as: the teaching staff's training and methods, the child involved in the learning progress, the social and school environment, the family's contribution, material resources, work tools, etc.

“Evaluation deserves an outstanding place in education, of which it is an integral part. It always has a direct or indirect relationship to educational progress in terms of extension and quality.” (D. Ausbel)

According to IoanJinga, evaluation is “a complex process comparing the assessment of quality, efficiency and progress, related to correlations between the outcomes of teaching activities and the planned objectives, the used resources and previous results”.

In the last decades, pedagogy has received special attention due to the study of the evaluation concept, since evaluation plays a major part in training a student, as the progress of his/her skills is analysed.

The traditional paradigm of evaluation focuses on quantity, not quality, as it happens with modern pedagogy.

Modern evaluation implies an active involvement of the student in evaluation, so that s/he becomes aware of his/her level and his/her motivation to learn increases.

Assessing the progress in a child's development implies determining the student's possibilities to transition to new living conditions, the development of his/her social, affective, cognitive, verbal, motor conduct. The child's educational progress is outlined by evaluating the performances of children of various ages and represents the outcomes of the educational process, which should and must be obtained by means of various pedagogical technologies, based on curricular requirements.

Progress is evaluated by means of three tests: the initial test, applied in the first two weeks of the academic year, the final semestrial evaluation applied in the last week of the first semester and the final annual test, applied in the second-to-last week of the academic year.

The child's marks are an indicator of his/her performance level and are recorded in the progress report.

As s/he draws up the school progress report, where the achieved behaviours, the developing behaviours and the behaviours in need for support at the end of the initial evaluation are mentioned in percentages, the teacher knows what and where to work on; thus, the school progress report acts as a guide for the performance of subsequent teaching activities.

Progress is assessed in progress reports at the level of the class/group or on an individual basis.

An educational approach with a stronger focus on experiential learning has been witnessed since the 1970s, with the outstanding contribution of David A. Kolb regarding the development of the modern theory of experiential learning, mostly based on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. In his book on experiential learning, Kolb refers to William James, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Paulo Freire and Mary Parker Follett, as the most important researchers having studied this learning model.

Carl Rogers is the first author who uses the concept of “experiential learning”; his ideas on the educational process are synthesized in the volume “Freedom to Learn: A View of what Education Might Become”, published in 1969.

According to Carl Rogers, there are only two types of education: cognitive learning and experiential learning. Cognitive learning is defined as memorizing meaningless knowledge (formulae, numbers, letters), while experiential learning is loaded with meaning and is the only kind of genuine learning.

The great theoretician John Dewey asserted that “experience is a situational transaction whereby an organism adapts itself to an environment it transforms”; through experience we acquire knowledge and it helps us adapt the environment of our needs, purposes, wishes to the situation we find ourselves in. according to him, teaching must relate to the children’s previous experiences; the first step is to discover the materials required to learn within the experience, then the progressive development of the experience that has already been lived, in a more detailed, complex and organized manner, with a view to achieving the envisaged goals.

To John Dewey, “experience is cumulative and creative”, and human experience is active, reflective and intelligent, whereby reflective experience is synonymous to thinking.

According to Peter Jarvis, our first experiences are bodily sensations (image, sound, smell) which are transposed to the language of our brain and mind in order to achieve meaning. He draws up a very interesting comparison between the human body, that needs food in order to develop, and the human essence, that needs experiences in order to develop. “The stimulus of learning is our experience with the environment – our point of intersection with the world.”

J. J. Rousseau also argues for experiential learning, which is confirmed by his opinion on education – “genuine education is not necessarily made up of rules, but of exercises” – and on lessons – which, in his opinion, “should always consist rather of actions than words; since children easily forget what they say and what they are said, but not what they do and what has been done”. This denotes J. J. Rousseau’s opposition to bookish education, which does not provide children with the opportunity of understanding the concrete experience behind these words.

A relation of synonymy is frequently considered between experiential learning and experiential education; however, the latter represents a wide frame of education, while experiential learning is mainly focused on the individual learning process. Thus, comparing experiential learning to experiential education, we may conclude that experiential learning is mostly focused on the student and the learning context and is undertaken as a consequence of a reflection on what is done.

According to Kolb, two requirements must be met so that learning is efficient, solid and deep: it should be based on personal experience and it should be followed by a relevant reflection. The alternance between action and reflection results in the organization of learning activities along a cyclic approach, involving four steps: the concrete experience is the step when the learner lives a new experience, undertakes an activity or reinterprets an experience s/he has already lived; in the second step, reflective observation, the subject reflects on the experience s/he has lived and on its personal meaning; abstract conceptualization is the third step, implying the integration of observations and reflections by drawing up concepts, ideas, generalizations; the last step, active experimentation, implies that the learner should apply the ideas, the developed knowledge, in new concrete situations.

All these will result in subsequent concrete experiences. This process is sequential, integrated and cyclic, and each step represents a way to adapt to reality: concrete, reflective, abstract and active.

David Kolb also proposed four learning styles based on the two axes that define how information is treated and processed. Therefore, an axis joins concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, while the other joins active experimentation with reflective observation, resulting in the four learning styles: divergent, convergent, assimilative and accommodative.

In preschool children, playing satisfies their need for activity, for acting with real or imaginary objects, for transposing themselves in various roles and

situations that get them closer to the surrounding reality, a need generated by wishes, tendencies, specific needs of this level of psychological development.

Irrespective of how playing is performed, they are specific to children all over the world; for these reasons, we can assert that playing is the fundamental activity of kindergartens.

“By playing, children manage to know the surrounding world and to integrate in the society. The collective character of playing allows to establish social relations between children, to exchange knowledge, to experience a wide range of affective states, to develop self-control and courage, initiative and submission.” (Cerghit, 2006)

Playing is not only a fun and recreational activity or kids; playing also stimulates and develops the pre-schooler’s cognitive capacities, especially his/her creative thinking and the development of personality traits. Moreover, pre-schoolers develop their initiative, flexible thinking, team spirit, cooperation.

Ioan Cerghit argues that, by playing, “the child imagines, re-plays an actual world in order to be able to know better, to extend his/her knowledge horizon, to develop certain skills”. In other words, playing socializes, humanizes, prepares individuals for the future and satisfies current needs.

Methodology

The sample

The sample of the research includes 30 pre-schoolers (the “Bees” group and the “Butterflies” group) and two pre-school teachers from the rural area, working in the kindergarten of the Secondary School of Rojiste, Dolj county.

The purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to establish whether the performance of learning activities by children in the kindergarten, through experiential learning, generates major improvements in the pre-schoolers’ progress.

Research hypothesis

If experiential learning strategies are implemented, significant progress is seen in the pre-schoolers’ development.

Methods

The experiment and observation methods were used.

The experiment method was deployed by implementing experiential learning strategies in the experimental group. In parallel, teaching and educational activities took place in a traditional manner in the control group; only general fact-finding observations were made here. In the experimental group, experiential learning situations were created, the pre-schoolers were active and involved in the activities. The pre-fact-finding step consisted of acquiring indicative baseline data on the studied issue. The baseline data were collected by means of talks with the teaching staff of the “Bees” and “Butterflies” groups. The experimental step involved the performance of teaching and educational activities in the experimental sample by means of experiential strategies.

The baseline data were also collected through this method, by observing the children’s activities, their behaviour (their language, their own working rhythm, their involvement in learning activities).

In this research, the skills grid is a tool to monitor the pre-schoolers’ initial level, and, after enforcing experiential strategies, this tool helped record the progresses of first graders.

The skills grid is designed as a tool to assess the extent to which experiential learning has helped improve the pre-schoolers’ progress, in terms of cognitive development.

The results of the research

Analysis of the level of the control group – initial test and final test

The first envisaged skill – “S/he uses spatial relations (above, below, next to, higher, lower, etc.)” – was acquired by the control group in the initial test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 30.8% - unachieved and 69.2% - in progress.

The second envisaged skill – “S/he uses objects, materials and equipment to collect information on the surrounding items and phenomena” – was acquired by the control group in the initial test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 7.7% - unachieved, 84.6% - in progress, 7.7% - achieved.

The third envisaged skill – “S/he collects information on the environment, using his/her senses, observation, manipulation and conversation”

– was acquired by the control group in the initial test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% in progress.

The fourth envisaged skill – “S/he identifies and describes elements of the surrounding world, as well as the interdependence between them” – was acquired by the control group in the initial test as follows: 69.2% - unachieved and 30.8% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% in progress.

The fifth envisaged skill – “S/he makes predictions based on the observed phenomena” – was acquired by the control group in the initial test as follows: 30.8% - unachieved and 69.2% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 30.8% - unachieved and 69.2% in progress.

The purpose of this comparative analysis between the level of the control group in the initial and final test, respectively, was to establish that the control batch involved in this research did not experience significant progress regarding the envisaged field, i.e. the cognitive field, as teaching was performed according to traditional methods.

This analysis proves that traditional teaching and learning methods are less likely to generate progress than experiential methods and strategies.

Analysing the achievement of the first skill – “S/he uses spatial relations (above, below, next to, higher, lower, etc.)” – at the level of the control group in the initial and final tests, we find that the pre-schoolers in the control group did not achieve major progress; only the percentage of unachieved skills decreased by 15.4%.

The same situation is witnessed for the second, third and fourth skills, where the control group does not achieve major progress.

The fifth skill – “S/he makes predictions based on the observed phenomena” – shows that the pre-schoolers stagnated regarding the improvement of this ability, as the percentages for the unachieved and in progress levels are the same for the initial and final tests.

The results confirm that the enforcement of classical methods did not help the control group to evolve to the same extent as experiential learning, as its progress was quite low.

In conclusion, according to these comparative statistics between the initial and the final tests of the control group, we concluded that the control batch did not experience significant progress.

Analysis of the level of the experiment group – initial test and final test

The first envisaged skill – “S/he uses spatial relations (above, below, next to, higher, lower, etc.)” – was acquired by the experiment group in the initial test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 69.2% - achieved and 30.8% - in progress.

The second envisaged skill – “S/he uses objects, materials and equipment to collect information on the surrounding items and phenomena” – was acquired by the experiment group in the initial test as follows: 53.8% - unachieved and 46.2% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 23.1% - in progress and 76.9% - achieved.

The third envisaged skill – “S/he collects information on the environment, using his/her senses, observation, manipulation and conversation” – was acquired by the experiment group in the initial test as follows: 46.2% - unachieved and 53.8% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 61.5% - achieved and 38.5% - in progress.

The fourth envisaged skill – “S/he identifies and describes elements of the surrounding world, as well as the interdependence between them” – was acquired by the experiment group in the initial test as follows: 38.5% - unachieved and 61.5% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 69.2% - achieved and 30.8% - in progress.

The fifth envisaged skill – “S/he makes predictions based on the observed phenomena” – was acquired by the experiment group in the initial test as follows: 23.1% - unachieved and 76.9% - in progress, and in the final test as follows: 38.5% - achieved and 61.5% - in progress.

The purpose of this comparative analysis between the level of the experiment group in the initial and final test, respectively, was to establish that the experiment batch involved in this research experienced significant progress regarding the envisaged field, i.e. the cognitive field, as teaching was performed according to experiential methods and strategies

This analysis validates the research hypothesis: “if experiential learning strategies are implemented, significant progress is seen in the pre-schoolers’ development”.

Analysing the achievement of the first skill – “S/he uses spatial relations (above, below, next to, higher, lower, etc.)” – at the level of the experiment group in the initial and final tests, we find that the pre-schoolers in the experiment group did achieve major progress; eventually, no skills remained unachieved, only achieved (69.2%) and in progress (30.8%).

The same situation is witnessed for the other skills, where the pre-schoolers no longer had unachieved skills, only achieved skills and skills in progress, with higher percentages for achieved skills.

Thus, the obtained results confirm that the enforcement of experiential methods and strategies in activities with pre-schoolers help achieve major progress in the pre-schoolers' development.

Discussions

The use of experiential strategies in pre-school education provides a favourable framework for the performance of active education and, at the same time, a pleasant and interesting work environment, which perfectly suits the personality of today's children. Nowadays, pre-schoolers need activities likely to attract their attention and help them consume their energy so as to favour their development.

Another major issue approached in this work is the comparison between experiential and traditional learning, which is the easiest way of ascertaining the benefits of experience-based learning.

In order to approach experiential learning related to school progress, we first had to deal with the learning and progress concepts, so as to be able to understand the relationship between these two concepts. The approach of experiential learning clarified the aspects of this concept, also seen in terms of the educational factors and didactic strategies likely to change in experiential learning.

The research performed in this work achieved its purpose, to prove that the achievement of kindergarten activities by means of experiential learning provides a major contribution to the pre-schoolers' progress.

In conclusion, in this paper, the theory part synthesized the major issues of experiential learning, and the research part confirmed the starting hypothesis, i.e. that "if experiential learning strategies are implemented, significant progress is seen in the pre-schoolers' development".

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INSIDE-T PROJECT: PREMISES FOR AN INTERGENERATIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM MODEL

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Abstract

Inside-T is a European Erasmus+ project that aims to develop the sustainable tourism in rural areas by using a new intergenerational education curriculum model, based on other previous successful initiatives such as Sustain-T. Drawing from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, Fink's theory of integrated course design and an innovative e-mentoring methodology, Inside-T curriculum provides valuable information and practical ideas for education sciences experts, teachers, trainers and facilitators.

Keywords: intergenerational education, curriculum model, knowledge management, European project, Erasmus+

Introduction

As the world of education is trying to cope with the new COVID-19 pandemic, it is becoming increasingly clear that the only viable and sustainable solution is global cooperation and particularly European cooperation, in the case of Romania. One of the best ways to do that, at international and regional scale, is by working together, in European projects, to meet the new challenges and bring forward the best practices and methodologies. In our opinion, every threat is also an opportunity for growth and in the case of this pandemic it is apparent that the new technologies of information and collaboration will play a pivotal role in the radical change of national education systems all over the world. More, not only education was profoundly transformed by the pandemic but also other economic sectors such as tourism. In order to mitigate the unnecessary risks, many people stay at home or choose to go in secluded places or where there is a low probability of getting in touch with many people. Consequently, the tourism

market collapsed and it is now evident that, at least until a cure will be invented and globally distributed, we must find new ways of adapting the existing institutions, methodologies, and structures to the information society. Both education and tourism should surpass the inertia, rigidity, and conservatism that resisted with obstinence to the ICT developments and mark the beginning of a postmodern society that can meet the needs of digital citizens and students. Educational technology is not a whim of several snobs, or some abstract complementary way of interacting with students but is now at the heart of education. And it will surely be even more important in the future, as the digital natives themselves are going to be teachers and will change the educational curriculum according to their own image and representation on what is an authentic education.

In this context, the INSIDE-T Erasmus+ brings a new perspective over both postmodern education and sustainable tourism. According to the project website (<https://insidetproject.eu>), the main learning objectives are: to facilitate networking and using of networking tools in order to encourage the development of sustainable tourism in low-density areas; identify and use of ICT tools, particularly learning management systems, virtual learning communities and social networks that can help the development of innovative sustainable tourism business ideas; identify and implement new ways of using the potential of intergenerational learning methods and e-mentoring in sustainable tourism.

The theoretical framework of the project is based on three pillars: the Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, connectivist learning paradigm and Fink's integrated course design model. First, the sociocultural theory is an excellent place to start because the project puts a strong emphasis on the social dimension of learning, particularly in the context of intergenerational education. The sociocultural theory is articulated around several fundamental concepts, such as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. For Vygotsky, the ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978). This concept is of great importance for the project because it is very important to learn from people who made it, which are successful entrepreneurs and can serve as models for young people, particularly the ones who think about starting a new business. Therefore, mentoring is a key concept in the project and in a

postmodern understanding of sociocultural theory. Second, the other fundamental dimension of moving forward in the ZPD is my maximizing the use of information and communication technologies, in the context of connectivism, particularly the learning management systems, social networks, and online learning communities (Universitatea Politehnica din Timișoara, 2020). By maximizing we understand the optimum integration of new technologies and especially developing the adequate methodologies needed to operate with them. The addition of new digital technologies is only half of the efficient education equation. The other half is the using the correct methodology with the right people, the adaptation and integration of the technologies to facilitate students' learning. Therefore, the integration of new technologies can sustain students' efforts to learn help them along the way to develop successful businesses, support networking and joint project initiatives, all while keeping them safe in the meantime. Third, Fink's integrated course design brings a modern educational design perspective that can help in building up the INSIDE-T curriculum. The integrated course design model has five fundamental components: situational factors (by conducting an in-depth situational analysis), learning goals (associated with a taxonomy of significant learning), assessment activities (using educative assessment strategies), learning activities (focused on learners of all ages) and integration (envisioned to be at two basic levels: functional and chronological). The taxonomy of significant learning is developed around six major categories: foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring and learning how to learn (Dee Fink, 2013).

The curriculum includes a different perspective over INSIDE-T main phases of learning, which is thought to have at least three levels. The first phase consists of the implementation of the self-assessment by measuring the level of participants' entrepreneurial competences. The main instrument needed in this phase is the self-assessment tool. The second phase consists of a gap analysis that compares the results of their self-assessment with their needs and areas of improvement. The basic instrument used in this case is a collaborative resource-mapping tool. The third phase includes engaging in a collaborative resource network that allows the participants to share knowledge and promotes a greater visibility. The fundamental instruments in this phase are the collaborative and creative lab tools (AidLearn Hr. Consulting, 2018; Universitatea Politehnica din Timișoara, 2020). The

INSIDE-T project's main training delivery mode is focused on a blended learning approach, where the educational experience is modeled by three factors: social presence, cognitive presence and teacher presence (Vaughan, N. D., Garrison, D. R., & Cleveland-Innes, M., 2013). The project originally included several face-to-face learning activities, along with modules of self-directed learning. However, it is very probable that the digital learning activities will have an even more important role, since the risks associated with pandemic are still remarkably high and need to be carefully mitigated. It is especially important to highlight that the INSIDE-T methodology (and project, for that matter) is based on the framework of SUSTAIN-T, which was a remarkably successful European project. Many of the curriculum the SUSTAIN-T curriculum components were adapted and expanded in the INSIDE-T projects such as the perspective on training delivery, the instructional design approach, the phases of learning etc. However, it should be noted that the INSIDE-T project also brought a series of pedagogical innovations at both theoretical and methodological level. (AidLearn Hr. Consulting, 2018).

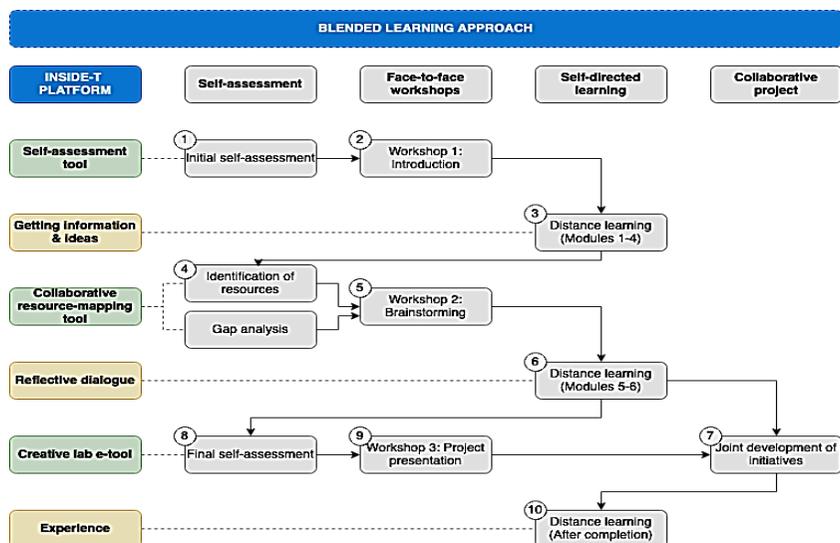


Figure 1. The INSIDE-T project's blended learning approach

As Figure 1 shows, the blended learning approach includes the organization of three workshops (Introduction, Brainstorming and Project Presentation) that are intercalated with distance learning modules. Also, it should also be noted that the learning instruments (self-assessment tool,

collaborative resource-mapping tool, creative lab e-tool) are integrated in a more general learning model, that includes three main steps: getting information and ideas, reflective dialogue and development of educational experience (AidLearn Hr. Consulting, 2018; Universitatea Politehnica din Timișoara, 2020).

It is remarkable that the INSIDE-T project is centered on intergenerational learning, which is of great importance in the context of postmodern education. Seniors should be mentors and models for young people, because their professional and life experience is invaluable. More to the point, the role of the seniors should be rediscussed as a key advantage in the future of European Union. In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the level of success (in terms of project implementation) will depend on two factors: first, on the way in which we make use of the new information and communication technologies potential and second, the level of integration of innovative pedagogical methodologies, such as those related to intergenerational learning, mentoring, coaching, self-directed learning (Garrison, 1997), and so on. It is likely that it will be necessary a change of attitude regarding the new technologies: they are no longer a marginal component of contemporary education or educational utopias; on the contrary, they are now at the heart of postmodern education and have the most important role in reforming national educational systems, from reconfiguring the educational curriculum (which is now a digital curriculum), re-imagining of traditional methods of learning, teaching and assessment and integration of new learning models, theories and paradigms such as connectivism. The contemporary education is not in crisis but in front of the most important transformation from the invention of the printing press. Educational authorities all over the world are also slowly becoming aware of these developments and are starting to create the premises of the educational future that the digital citizens of a true information society really deserve. The potential for an authentic learning revolution is indeed enormous but teachers and students must have the courage to change negative attitudes and step into the light of a true education that is constructed around (not accessorized) by the new information and communication technologies.

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POSTMODERNIST ORIENTATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES IN HISTORY TEACHING

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Abstract

The proposed study "Postmodernist orientations and perspectives in the teaching of history" aims to investigate the current state of educational policies on the teaching of history. Researchers of our time continue to have inexhaustible discussion about the purpose of history in the context of the current millennium and the important changes in the science of history. The idea that history must and can be studied has been emphasized, because people need to know themselves. From the new principles that underlie the study of history in the postmodernist period, we chose multiperspectivity, a methodological concept used lately in historical education in school. After 1990, the term was used more often, especially in European conferences on history, in order to describe a certain way of learning, and a particular type of approach to the content of the curriculum.

Keywords: postmodernist, multiperspectivity, history didactics, research

1. Introduction

Researchers of our time continue to have inexhaustible discussion about the purpose of history in the context of the current millennium and the important changes in the science of history. The idea that history must and can be studied has been emphasized, because people need to know themselves. Contemporary researchers have mentioned for the twentieth-twenty-first centuries three sources of fundamental knowledge of history: school, family, media. At the same time, it should be noted that history can be seen as an object of specialized academic research, and at the same time, as an object of study in school, each of them having specific

ways of analysis, rules and working tools. If we were to emphasize the different characterizations of postmodernism, it would mean highlighting the dissolution of the values that constituted modern humanism and its philosophical basis. The term postmodernism comes from modo / modern, which in Latin means right now, today, and thus postmodern means, strangely, that a thing of today is after today. This is somewhat strange after today and we can think that it emphasizes the very essential idea of postmodernism (Lyon, 1994, 11). The etymology of this term leads us to assume what postmodernism means as a post historical age. Post historic era understood as a specifically modern doctrine, with strong roots in Christian messianism.

Discussions about education in the postmodern world continue today. There are, according to the beliefs held by current specialists in education sciences (Sava, Ulrich, Iucu, 2012, 13) phenomena specific to modernity, which we can identify in the current educational space, with relevant references to Romanian education. Education is not in the period of authentic postmodernity, considers, in a previous paper prof. Univ. Dr. Emil Păun (Păun, 2012, 13). There is a synchronism with postmodernity more in terms of theoretical discourse, but in terms of educational practices we are far from postmodernity.

In this context, as new research in the field of education very well points out, the need for clarifications and theoretical pedagogical foundations has increased, both in the sphere of school and non-school activity. (Peacock, 2017,13). Recently, new ideas and concepts have accumulated in the field of pedagogy, however, says Professor Păun, there are still some epistemological ambiguities likely to affect the scientific position of pedagogy, which seeks a new identity within the epistemic space of socio-human sciences in general and education sciences in particular. Current developments in the field of pedagogy attest to his remarkable progress in explaining and scientifically substantiating the new ways of organizing and conducting educational processes. Behind these developments is a whole history that demonstrates the shaping of pedagogy as a science. As a discipline, history has taken decisive steps in Romania since the early 90's. Associated with the science it expresses and often confused with it, the discipline of history wanted to present itself, after this period, under its four dimensions. , which is characterized by most educators who have dealt with its status. These dimensions consist of: the factual-event dimension, the systemic, cultural dimension and, finally, the serial dimension. As a result, as contemporary teachers point out, trying to reconcile the informational aspect of the

discipline with the didactic one, the leaders of history came to forms of training and evaluation that produced heated discussions, sometimes leading to real scandals. (Adăscăliței, Bercea, Dumitrescu, Lazăr, Manea, 11).

From the new principles that underlie the study of history in the postmodernist period, we chose multiperspectivity, a methodological concept used lately in historical education in school. After 1990, the term was used more often, especially in European conferences on history, in order to describe a certain way of learning, and a particular type of approach to the content of the curriculum.

Multiperspectivity is a term more used than defined. Some historians, such as Peret-Fritsche, Ann Low-Beer have tried to describe its main features. The first emphasizes that multiperspectivity is a process, a strategy to understand, in which we consider (along with our own perspective) and the perspective of another or the perspectives of others, which deduces that we also have our own perspective, sifted through our own cultural context, and that it reflects our own point of view, our preconceived ideas, our interpretation of what could have happened (Peter-Fritsche, 2001, 20). Also, multiperspectivity is, and can be, a predisposition, meaning the ability and willingness to look at the situation from different perspectives. For this, a condition must be fulfilled, namely that there are other ways of looking at the world than one's own perspective, the will to put yourself in someone else's position and to try to see the world as the other sees it, to have empathy.

It is very important to understand why access to a diversity of sources and different perspectives can be an essential prerequisite, but it cannot guarantee us a multi-perspective approach. It is equally important to point out that there are a number of practical issues that can limit the use of multiperspectivity in history classes. These limits are related to the problems of time, space, costs, the degree and depth of flexibility within the curriculum (Stradling, 1999, 65).

Time is one of the great problems from the point of view of the history teacher when approaching multiperspectivity. Another big issue is the flexibility of the curriculum. A genuinely pluralistic approach to national history is difficult given that the history curriculum is rich in content and the teacher is required to cover a large number of topics in a relatively short period of time. Multiperspectivity requires a flexible curriculum structure of history, and even if at some point it allows the study of minority history, gender history, the history of everyday life, there is a risk that it will not

reach the core of the central problem of multiperspectivity, namely the relationship between these diverse groups, with their different perspectives and experiences. From the point of view of textbook editing, the use of multiperspectivity is very often limited by space and costs. The multi-perspective of a historical event requires more pages than it should officially. Any textbook author who has tried to present a topic from a multiperspective point of view knows that it is a very time consuming task and requires intense effort.

Another practical constraint is that when addressing topics and themes that have a regional, European or global dimension, the space given for multiperspectivity is possibly limited by the number of languages that the history teacher and students master. The Internet now offers a whole range of resources for teaching and learning, especially for the history of the 19th and 20th centuries. They bring to attention a diversity of perspectives on events, official and unofficial perspectives. Many of these sites are American, the selection of materials reflects preconceived interests and ideas, and students or teachers must be fluent in English.

Multiperspectivity could become a complication if too many levels and perspectives are introduced into the historical narrative, and then it would be difficult for students to make judgments and draw conclusions. Therefore, it is necessary for the history teacher to look for and find a series of means through which to make more tangible and less abstract connections such as, helping them to make a chronological frieze or why not a historical narrative. comprises both while, and then, then, and so on.

It is important for students to know that multiperspectivity is the interpretation of the sources of different histories, rather than their explanation. Students need to understand that historians are children of their time and whose thinking is, to some extent, filtered through contemporary concerns and problems, but also that they have inherited frameworks for interpreting the past from previous generations of historians who influence them. , in turn, reflection. The most important thing is that students learn that the work of recent historians is not necessarily better, more valid, safer, or more complete than the work of older historians - it is just different.

Also in the sphere of postmodern principles of teaching history is history as a narrative, approached in the postmodern period. Reflecting on history and historical truth in modern and postmodern historiography we can deduce that it involves a special relationship with the notion of interpretation, according to which the past is recomposed by philosophical methods, given

the complex links between consciousness of present time and consciousness of past time, expressed in which private histories and public history are articulated in mentalities. However we conceive the way to write history proper to historians and philosophers concerned with historical phenomena and implicitly the style of presenting historical facts, important events, the ultimate goal must be to discover and expose the truth, and confess it, whether or not to the liking of those in charge at the time, who may not be interested in the faithful image of a human time with its space. Sometimes, conservative orientations flourish in the shadow of revolutionary methodologies of history, through the very revaluing attitude of the past, giving meaning, continuity and the presence of personalities, events, happenings and processes from another time and place. From this attitude is born a vision proper to the high spirits, a vision that becomes a plea for the pedagogical and civic dimension of history.

To define history and historiography in a comprehensive dimension (as a reliving in memory of the past recorded and preserved until now for memory), we can invoke Henri Irénée Marrou, according to whom the historian is the one who knows how to go out of his way to meet the other (Marrou, 1954, p. 92). The other, in the case of the historian, is the past that can only be known by sympathy, an attitude that puts above the scientific intentions of the scientist, friendship with the object: we do not study a document for himself, but to reach, through him, the past (p. 117).

Regarding history, the basic question of philosophy can be formulated, as it was by historians who take seriously not only the mission to bring positive testimonies in the service of establishing the truth, but also to discover something like that. important about the human condition, and in this way: Why do people in a certain place, in a certain epoch, write history in a certain way and what is the validity of what they write? (Momigliano, 1983, p.10).

The time travel of the historical researcher ensures a certain order of events. The historian puts the events in order, but this order can only be partial, only of those that have been recorded or taken into account, from a complex reality, which will largely remain unknown. This is true not only for distant history, for which historical sources have symbolic value, but certainly as for recent history, that which we live, or know both at the level of direct individual experience, can be falsified, either by that two witnesses to the same event will tell it differently, either through a different understanding of the implications produced and the essence that precedes it,

or perhaps out of the need for fiction that prefers the obscurity of transparency. History is nothing but the story of the survivors (Emmanuel Levinas) and the victors, the powerful. This means that in order to establish an image of man and society by telling him what he was (Collingwood), the coordination of scientific data (historical evidence) with mentalities that can be reconstructed on their basis or intuited by the philosopher historian through an exercise presentist is a necessary step.

2. Research design

Is a strong tendency towards social concentration in the use of educational research results. The proliferation processes of educational research are mainly focused on tight bands of people and organisations. If even quarks are the product of social engineering processes of science (Pikering: 1984). Outlining the problem to be researched is an important stage of the research because it determines from the beginning the path to be taken, and the researcher wants to get there, intuiting that he will have something to discover (Singly, F., Blanket, A., Gotman, A., Kaufmann, J., 1998)

The proposed study "Postmodernist orientations and perspectives in the teaching of history" aims to investigate the current state of educational policies on the teaching of history.

We find that the attitude towards the history of the world we live in is increasingly contradictory, since the duration of studying history differs from one country to another, the obligation to learn it covering only five years of high school in most education systems and only three years in others, for the last high school classes, history being an optional subject. It is easy to see that history today has lost ground to the study of modern sciences and languages, and has come to be seen as a difficult and tedious object of study. In this context is the Romanian attitude towards history, which varies depending on one of the symbolic data of our recent history-December 1989. Before 1989, history was in the attention of decision makers, due to its ideological and propagandistic values and benefited in generally two hours a week, and at the university level, regardless of profile and specialization, a course on fundamental issues of Romanian history

Despite all these developments, history plays an important role in educating young people through its contribution to the development of students' intellectual abilities, the formation of their personality, the explanation and even solving problems that man encounters in existential

terms, but also in cultivating values. and national identity, in promoting the spirit of democratic, European citizenship, because, as Nicolae Iorga said, “History is the most humane discipline of all, because it widens life ... history is human life, the problems of yesteryear are now, in another form, with other people ... ”(Păun, Ș., 34).

The investigative approach specific to the ascertaining stage was carried out in accordance with the proposed objectives and hypotheses.

General objective:

Evaluation of the educational policy regarding the teaching of history.

General hypothesis:

In the present research, we aimed to confirm the hypothesis according to which there is a relationship between the usefulness of the textbook, teaching aids and audio-video means in history class.

The methods used for the research were of a quantitative type - the questionnaire. For our research we propose to apply a questionnaire, one for students. In developing this method we will be guided by the steps presented by Ciolan (2011, 41) in the chapter on the questionnaire method.

Presentation of the group of participants

The research population included high school students, 11th and 12th grades from Bucharest, Timiș, Constanța, Buzău, counties, both from rural and urban areas, a total of 430 students. Of these, 57.7% were 11th grade students and the remaining 42.3% were 12th grade students.

The profile of the classes of high school students who answered the questionnaire was both theoretical, vocational and technological, of which 74.1% students study in the theoretical profile (mathematics-computer science, mathematics-bilingual, natural sciences, philology, social sciences), 15.1%, study by vocational profile (teachers-educators, instructor-animators, students, arts), and the remaining 10.8%, study at a technological profile.

To question I- To what extent do you use the textbook in history class?

1. to a very large extent; 2. to a large extent; 3. to a small extent; 4. to a very small extent; 5. not at all, the respondents estimated that they use the history textbook 7.3% to a very large extent, 28.7% use the textbook to a large extent, to a small extent 36.2%, 13.2%, use the textbook to a small extent and 14.4%, students do not use the textbook at all in history class.

It is still appreciated as a resource in history, but the recent digitization and the multitude of open educational resources, as well as the low interest of students in reading, are reducing its importance.

To question II. To what extent do you use teaching aids (workbooks, atlases, historical maps) in history class? -1. to a very large extent; 2. to a

large extent; 3. to a small extent; 4. to a very small extent; 5. not at all the respondents appreciated that 34% are very useful to them, 44.2% to a large extent they are useful to them, 14.4% to a small extent are useful to them, to a very small extent, not at all useful to them 4%.

To question III. To what extent are the audio-video means useful to you in history class?, the respondents appreciated that they are very useful in a proportion of 46.3% students, largely 35%, to a small extent 12.8%, students, 3.5%, students appreciated that the audio-video means are useful to a very small extent, and 2.6% of the student appreciated that these means are not useful not at all history class.

To question IV. To what extent do you use the contents from the history class to other subjects? The respondents estimated that these contents are largely useful in a proportion of 46.3% students, 28.6% students have found that they are useful to a small extent, 18.2% students found that these contents are very useful, 5% students found that they are very useful, and 1.9% appreciated that they are not useful at all.

To question V, the respondents rated 39.9%, that it would be very useful, 29.5%, that it would be very useful, 18.3%, students consider that it would be useful to a small extent, 6.6% consider that it would be useful to a very small extent, and 5.9% consider that an optional on the discipline history it is not useful at all.

3. Conclusions

If we analyze the last decade, we will find a relative frequency of changes in the field of education in Romania. Numerous changes have affected the structure of the system, leading to changes in its components, including the curriculum (respectively curricula, and textbooks). In the elaboration of the history programs, with one exception (the change from 1999), the stages of change went through all the objects of study.

In Romania, several generations of programs currently coexist. Even if their structure is different, the common element is to emphasize the regulatory role of students' learning in training. Student focus and synchronization with developments at European level remain constants of curriculum design.

The school curriculum tells us best what is the offer of knowledge that an object of study offers to students in a certain period of schooling and how this knowledge is organized. It is a technical document, which requires a certain reading key, applicable to various reading situations. In order to be usable in various contexts, the texts of the programs must be characterized by internal coherence, the accuracy of the language used, development potential (at the level of textbooks and auxiliaries), as well as the ability to incorporate changes.

In recent years, the education system has changed its objectives in terms of skills training in students during schooling, moving to equip the student with a structured set of functional skills, which he can apply in certain contexts. However, very rapid curricular changes, sometimes without expecting a clear feedback from the system, the change of history teaching aids requires a rethinking of the methodological dimensions specific to the educational context approach, especially at the level of teaching-learning-assessment. Learning history depends on the quality and extension of the individual experience, as well as solving some problems that the history teacher encounters daily. These problems refer to the possibility of generalization in history and to the expression on the basis of facts of some value judgments, of some moral judgments.

Learning history depends on the quality and extension of the individual experience, as well as solving some problems that the history teacher encounters daily. These problems refer to the possibility of generalization in history and to the expression on the basis of facts of some value judgments, of some moral judgments.

At the same time, we must consider supporting the teaching of history in the European school by the Council of Europe, encouraging a diverse approach to history, the past-present-future

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MANAGEMENTUL CICLULUI PROIECTELOR DE PARTENERIAT EDUCAȚIONAL

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Abstract

Managementul ciclului proiectelor de parteneriat educațional reprezintă o paradigmă a managementului de succes în sistemul educațional, iar dezvoltarea competențelor și abilităților manageriale de elaborare și coordonare a implementării proiectelor de parteneriat educaționale este o țintă strategică a demersurilor de creștere a numărului proiectelor și de îmbunătățire a practicilor manageriale de coordonare a acestora. Se știe că educația, ca acțiune socială organizată, presupune mai mulți factori: familia, școala și comunitatea. Democratizarea educației face necesară deplasarea centrului de interes de pe cunoștințe impuse – pe obiective, de pe programe abstracte – pe nevoile curente ale elevului, astfel încât acesta să fie centrul de interes al tuturor.

Cuvinte cheie: educație, management, parteneriat educațional, ciclul proiectelor, analiza, elaborare, implementare, monitorizare, evaluare, audit

Introducere:

În actualitate, parteneriatul educațional este unul dintre cuvintele cheie ale pedagogiei contemporane; este un concept și o atitudine în câmpul educației.

Acesta reprezintă unul dintre obiectivele strategice ale reformei învățământului românesc și, în consecință, o problemă prioritară a literaturii de specialitate.

În contextul politicii educaționale din România, eforturile sunt îndreptate către implementarea unui număr cât mai mare de parteneriate educaționale în instituțiile de învățământ.

Denumirea problematicii de studiu evidențiază abordarea epistemologică și metodologică a etapelor parteneriatelor educaționale în ceea ce privește managementul ciclului acestora.

În practica școlară există mai multe expresii destinate parteneriatului educațional: acord de parteneriat, acord-cadru de parteneriat pentru educație, parteneriat de colaborare, protocol de colaborare, protocol de parteneriat, contract de parteneriat, convenție de parteneriat, parteneriat de colaborare instituțională, proiect de parteneriat și altele.

În esență, parteneriatul reprezintă procesul de colaborare dintre două sau mai multe părți care acționează împreună pentru realizarea unor interese sau scopuri comune.

În ceea ce privește abordarea de tip curricular flexibil și deschis a problemelor educative, parteneriatul educațional tinde să devină un concept central. El aduce în discuție importanța diversității în actul educativ întrucât fiecare copil este unic în felul său, are particularități diferite, determinate de caracteristicile lor individuale și de apartenența la un spațiu și o identitate socio-culturală, rezultând astfel nevoia de pliare a temleor pentru fiecare tip de personalitate al educabililor.

„Din ianuarie 2015, a apărut oportunitatea derulării parteneriatelor internaționale între instituțiile școlare odată cu lansarea platformei eTwinning, la inițiativa Comisiei Europene. Scopul este să încurajeze toate școlile din Europa să deruleze parteneriate de colaborare folosind diferite modalități de comunicare, bazate pe noile tehnologii. Școlile încheie parteneriate și derulează proiecte care vizează:

- să formeze echipe de lucru elevi și profesori, care să lucreze împreună;
- să construiască o identitate comună și să aprecieze ceea ce este european-totul prin prisma cunoașterii de către elevi a acestor aspecte;
- să experimenteze noi metode de predare, noi tehnologii și noi modalități de abordare a sarcinilor tradiționale în condițiile în care profesorii se luptă cu provocările unui peisaj educațional în schimbare.” (<https://edict.ro/parteneriatul-scoala-familie-comunitate/>)

Parteneriatul educațional se realizează între:

- instituțiile educației: familie, școală și comunitate;
- agenții educaționale: copii, părinți, profesori, specialiști în rezolvarea unor probleme educaționale (psihologi, consilieri psiho-pedagogi, terapeuți etc.);
- membri ai comunității cu influență asupra creșterii, educării și dezvoltării copilului (medici, factori de decizie, reprezentanții bisericii, ai poliției etc.).

Per ansamblu, proiectul de parteneriat educațional are nenumărate avantaje din punctul de vedere al educației pe care o face școala.

Acestea sunt:

- teoria se împletește cu practica, astfel elevii constată că ceea ce învață la școală poate fi aplicat și în afara orelor de curs;
- aceste activități contribuie la dezvoltarea empatiei școlărilor și la creșterea nivelului de responsabilitate față de semenii lor;
- se creează și se întăresc legături la nivelul comunității locale;
- se stimulează gândirea critică și autocritică;
- se educă percepția multiculturalității/interculturalității;
- se dezvoltă stima de sine și devotamentul pentru ideile civice.

2. Ciclul proiectelor de parteneriat

Proiectele educaționale se configurează, din perspectiva managementului educațional, pe modele și instrumente managementului proiectelor europene, domeniu unde s-a conceptualizat sintagma de managementul ciclului proiectelor.

În Manual Project Cycle Management (2001, 2005), sunt prezentate două perspective de conceptualizare:

1. Abordarea structural-funcțională: reprezintă totalitatea modelelor, strategiilor și instrumentelor manageriale utilizate în vederea îmbunătățirii managementului proiectelor și programelor externe (op.cit.):

a) obiective clare și realiste ale proiectelor:

- realizarea unei delimitări clare între obiective și mijloacele de realizare a acestora;

- definirea clară și realistă a scopului proiectului care trebuie să prevadă beneficiile sustenabile pentru grupurile țintă;

- riscuri și supoziții: factori majori externi care determină succesul proiectului;

b) factori de calitate care intensifică beneficiile proiectului pe termen lung:

- relevanța intervențiilor pentru beneficiarii proiectului;

- gradul de adecvare a operațiunilor, în vederea implicării beneficiarilor și a altor persoane interesate, fără ca acest lucru să fie contrar principiilor proiectului;

- nevoia unui cadru al politicilor sectoriale al țărilor, care beneficiază de resurse financiare pentru derularea proiectelor;

- nevoia de a atrage tehnologii potrivite;

- respectul pentru valorile socio-culturale ale persoanelor implicate;
- capacitățile manageriale instituționale, ale organizațiilor care propun și gestionează proiecte;
- nivelul cooperării între persoanele și instituțiile implicate în coordonarea proiectului;
- fiabilitatea economică în susținerea implementării proiectului și menținerii beneficiarilor pe termen lung.

2. Abordarea procesual-pragmatică, conform căreia managementul ciclului proiectului reușește un ansamblu de concepte, tehnici și proceduri operaționale de explicare și realizare a schimbărilor și beneficiilor preconizate, prin realizarea unor studii corecte de fezabilitate, de monitorizare, evaluare și informare în procesul de adoptare a deciziilor la niveluri cheie în elaborarea și coordonarea implementării proiectelor.

➤ Modelul managerial al ciclului proiectului, adresat formatorilor și cadrelor didactice (M.Ed.C., Consiliul Național pentru Pregătirea Profesorilor, 2001) este ilustrat astfel, în figura 1:

Faza precontractuală	Faza contractuală	Faza postcontractuală
Concept Fezabilitate Înscriere	Plan Implementare Activitate	Evaluare Feedback
Ce considerăm că trebuie realizat? Merită? Dorim să acționăm? Pregătirea acțiunii.	Ne încadrăm în timp și buget? Care este calitatea?	Cât de bine am acționat? Cum putem acționa mai bine în viitor?

Așadar, fazele ciclului proiectului de parteneriat educational sunt:

- a) Faza de analiză;
- b) Elaborarea proiectelor;
- c) Implementarea proiectelor;
- d) Monitorizarea proiectelor;
- e) Evaluarea proiectelor;
- f) Auditul proiectelor

a) Faza de analiză

În faza de analiză se realizează determinarea tipurilor de nevoi, cât și așteptări ale grupurilor-țintă, prin parcurgerea următoarelor secvențe, conform Bunăiașu, 2012:

„- analiza deținătorilor de interese: se realizează în scopul identificării categoriilor de persoane cărora le sunt adresate beneficiile socio-educaționale sau economice ale proiectului, selectate din perspectiva maximizării acestor beneficii și minimalizării impactului negativ.

- analiza problemelor potențiale și a celor identificate: reprezintă activitatea de determinare, descriere și soluționare a problemelor potențiale sau identificate și are ca scop rezolvarea situațiilor negative care afectează realizarea proiectului.

- explorarea și analiza diagnostică: această etapă are ca obiect determinarea unor elemente semnificative ale organizației.

- analiza obiectivelor: reprezintă activitatea de determinare a caracteristicilor definirii obiectivelor proiectului.

- analiza variantelor strategice ale proiectului: constituie ultima secvență a etapei de analiză, finalizată cu adoptarea de decizii manageriale privind realizarea obiectivelor proiectului.”

b) Elaborarea proiectelor

Specialiștii au identificat următoarele metode ca fiind cele mai eficiente în ceea ce privește planificarea și programarea activităților cuprinse în proiectul de parteneriat:

✓ Diagramele/graficele Gantt; (exemplu)

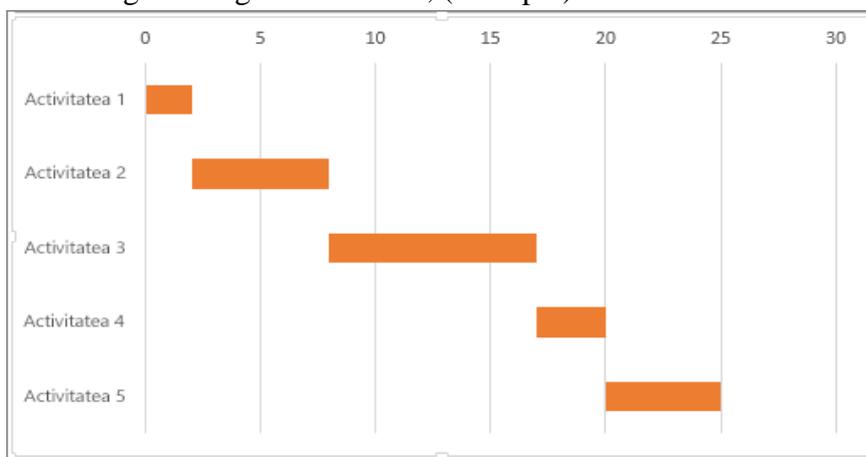


Figura 2 (<https://support.office.com/ro-ro/article/prezentarea-datelor-într-o-diagramă-gantt-în-excel-f8910ab4-ceda-4521-8207-f0fb34d9e2b6>)

✓ Metoda CPM (Critical Path Method=Analiza drumului critic);
(exemplu)

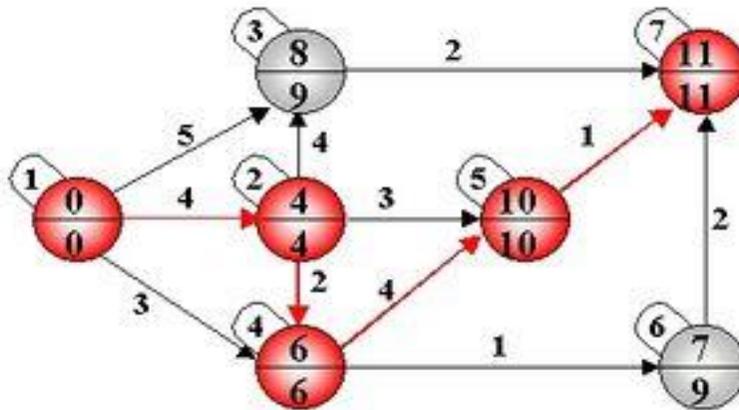


Figura 3 (<https://biblioteca.regielive.ro/proiecte/economie/metoda-drumului-critic-205130.html>)

✓ Metoda PERT (Programme Evaluation and Review
Technique=Evaluarea programelor și tehnica revizuirii lor). (exemplu)

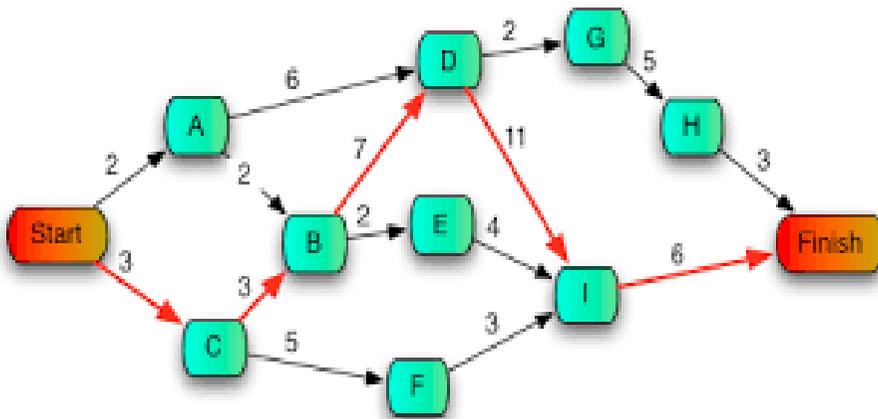


Figura 4 (<https://www.finantare.ro/metoda-pert-for-dummies.html>)

c) Implementarea proiectelor

Conform Bunăiașu, 2012, „procesul de implementare se bazează pe o serie de premise ale eficienței, eficacității și calității actului managerial:

- antrenarea în mod eficient a resurselor disponibile;
- asigurarea funcționării la parametri optimi a mecanismelor specifice managementului de proiect;

- raportarea, în toate etapele derulării proiectului, la indicatorii de reușită ai activităților, programelor, proiectului în general: respectarea cadrului normativ, operaționalitate, fezabilitate, adecvare, flexibilitate, coerență, consistență, viabilitatea, impactul pozitiv asupra grupului-țintă și satisfacția beneficiarilor privind produsele proiectului;

- analiza și revizuirea activităților, programelor, a proiectului în mod global, prin raportare la modelul general al managementului calității totale și la criteriile acestuia, definite pentru proiectul respectiv.” (Bunăiașu, 2012, p.68)

d) Monitorizarea proiectelor

Monitorizarea proiectului urmărește să verifice dacă obiectivele stabilite inițial au fost atinse prin verificarea proceselor de asigurare a calității, prin verificarea resurselor și a costurilor reale ale proiectului.

Procesul de control al proiectului implică 3 etape de decizie:

- Decizie referitoare la cum se va monitoriza proiectul;
- Decizie referitoare la modul de evaluare a performanțelor proiectului;
- Decizie referitoare la posibilitățile de intervenție în proiect printr-o buclă de reacție inversă.

Managerul de proiect poate monitoriza desfășurarea proiectului prin intermediul rapoartelor de execuție lunară, trimestriale, anuale, pentru proiecte pe termen lung; prin intermediul listelor de activități cu punctaje de îndeplinire; prin analize în timp ale proiectului; prin grafice-rețea etc.

e) Evaluarea proiectelor

Evaluarea reprezintă activitatea sistematică și organizată de verificare, măsurare și apreciere a proiectelor, din perspectivă multilaterală:

- ca produs al proiectării manageriale;
- ca produs managerial;
- ca rezultate ale implementării proiectului.

Evaluarea ca produs al proiectării manageriale satisface exigențele de conformitate la ținte, beneficiar, dar și exigențele ce privesc latura tehnico-managerială a elabărării proiectelor.

Evaluarea ca produs managerial constă în evaluarea tuturor etapelor din ciclul managementului de proiect.

Evalurea ca rezultate ale implementării proiectului analizează schimbările la nivelul grupului-țintă, nivelul satisfacției grupului-țintă, produse ale proiectului etc.

f) Auditul proiectelor

Auditul proiectelor este realizat de către experți evaluatori, fiind un proces extern managementului de proiect realizat de către experții evaluatori.

Scopul auditului proiectelor constă în culegerea de informații privind respectarea procedurilor prestabilite în ceea ce privește verificarea utilizării în mod legal și optim a resurselor.

În concluzie, dacă monitorizarea și evaluarea sunt activități incluse în ciclul managementului de proiect, auditul este desfășurat din exterior, stabilit de către managerul de proiect.

Concluzii

În contextul unei societăți care se schimbă, operând modificări de formă și fond la nivelul tuturor subsistemelor sale, învățământul românesc trebuie să își asume o nouă perspectivă asupra funcționării și evoluției sale.

În cadrul acestei perspective, parteneriatul educațional se dovedește ca fiind necesar să devină o prioritate a strategiilor orientate către dezvoltarea educației românești.

Concluzionăm că pentru a realiza un parteneriat construit pe baza valorilor democratice, în societate trebuie să se schimbe valori, atitudini și comportamente la nivelul tuturor factorilor implicați: decidenți, oameni ai școlii, familii, elevi, reprezentanți ai instituțiilor guvernamentale și nonguvernamentale, cu alte cuvinte la nivelul tuturor posibilor parteneri educaționali.

„În domeniul educației, parteneriatul factorilor sociali implicați trebuie să se realizeze pe temeiul unui set de valori fundamentale pe care partenerii le recunosc ca pe valori comune. Teoria și practica parteneriatului educațional demonstrează că toți partenerii care sunt interesați în dezvoltarea educației trebuie să admită ca valori fundamentale: democrația, civismul, umanismul, toleranța, comunicarea, cooperarea, diversitatea.” (Gonța, 2016)

Parteneriatul educațional reprezintă o abordare holistică, de sistem pentru îmbunătățirea calității educației care plasează copilul în centrul reformei educaționale. Un rol deosebit în cadrul acestui parteneriat revine componentei ce vizează participarea părinților și comunității la viața școlii, dar și deschiderea serviciilor școlii către comunitate.

În concluzie, parteneriatul educațional este forma de comunicare, cooperare și colaborare în sprijinul copilului la nivelul procesului educativ. Acesta presupune o unitate de cerințe, opțiuni, decizii și acțiuni educative între factorii educaționali. Parteneriatul educațional se desfășoară împreună cu actul educațional. Se referă la proiectarea, decizia, acțiunea și colaborarea dintre instituții, influențe și agenți educaționali.

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TRAINING MANAGEMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Early education, in the postmodern era, of knowledge and digitization of information, benefits from multiple theoretical and practical contributions on training management and the use of information systems in education, due to their very attractive virtues for pre-schoolers: accessibility, flexibility and interactive way of presenting information.

The article addresses the training management in early education by analysing two components: learning communities in the virtual environment and learning management systems. The multidimensional structures of the two components, which are in functional connection, lead to the facilitation of the learning process, by increasing the receptivity and the degree of assimilation of knowledge, the monitoring the training process and the results obtained by pre-schoolers.

The theoretical foundations presented will be able to be capitalized in a future research that will aim at qualitative and quantitative analysis of the impact of the use of digital learning technologies in the cognitive development of pre-schoolers, thus contributing to the formation of preschool learning skills. Adapting education to the current requirements of the society leads, on the one hand, to the reducing of training costs and time, and on the other hand to increasing the quality and efficiency of training.

Keywords: early education, virtual communities, e-learning, training management, training management systems

1. Conceptual analyses of learning communities

Early education is the educational area that benefits from a multitude of research and theoretical and practical contributions, as a result of the awareness of the need for an integrated approach to the development of the

preschool child and to the relation to the European dimension of education. Preschool institutions need to adapt their classical methods and practices and find new strategies to stimulate and promote training and self-training and to maintain the balance between individualism and socialization; it must prepare the individual for a new style of training: lifelong learning.

In the current context of education, the development of cognitive abilities, of creative and critical thinking, the ability to work with information constitutes one of the objectives of the educational process. The educational framework and the means of achievement are going through an unprecedented change through the use of information and communication technologies that produce multiple changes at the procedural, relational and value level of education. The efficient integration of the computer, the internet and the e-learning technologies in training leads to functional and relational replications that allow the introduction of procedures for knowledge processing, identification and capitalization in higher integrative ensembles. The new medium restructures the learning group, which is defined by asynchronous, a-spatial and virtual connectivity. The learning groups change their poignancy, becoming an extensible reality in time and space. (Ceobanu, 2016)

Virtual/online communities have become very popular in the educational field because they encourage collaborative learning and teamwork. Training children in an online community allows both for them and for the teachers to share their tacit knowledge and increase school performance. The virtual community can be represented by a group with a variable number of people who interact with each other, through specific social media, to achieve common goals. Within the virtual community, communication between its members is achieved through a wide range of interactive tools, both synchronous and asynchronous. The most used communication tools are: e-mail; discussion forum; wiki; blog; Webcast; instant message (IM) and chat; survey; screen design and on-screen sharing tools; audio and video conference, held on various platforms.

The virtual community, from the point of view of interactivity, knows three levels of communication (Corbu, 2019):

- bidirectional non-interactive communication (bilateral message flow);
- reactive (or quasi-interactive communication – there is bilateral flow, and subsequent messages refer to previous ones);
- fully interactive communication – subsequent messages in any sequence to consider not only the messages that preceded it, but even more,

the way in which previous messages were reactive. This type of interactivity forms a social reality.

“The new information and communication technologies (NICTs) can bring people together by building cultural bridges across nations (Nistor et al, 2013; McConnell et al, 2012). Many students and teachers are increasingly involved in this type of communication through the use of smartphones, tablets and laptops, thus creating the premises for a new education culture. One that can provide instant access to information on almost any subject, bringing together people from anywhere on the planet in a virtual space, while also contributing greatly to the expansion of education in the informal and non-formal field. For the first time in human history, every act of communication has the potential to develop into an educational activity.” (Strungă, 2020).

Each online community has its own characteristics. Goals vary, structures are different and people are different. But there are some common styles or patterns of participation that have been observed. Online communities depend on social interaction and the exchange of information between users. This interaction emphasizes the element of reciprocity in the unwritten social contract between community members. Thus, the most important elements in building a real community are not the tools, no matter how modern (gadgets, platforms and virtual learning environments, etc.), but the people who interact with these tools and the feeling of community and identity that develops within such a group. This idea is also supported by the differentiation between professional learning networks and communities of practice.” (Strungă, 2020).

2. The managerial approach of training in the virtual environment

Education through the internet is a new way of learning for pre-schoolers/students, but also a new way of teaching and assessing for the teacher. Thus, distance education is beginning to become a feature of the pre-university environment, more and more education institutions pay more attention to pedagogical activities, seen in terms of the relationship between new information and communication technologies and didactic objectives. In this context, there is more and more talk about “virtual school”, “virtual library” or “e-learning”. The integration of technologies in education must achieve four key components of learning, namely: active involvement, group work, frequent interactions and feedback from expert communities.

The concept of “e-learning means the use of multimedia technologies and the Internet to improve the quality of education, facilitating both access to resources and services and exchanges and collaboration” (<http://www.elearningeuropa.info>). E-learning is a complex phenomenon, which gives virtual training, unlike the traditional education system, a number of advantages such as: geographical independence; the possibility to access the content of the educational material from anywhere and anytime, with the help of the personal computer and the network; accessibility, flexibility and comfort – access to education and involvement in the training activity via the Internet in real time, from anywhere and anytime, without time dependence; individualization of the learning process; various pedagogical methods – e-learning programs must be based on various pedagogical methods, which guide the subjects throughout the learning process: a diversified educational material is retained in proportion of 80% through listening, watching and interactivity; synchronous and asynchronous interactions; online education is organized by subjects, unlike traditional education which is organized by age groups –in a virtual classroom can be brought together subjects of all ages, with different backgrounds, neglecting spatial boundaries (Dobrițoiu, 2019).

The successful introduction of computerized technology in the training-educational activity in kindergarten involves paying special attention to the training management process: managerial processes, strategies, roles and relationships structure. The training in the virtual environment, due to the diversity of interactive resources, can be an effective way of learning, especially for the categories of activities aimed at the cognitive development of pre-schoolers.

In early education, the training-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 training-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 its personality, according to the ideal established at the level of the educational policy”(Joița, 2000). Using the design principles 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 curricular 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).

Thus, we can consider that the training management in the virtual environment represents the adapting of the principles, functions, strategies and general means of educational management to the characteristics of the institutional system, the learning environment and the training process in early education, in order to efficiently carry out activities at the strategic, tactical and operational levels: strategic design, planning and programming, organization, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, meta-evaluation and regulation. At the level of the pre-school institution and the group of pre-schoolers, training management consists in applying all general management functions in order to achieve high performance standards of early education objectives, meeting the needs and requirements of children, materializing in activities, actions, managerial operations specific to curriculum management and group management.

Defining characteristics of training management in early education, appropriate to the virtual learning environment:

- 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 material resources, 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 methods specific to management that ensure the achievement of training-educational objectives at the highest possible standards of quality and efficiency;

- Integrated structuring/organization of the contents of the experiential fields and of the development fields in order to form an integrative vision on the reality through monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary activities organized in the virtual environment;

- 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 pre-schoolers;

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

In early education, virtual learning has the great advantage of facilitating the transition from passive accumulation of information by children to learning through discovery, especially through interactive games, they learn how to learn, thus developing their cognitive skills and strategies which they will use and adapt in various other situations.

3. Characteristics of training management systems; implications for early education

Driven by the evolution of digital video and robotics systems, virtual reality is developing as a new educational paradigm to create mediated learning experiences. The pre-schooler/student can interact with digitally generated artificial environments, as if they were real, thus developing knowledge and new skills through experiential learning. The use of information and communication technology in education will lead to a shift from a teacher-centred to a child-centred learning environment, where teachers are no longer the key source of information and knowledge transmission, collaborators of pre-schoolers/students, and they are no longer passive recipients of information, but are actively involved in their own education.

Virtual learning environments, known as virtual learning management systems, refer to both the information infrastructure and the artificially created learning environment that can simulate conditions and criteria close to reality and that facilitate the learning process in a way superior to traditional learning. The learning environment includes a set of teaching tools, supporting learning designed to improve children's educational experience (Ceobanu, 2016). Learning management systems also manage access and monitor teacher progress, and also coordinate online resources to support course functionality. Virtual training systems have a number of features, such as: course catalogues and online registration system; ability to launch and track educational content; learning assessment; educational resource management; provision of customized reports; collaborative learning tools; the ability to integrate other established applications.

In the electronic environment there are numerous virtual e-learning platforms: AEL – training platform that provides support for teaching and learning, testing and assessment, content management, monitoring the learning process and curriculum design; the iTeach platform – used for the professional development of teachers; the Blackboard platform used to create and manage online courses, give homework and give grades to students; the Edmodo e-learning platform is extremely “friendly” to any user and ensures effective communication between teachers, pre-schoolers/students and parents.

According to the Minister’s Order no. 4135/21.04.220, “The Ministry of Education and Research, through the National Centre for Policies and Assessment in Education (CNPEE), operates the Digital portal on educared.ro (<https://digital.educared.ro>), as a totality of the platforms of e-learning and online learning resources provided and, as appropriate, validated and recommended by the Ministry of Education and Research”. The platforms for managing classes, learning resources and school progress promoted by the Ministry of Education and Research (<https://digital.educared.ro/#h.cjuhzoxf0hb>) are: Google classroom, Microsoft team, Edmodo, Moodle, Easyclass, iTeach platform, MyKoolio, Kinderpedia.

Among them, we consider that for early education, due to the age peculiarities of pre-schoolers, the following platforms are suitable to be used:

1. The Classroom platform, which is part of the Google Apps for Education application group. Groups, teachers and pre-schoolers/students can work in full collaboration wherever they are, on any device. Thus, groups can be created, topics and consultations shared, reactions and opinions can be sent. An administrator can add students, manage 112 devices, and configure security or how to communicate via email, chat or video conference. This platform mimics a traditional classroom, in the sense that it is led by a teacher by integrating different types of synchronous tools such as chat, audio-video conferencing or application sharing. On the right side of the screen, there is a participant window that shows the names of all those participating in the session, a set of tools to use for interaction (comparable to those of a traditional class, such as raising a hand or two fingers), the instant messaging window to send messages to other students or the trainer and the audio control of the microphone and speaker.

2. Kinderpedia platform – the complete communication and management solution for kindergartens, which aims at optimizing the training-educational and administrative processes, placing the collaboration

between the pre-school teacher and the parent at the core of the educational act. Kinderpedia is a cloud, multi-language and multi-currency platform, accessible from any browser. Kinderpedia modules include: child and family management, group management, enrolment and capacity planning, staff management, staff planning and shift schedule, activity timetable, event calendar, weekly menu, QR code check-in, daily timeline and reporting, individual observations for each activity, photo and video gallery, customizable push notifications on the mobile application, children's medical register, questionnaire mode, newsletter mode, document storage in the cloud, multi-location management, custom reports, revenue forecast, automatic invoicing.

3. The Edmodo platform ensures effective communication between teachers, pre-schoolers and parents, being a controlled environment in which the teacher can see every message, file or content shared by his class members. Another advantage of the platform is the ease with which it can be used, by creating and identifying new knowledge, organizing and capturing knowledge, exchanging and disseminating knowledge, completing the learning process by extremely modern means, to the liking of children, exactly in the environment where they feel the best.

From the perspective of pedagogical implementation, the two platforms develop several advantages (Strungă, 2020):

- research on learning strategies of pre-schoolers in the virtual environment: we can measure the level of interest, the time spent on the platform, the number of contributions from the virtual learning space and other useful parameters;
- a virtual curriculum that offers multimedia content to courses – video, audio and interactive text, which is more intuitive and facilitates the learning process; the possibility of cross-platform integration (combining the use of several services, such as Google Documents, Evernote, Dropbox, etc., in order to ensure better flexibility for learning);
- virtual assessment, which extends compared to its traditional form throughout the learning activity: teachers can consider the contributions made in their free time, holidays and the use of all types of content available to express ideas; this process will lead to an authentic formative education;
- new constructivist virtual learning strategies, starting from the premise that pre-schoolers/students can learn whenever they want, if they are adequately motivated to use new information and communication

technologies. Every time one accesses the internet and reaches entertainment sites (such as YouTube or TED), a new opportunity to learn, to organize what they have learned in clusters of knowledge, to share new knowledge colleagues or teachers in the virtual learning community is foreshadowed;

- the development of international virtual learning communities is undoubtedly one of the biggest advantages of using these platforms, as it promotes social learning at European level in a framework that is specifically built to facilitate educational activities. This leads to the development of intercultural curriculum and skills, the promotion of intercultural dialogue and cooperation, the easier approach to cross-cultural issues, etc.;

- innovation of virtual pedagogical practice by associating virtual learning communities at school level with virtual learning communities operating at the inspectorate or university level;

- integration of e-mentoring and e-internship as new methods of counselling and collaboration with parents of pre-schoolers, which can be implemented only in virtual learning communities. A special type of mentoring is e-mentoring, which can be defined as: a relationship that is established between an experienced person (mentor) and a less qualified or less experienced person (the child and the parent participating in the activities of mentoring), mainly using electronic communications, which aims to develop and increase the skills, knowledge, confidence and cultural understanding of the parents of the children in order to help them understand, support and guide their children, while also facilitating the development of mentoring;

- innovation of virtual relationships, interactions and norms established between members of the virtual learning community. These new elements need to be adapted to: better flexibility, openness to feedback and constructive criticism, a sense of virtual community.

4. Conclusions

In the era of “digital natives” the use of virtual environments in the training process is no longer considered an alternative, but together with traditional training are seen as complementary ways to use the benefits of both methods and thus achieve considerably greater educational success. The combination of traditional training with computer-mediated training, “blended learning”, offers multiple benefits to the educational act: it encourages the active construction of knowledge, ensures meaningful learning contexts, promotes reflection, frees the child from routine activities

and stimulates intellectual activity. These elements produce essential changes in the field of teaching, both in terms of quantity and quality.

Starting from the examination of new orientations and trends in learning, we can say that the kindergarten/school, as an institution and as an organization that produces learning, remains open to any possibility of access of new educational resources and quality (self)training, based on the new technologies. The flexible approach to learning and state-of-the-art technological innovation must lead to a borderless education at European level.

In the process of managerial implementation of training in the virtual environment, the activity of teachers and school managers will be oriented towards:

- shifting the focus from a teacher-centred to a child-centred learning environment, in which teachers are no longer the key source of information and knowledge transmission, collaborators of pre-schoolers/students, and they are no longer passive recipients of information, but are actively involved in their own education.

- carrying out educational activities based on knowledge of individual differences, interests, knowledge, abilities, behaviours;

- training children's self-control for learning and developing interest and creativity through interactive play;

- involvement in cooperation activities with the promoters of educational policy and mutual collaboration with colleagues – managers, pre-school teachers, methodologists, support teachers, mentors, staff (doctor, psychologist, speech therapist, psychopedagogue, music leader) parents, community, etc.

- lifelong personal and professional development;

- teachers for pre-school education must adapt their classical methods and practices and find new strategies to stimulate and promote instruction and self-instruction and to maintain the balance between individualism and socialization; they must prepare the individual for a new style of training: lifelong learning.

- the need to develop a reference framework for the implementation of virtual learning platforms in early education and the formation of learning communities and, implicitly, the implementation of training programs for teachers aimed at training/developing digital competence.

- digitization of the curriculum:

- Performance depends much more on the ability to use knowledge tools than on internal cognitive activity.

➤ The curricular contents must be designed so as to correspond to the new attitudes and mental strategies of the pre-schoolers, “digital natives”, who live daily in a multimedia and digitized universe.

➤ Virtual Multimedia Library – fully covers the necessary contents and learning resources, with free and unlimited access for teachers and children, wherever they are and at any time. By exploiting these resources, everyone will build their teaching or learning appropriate to their own needs, without feeling limited by the resources of school libraries or available textbooks. Access to learning and teaching resources will be fully democratized, and the cultural disadvantage of some will come to an end.

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