TRAINING TODAY'S INDIVIDUAL FOR TOMORROW'S INDIVIDUAL'S PERFORMANCE. LIFELONG LEARNING

Florentin Remus MOGONEA[1]

Abstract

The contemporary world is characterized by a rapid and unpredictable evolution of science and technology, generating a significant movement of ideas, inventions and discoveries, an exponential growth of information and cutting-edge technologies. These have as a consequence the digitalisation of the society, the restructuring and the renewal of some multidisciplinary epistemological approaches, from all sectors of the social life.

Contemporary society is facing limited resources of raw materials and energy, population growth, widening the gap between rich and poor countries, the steady deterioration of the environment, and interethnic conflicts.

The solution to this crisis is the education reform, which will cause profound transformations in relation to the specificities of each country, a new education policy to increase its quality and imprint the prospective character.

Through structure, objectives and content, education must constantly meet the requirements of the evolution of national and international reality. The meanings and efficiency of the educational act are given by the the adaptation and self-regulation capacity of education, compared to the more numerous challenges of the social space.

Our paper aims to demonstrate the importance of lifelong learning, deepening and capitalising on it, after the period of compulsory schooling. Tomorrow's human education is no longer reduced to what the school transfers; it results from the harmonious combination of the three forms of education throughout life. This means that the training of today's individual, through education, will meet the demands of the tomorrow's knowledge society.

Key words: Continuing education; Lifelong learning; Adult education; Andragogy.

1. Preliminaries

Contemporary reality shows that the role of the school not only has not diminished, but has become increasingly complex, due to its intertwining and functional correlation with other segments of the society, capable of performing, sequentially, the tasks and actions of this specialized institution.

Botkin *et al*. warned us as early as 1981 about the need for resizing and even changing educational paradigms. Traditional societies have adopted a type of

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[1] Associate Professor PhD, Teacher Training Department, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: fmogonea@yahoo.com.

maintenance learning, which emphasizes the acquisition of fixed methods and rules, in order to deal with familiar and recurring situations. This type of learning is meant to ensure the functioning of an existing system, of a known way of life, and it stimulates our ability to solve given problems and to perpetuate a certain cultural experience. In the conditions in which existential shocks, changes, evolution take place, another type of learning is needed, i.e., innovative learning. Innovative learning aims to prepare individuals and societies to act in new situations, and it involves the qualities of autonomy and integration. Innovative learning means formulating problems, breaking down clichés, predisposing to the breaking away from closed structures. Great existential changes take place on the basis of innovative visions, not on observance of traditions.

The reform of the Romanian education system has as an effect some changes of the educational policy and strategy. Educational policies and practices are based on reform principles:

• correlating education with the evolution of the economic system, the labour market, science and technology;

• equity as far as the opportunities for an open, diversified and modern education are concerned;

• optimizing the ratio between the general culture and specialized subjects in the curricula;

• European compatibility of the National Curriculum;

• decentralization and reform of school management.

The reform programme, developed on the basis of these principles, includes many elements of innovation, among which we list:

• restructuring of secondary, ethnic and vocational education;

• its organization in branches, specializations and curriculum cycles: observation and orientation, deepening and specialization;

• curriculum design at the national and local level;

• design of the national curriculum, compatible with the European one;

• design and implementation of curricula;

• design of state-of-the-art school curricula and textbooks;

• creating the market for alternative textbooks;

• improving the education infrastructure and connecting it to global electronic communications;

• organizing higher education in three cycles: colleges, part-time and full time higher education programmes;

• introduction of optional subjects for skills development;

• application of a new system of evaluation of students' performance;

• introduction of the entry examination upon the graduation from the secondary school;

• increasing the efficiency of the financing system and of the management of material resources;

• reform of school and academic management by decentralizing and developing the autonomy of education entities.

It has long been believed that school can provide the individual with a professional and cultural background for his entire life. In the school of that time, from which we have been separated for several decades now, education most often had an encyclopedic character, in the sense that the ambition was to teach the young people "everything" and to pass on as much of the treasure of knowledge accumulated by humanity. The unprecedented acceleration and amplification of the process of knowledge and the pace of obsolescence of knowledge in the contemporary world makes it impossible for a single person - no matter how intelligent and persevering s/he might be - to assimilate all the knowledge of his/her age. Even in a single field of activity or subject. Apart from the fact that, according to statistics, the volume of knowledge doubles every ten years, and the time required for the practical application of scientific discoveries has been greatly shortened. Human society, as a whole, is going through a period of revolutionary transformations that require the contemporary individual to have the capacity for continuous adaptation throughout his/her life.

Under the circumstances, the traditional type of education, based mainly on school, which had to solve all the problems thus preparing the young people for life, is gradually replaced by a new conception of education - lifelong learning. Since 2000 the European Commission has adopted a series of recommendations on the promotion within each Member State of an education that includes, not only structurally, but also in terms of educational content, elements of proximity and coincidence. The first common goals set out in European documents were "education for democracy", "lifelong learning" - continuing education, "multicultural education".

The concept of *lifelong learning* can be dissociated from another notional content, the one referring to the permanent character of education. The need for the permanence of education at the individual and historical plan has long been intuited, first of all by the classics of universal pedagogy. "The whole of *his life is a school for everyman*, from the *cradle to the grave*" says Comenius; he also considers that "everything we are, what we do, what we think, talk, weave, acquire and possess is nothing but a ladder on which we climb higher and higher, to get as high as possible, without ever reaching the highest level. "

There is no established definition for the concept of *lifelong learning* and, therefore, we operate with its characteristic features. Dave defines *lifelong learning* as the process of improving the personal, social and professional development throughout the life of individuals that would allow them to integrate into the socio-economic and cultural environment.

Maheu (p. 180) thinks, for example, that lifelong learning is a dimension of life. It is a certain attitude of insertion to the real and not the preparation for an active and responsible existence.

Lengrand (p. 49) sees *lifelong learning* as an action capable of enhancing the creation of structures and methods that help the individual throughout his/her existence in the continuous process of preparation and development; to prepare the individual so that s/he becomes his/her own subject of development through the multiple forms of self-instruction.

Schwartz defines *lifelong learning* as an integration of educational acts to a true continuum in time and space, through the play of a set of means (institutional, material, human) that make this integration possible (p. 53). In his opinion, education is not limited to a single educational subsystem, but it encompasses, in perspective, all social activities that are carriers of education: ... the idea of the permanence of education will go to such an extent that there will be no more talk about anything else but education, the notion of permanence being included in the very idea of education (pp. 53-54).

For Suchodolski, the expansion of lifelong learning will make it a means of developing the needs for and interest in cultural values, because it corresponds to the orientation of human preferences and inclinations, and because it makes our lives more colourful and valuable. (p. 312).

2. Characteristics of lifelong learning

The concept of *lifelong learning* displays a number of characteristics:

- continuous character. The continuity in time of education should not be seen as a burden, but springing from the individual's right to education, as a way of adapting to the increasingly complex requirements of the environment. The right to education becomes the right of the individual to lifelong learning.

- global character. The globality of the individual, on the one hand, and the global character of the phenomena, on the other hand, explain this characteristic. The roles that the individual fulfills coexist at any time.

- integral character. Lifelong learning must horizontally integrate different psychic structures of the individual (intellectual, motivational, attitudinal, etc.), as well as the sources of non-formal and informal experience that influences the formation of the individual.

In a narrow sense, adult education represents the totality of the learning experiences that an individual goes through after reaching the legal age of enrollment to a system of compulsory initial vocational education and training. Most often, adult education is delimited by reference to children's education, the latter being still integrated to formal systems of compulsory education and initial vocational training. The term *adult education* has acquired different meanings throughout history and in different cultural spaces, but recent developments have focused on understanding adult education from the perspective of lifelong learning. Admittedly, adult education includes both continuing professional training (especially related to career and professional development) and the component of personal and civic growth (focused mainly on educating a passion, personal interests of knowledge, manifestation of civic behaviour or leisure activities).

According to the European Commission Communiqué of November 2001 - *Achieving a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reallity* - the term *lifelong learning* is defined as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective".

According to the same document, lifelong learning involves:

• Acquiring and updating any type of skills, interests, knowledge and qualifications, starting from preschool education until the period after retirement. The concept of *lifelong learning* thus promotes the development of knowledge and skills necessary for every citizen to adapt to a knowledge-based society and to actively participate in all spheres of economic and social life, getting control of their own future.

• Valuing any form of learning, including: learning in formal contexts, such asa university course; non-formal learning such as professional skills acquired in the workplace; informal learning such as intergenerational learning (e.g. parents learning to use modern means of communication from their children or learning how to use a tool with a friend).

The current discourse on lifelong learning poses a number of new challenges for policy makers:

• dispersion and fragmentation of value systems at the social level, since the truth is permanently questionable;

• widening the discrepancies between various social groups and increasing the risk of social exclusion (those who lost the first chance to develop basic learning skills will continue to be increasingly disadvantaged);

• the decrease of the level of social cohesion, since survival strategies are more and more individualized;

• relativization of formal education systems and valuing of other contexts in which individuals learn through their own experience or through interaction with others;

• professional and geographical mobility of individuals withinthe globalization of the labour market.

3. Factors that enhance lifelong learning

The development of research in the field of learning theories has highlighted new models of adult learning that are meant to reconsider the nature, process and purpose of adult learning. As a result, the idea that adults learning ability diminishes with age has been discarded. Also, pioneering studies on the specificities of informal learning draw attention to the educational value of all social contexts, regardless of the level and deliberate and conscious structure of the learning experiences in which adults participate. Research on learning as a social and cultural process, as well as on the impact of organizational culture on adult learning, has also broadened the field of understanding of adult learning.

a) We are also witnessing the extension of responsibility for adult education from the individual to the social level. Adult education is no longer just an individual responsibility of those who want to keep their job or spend their free time in the most interesting way. Adult education has become an important dimension of the learning society, it has become a social policy.

b) The increase of labour mobility has determined the extension of the sphere of continuing professional training from a narrower framework regarding the development of the professional competences requiredat the workplace to much

more extended social competences. As a result, continuing professional training tends to cover a wider area in the field of adult education. A parallel between the traditional and the modern perspective of the meanings of continuing professional training highlights this trend.

c) The popultion growth trends facing Europe today, shaped by the process of the rapid ageing of the population, accompanied bylower birth rates are changing the composition of the workforce and the system of demand for health, social and education services. In this context, the reconsideration of the adults' activity, even after reaching the legal retirement age, becomes an important topic of reflection for both adult education specialists and social policies makers.

d) The new information technologies widely used have driven the development of extremely diverse and accessible ways of education for all, regardless of age or residence. Use of distance learning modes, Internet access, e-mail, etc. laid the foundation of a new model of learning called *e-learning*, whose field of research is on the rise.

e) The increasing importance of human resources development, of the social capital, within the new economic development policies have determined the emergence of diversified policies and programmes to stimulate the participation of adults in education, as a condition of sustainable economic development. Regional disparities were thus addressed in terms of human capital development besides economic indicators, development policies for participation in education in disadvantaged areas being accompanied by human resource development programmes.

As a result, we are witnessing a resizing of the understanding of the term *adult education*, based on redefining the concept of learning as a psychological or cognitive phenomenon, individual and internal, to an understanding of learning as a social process, contextualized, belonging to a particular type of culture and social agency.

The Romanian pedagogist, Văideanu, claims that continuing education is currently a way of life of the contemporary individual. It is the way in which the contemporary individual overcomes his/her periods of crisis, unpleasant professional surprises, tensions. Through educations s/ he learns how to self-evaluate, to objectively assess hi/hers place in a certain situation and, based on these evaluations, to take the appropriate measures of self-transformation. The same author is of the opinion that the individual who is prepared to assume responsibilities (including the responsibility of his/her own improvement), the one who reaches a high degree of autonomy in the learning process (...) that individual can be considered to be trained in the spirit of lifelong learning, knowing not only how to learn, but also to participate in the education of the other members of society "(1988, p. 140).

The historical and social factors that require the contemporary individual to be permanently educated are numerous:

• The contemporary information volume makes it possible to multiply the knowledge required to understand the processes of modern life and workin all fields of knowledge and human activity. The contemporary individual must be specially

prepared to seek, select and use the information s/he needs, as well as to reconcile what s/he knows with the discoveries in the fields that interest him/her.

• The dynamics of the occupational fields, at the beginning of this century, is another factor that requires lifelong learning. People, during their career, often have to change their job and even their profession, which forces them to constantly learn, to experience new institutions and to develop new professional skills;

• The advancement of technologies radically transforms the productive processes within the same profession; in order to keep their job, people are obliged to adapt as they go to the changes of the technological processes characteristic of the professional field in which they act; this adaptation is achieved through learning;

• The democratization of social life creates opportunities for a large number of people to participate in the management of various sectors of social life and to assume various responsibilities. In order to successfully fulfill his/her new roles (political, leadership, etc.), the individual in the new situation feels the need to be updated and to be trained in the social field in which s/he is involved;

• The prolongation of the average life expectancy has as a consequence, among others, the increase of the number of persons who have entered the retirement period; these people, relieved of their professional tasks, have more free time, which they often want to use to enrich themselves spiritually, to fulfill their aspirations which during their active life they did not have enough time to pursue. Fulfilling these aspirations often involves training, reading, systematic experiences, self-education.

4. Objectives of contemporary lifelog learning

The goals of contemporary lifelong learning have been classified into three broad categories (Dave, 1990):

a) conventional (traditional) objectives;

b) objectives of paramount importance;

c) instrumental objectives:

Conventional (traditional) objectives refer to the traditional educational purposes of lifelong learning, the most important of which referring to the development of basic social skills and abilities, without which a person's ability to self-educate permanently cannot be conceived: reading, numerical skills, basic practical skills and abilities, abilities to maintain health and personal hygiene. Some of the traditional goals of lifelong learning have gained in the modern society, a renewed emphasis: cultivating in people's souls ideals that support the need for lifelong learning, such as the ideal of efficiency in what is done (without repressing the human spirit), the ideal of freedom, the ideal of peace and democracy. In conclusion, lifelong learning traditionally pursued:

• building a positive attitude towards education and permanent personal growth;

• initiating the individual in the technique of lifelong learning;

• initiating the individual in the logic and specific languages of different fields of knowledge;

• developing personal communication skills;

• enrichment and systematic updating of general and specialised knowledge;

• mastery of modern methods of organizing and managing work processes; change of qualification, if required, and improvement of skills, according to up-to-date requirements.

The main goals are considered to be closely linked to the so-called "new quality of life" in the contemporary and future society. Quality of life does not refer only to the welfare of the members of a society, but, first of all, to the way they feel the life they live and the way they conceive and carry out their existence. The most important objectives of lifelong learning, related to people's ability to live a quality life are considered to be the following:

• achieving inner stability, materialized in the resistance of individuals to possible "shocks" caused by the increasingly frequent changes in the contemporary societies, maintaining their mental health;

• emotional vigour, characteristic of emotionally robust people, able to withstand strong emotions caused by the risk and uncertainty that the contemporary individual faces;

• the inner young spirit, manifested by curiosity, alertness to what is new, instead of immersing in a state of "confusion";

• the ability to make a responsible choice, signposted by the ability to grow, to lead oneself, instead of waiting for "directions" from" others or being led by other people;

• the tendency to permanently excell oneself, the desire to constantly improve oneself, as assessed against one's own prior achievements, not only against what one's peers are able to achieve (their achievements can sometimes be very modest, to which can be added a state of complacency in the state of mediocrity);

• social engagement, the ability to map one's abilities to the social and professional demnads.

The instrumental objectives are those purposes of lifelong learning that are meant to contribute to the achievement of the broader goals, previously presented: learning how to learn, inter-learning, self-directed learning, increasing educability.

• learning how to learn refers to "knowing how to learn" by using the most appropriate methods and techniques, likely to make the learning effort effective. The school, in addition to initiation in various learning techniques, must offer the individual opportunities to become familiar with the logic and specialised languages of different sciences, as well as with the structure of knowledge of different areas of human reflection.

• inter-learning refers to the ease with which an individual is able to learn from others and with others, in the family, at school, in group, etc.;

• self-directed learning implies the ability to plan and lead one's own learning processes, depending on the instructive-educational objectives to be achieved;

• increasing educability aims at the ability to take advantage of different life experiences, the ability to change one's own pre-existing structures, when required.

5. Forms of lifelong learning

Contemporary lifelong learning, by bringing together all forms of education - formal education (taking place within educational institutions), non-formal education (outside of school, through cultural institutions, media, etc.), informal education (occurring spontaneously, in various social groups) - includes a wide variety of forms:

• school-based education (including post-graduate education and various forms of vocational reskilling);

• family education;

• educational activities in clubs, cultural societies, children's and youth organizations, etc.

• education in some institutions (church, army, political institutions, etc.)

• education through media;

• self-education.

Basiccaly, however, it can be appreciated that lifelong learning is a synthesis of school education and adult education.

6. School-related duties in lifelong learning

The main duty of the school in order to promote lifelong learning - in addition to fulfilling the above mentioned objectives - is to prepare students for self-education. The school must provide students with certain intellectual skills and tools, indispensable for any self-education:

• self-control, objective self-evaluation of one's own progress in learning;

• the ability to communicate what has been learnt (in various forms: oral, written - summary writing, scientific papers, presentations, etc.);

• the ability of organizing and using one's time rationally; critical thinking in the use, for example, of the media, of leisure time, and of intense study;

• mastery of efficient learning techniques and methods (memorization techniques, data processing (summaries, fact files, syntheses, schemata, etc.);

• mastery ofinformation mining skills (use of textooks, notebooks, use of bibliographic catalogs, e-documentation, etc.).

7. Characteristics of contemporary lifelong learning

In order to achieve these objectives it is considered that lifelong learning should meet the following characteristics:

• continuing education, generated by the way of living, working and adapting of the contemporary individual, who in order to meet the challenges of the contemporary way of life, resorts to education, to his/her own transformation;

• global education, which integrates in a continuum all levels and types of education. It includes formal, informal and non-formal models of education, a plurality of alternative, complementary, open lifelong models of education, not limited to adult education;

• comprehensive education, as it aims to provide people with a multisided and balanced training, not just reskilling, or getting another qualification in a particular field;

• education for participation and development, because the individual trained in the spirit of continuing education is ready to assume responsibilities, s/he knows how to learn for himself/herself and how to participate in the education of others (Văideanu, 1988).

8. Adult educations – duties and forms of achievement

In general, adult education underlies three major categories of duties:
• cultivating the adult's personality;
• enrichment of knowledge;
• fully rounding the school culture.

The mission of education is to help the individual to cultivate, that is, to raise to the level of his/her own potential and to the level of his/her own destiny (Kriekemans). The cultivated individualis not the one who acquired, like ornaments, knowledge and abilities of all kinds from all fields. An individual can be considered motivated to the extent to which s/he:

• has managed to excell himself/herself so that s/he is able to express and assert his/her own unique identity;
• has become able to self-evaluate and appreciate things realistically;
• has acquired the power to dispose of himself;
• has become able to lead his/her life responsibly.

To sump up, it essentially means the ability to conquer and maintainone's freedom. Both workers and intellectuals can be considered cultured people, insofar as they have acquired these abilities. For all these reasons, human cultivation cannot stop during the school years.

Adult education can sometimes aim - in addition to preparing to live the daily life in freedom - as a secondary duty, the enrichment of knowledge which, at some point, the individual may feel deemed to, and even the third - the fully rounding of the school culture. The most important is, of course, the first, because it involves freedom, full self-awareness, the ability to choose consciously, responsiveness and the ability to understand everything that life teaches him/her so that no joy and pain has been experienced uselessly.

Schwartz (1976) distinguishes among three forms of adult education, corresponding to these three duties:

• education in the socio-cultural environment (popular education, preparation for leisure time, citizenship training, etc.

• education in the socio-professional environment (through daily work);

• post-secondary education (reskilling, training - usually undertaken by various educational institutions).

• adult education in the socio-cultural environment has developed four more important models over time:

• the Anglo-Saxon model - based on university education; universities carry out, either inside or outside, various activities for disseminating scientific knowledge, training citizenship, etc.;

• the French model - involving the use of an institutional system of clubs, open universities, libraries in which adults participate freely and which adds a system of various after-school activities;

• the Scandinavian model- based on open universities, communal schools, peasant schools, evening high schools, where the emphasis is on civic education, national history, national folklore, etc.;

• the mass-media model - consisting in the use of radio and TV broadcasts, documentary films intended for adult education (Topa, 1973).

Broadly speaking, the forms of adult education in the socio-professional context, in terms of their content, start from the issues that life itself raises for the adult: profession, politics, children's education, love, marriage, social and economic problems. It always starts from the real problems, as they are encountered in the life of the adults. Unlike when working with children and adolescents, when the educator is the one who decides what they will have to learn, when it comes to adult education, those who are the object of education decide whether or not to deal with the issues that they are proposed. It is a training that can no longer be imposed, because, in general, it is no longer perceived as a "means for later", but as an end in itself. Regarding the methods used, given that the content of these forms of adult education is the personal life of the participants, associated with the intention of finding its meanings, of course, scholarly and dogmatic lectures are inappropriate. Usually, the activities take place in the form of conversations in which each presents his/her case, expresses his/her point of view, so that, gradually, the impression is given that the path to truth and problem solving is discovered together (Kriekemans, p. 438).

9. Directions of education change as required by lifelong learning

In order to meet the changes taking place in contemporary social life and to be able to transform itself into an authentic education for change, contemporary lifelong learning imposed the following categories of changes of traditional education (Văideanu, 1988):

• the expansion of education - the learning period extends over the entire life of an individual, by including some categories of the population that once remained outside the formal education systems (based on educational institutions): preschool children and adults.

• education innovation - lifelong learning forces education to rethink its outcomes and content so that through everything it does to continuously develop and maintain thestudents' capacity of self-instruction and self-education.

Alongside rethinking the outcomes and content, the methods of school education and the way of organizing education are reshaped. Among the organizational transformations, the most important are considered to be:

(a) the decentralization of education (the possibility of making important educational decisions on the educational objectives pursued, the content and, in

general, the whole curriculum, at the level of the smallest units of the education system in a country;

(b) de-formalizing education (creating opportunities to move from one class to another, to move from one type of school to another, in less formal and less standardized ways);

(c) the diversification of forms and modes of learning so that, in addition to guided learning, specific to traditional education, new forms of learning such as self-learning (independent learning), inter-learning, group learning, spontaneously established), self-assessment and cooperative assessment;

(d) the development of effective systems for pedagogical counseling and the educational and vocational guidance of the population receiving education.

(e) the integration of forms of education - cooperation among all forms of education: formal, informal and non-formal. In the contemporary society there is an increasing tendency to use non-school structures, such as open universities, community learning centres, in conjunction with classical educational institutions (formal education), as well as informal education systems, such as radio and television broadcasts, online courses. All these forms of education must show unity of educational action, ensured by the pursuit of a common educational ideal and common general educational goals.

10. European programmes of lifelong learning and professional training

At the level of the European Union and of the European Commission, a wide range of decisions are made regarding education, its quality, educational systems and processes. There are several areas of intervention, including the one aimed at Vocational Education and Training, which aims to expand the range of professional training and personal growth opportunities in the context of lifelong learning. To this end, the European Commission sets as its priorities the multiplication of communication, cooperation and collaboration relations between the Member States with regard to educational policies and the identification of possible sources and resources for financing educational projects.

The education and training programmes, managed by the European Commission and implemented at the level of each community belonging to the Member States are:

• The Lifelong Learning Programme, whichaims to capitalize on lifelong learning opportunities (LLPs), based on an agreement signed by the Member States.

• The Erasmus Mundus Programme, which aims to improve the quality of higher education and promote the intercultural dialogue through cooperation of the Member States with third countries, according to Decision no. 1298/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, as of 16 December 2008;

• The Tempus Programme, which aims to and supports the modernization of higher education in the neighbouring areas of the EU. It promotes institutional cooperation at the level of the Member States and in partner countries, concentrating its actions on the area of higher education in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region;

• The bilateral cooperation programme, which aims at a set of actions designed to enhance cooperation between the Member States and the industrialized countries targeted primarily in North America and Asia-Pacific. This programme equally aims to provide financial support for student mobility. Cooperation with industrialised countries proposes various partnerships in higher education, including the EU-USA ATLANTIS Programme, the EU-CANADA Transatlantic Exchange Partnerships (TEP), the EU-ICI ECP understanding and cooperation programme, involving countries such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea.

• Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme - promoting higher education cooperation in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), and managing partnership funds between higher education institutions (HEIs) from different countries in these regions, providing scholarships for students and academics to carry out research or teaching mobilities in another country included in the programme.

Returning to the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), it is composed of the following categories of (sub-) programmes:

a) Sectoral programmes: Comenius; Erasmus; Leonardo da Vinci; Grundtvig.

These programmes are carried out by the punctual identification of some transversal activities: Cooperation and innovation policy; Linguistic diversity; Information and communication technology; Dissemination and capitalisation of results.

The structure of the Lifelong Learning Programme is therefore made up of:

• four sectoral programmes addressing pre-university education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig);

• a cross-cutting programme, focusing on cross-cutting areas (policy cooperation and innovation on lifelong learning, languages, use of information and communication technology innovations, dissemination and exploitation of results);

• a programme to support teaching, research and reflection on European integration and the main European institutions and bodies (Jean Monnet Programme).

The structure of the LLP programme therefore consists of the following sectoral sub-programmes:

- Comenius Programme (schools)
- Erasmus Programme (university education)
- Leonardo da Vinci Programme (vocational training)
- Grundtvig Programme (adult education)
- A cross-cutting program with four key activities;
a. Key activity no. 1: Strategic cooperation and innovation in lifelong learning;
b. Key activity no. 2: Foreign languages;
c. Key activity no. 3: Development of ICT-based content;
d. Key activity no. 4: Dissemination and exploitation of results.
- Jean Monet Programme (Jean Monet Action, funding grants for designated institutions, funding grants for other European institutions).

Based on the Candidate's Guide, we also identify a series of objectives common to all (showingminor changesfor the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013):

Overall objective: to encourage exchanges, cooperation and mobility between education institutions and systems in the European Union so that they become benchmarks worldwide.

Specific objectives:

- To contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning, to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in the systems and practices in the field;
- To support the achievement of an economic areaof lifelong learning;
- To help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of lifelong learning opportunities in the Member States;
- To emphasise the contribution of lifelong learning to social cohesion, active civic spirit, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal development;
- To promote creativity, competitiveness, employment opportunities and the development of entrepreneurship;
- To contribute to the increased participation in lifelong learning of people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socio-economic background;
- To promote language learning and linguistic diversity;
- To support the development of ICT-based content, services, pedagogical methods and innovative practices of lifelong learning;
- To strengthen the role of lifelong learning in creating a sense of European citizenship based on understanding and respect for human rights and democracy, encouraging tolerance and respect for peoples and cultures;
- To promote cooperation in the field of quality assurance in all sectors of education;
- To encourage the optimal use of innovative results, products and processes, as well as the exchange of good practices in the field relevant to the Lifelong Learning Programme, in order to improve the quality of education and training.

Since 1980, the Eurydice network has been an extraordinary provider of information on education in Europe. The network's mission is to cater reliable information and comprehensive analysis of European education systems and policies. It consists of 40 national units, located in 36 countries participating in the EU Lifelong Learning Programme: Member States; Croatia, Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey; Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The Eurydice Network is coordinated and managed by the EU-based Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), based in Brussels.

Eurypedia is a multilingual online encyclopedia that aims to present as accurately as possible the image of education systems across Europe. Managed by the Eurydice network and regularly updated by education experts and national ministries across Europe, it provides access to over 5,000 articles on the organisation of education systems and the latest reforms. If you want to understand a particular education system or if you want to analyse an issue of education at the European

level, Eurypedia provides you with the most detailed information about 38 school and university systems.

b) The Jean Monet Programme aims to enhance learning, teaching, research and reflection within and outside the European Commission.

The studies focus on the origins and evolution of the European Community and the European Union, the role of the EU in the dialogue between peoples and cultures, the role of the EU and its perception in the world.

11. Conclusions

The permanent character of education highlights the fact that education is undertaken throughout life. In the past, education referred only to one stage of human life (childhood and youth), which was possible given the slow pace of the development of society.

Even in these conditions, the great thinkers insisted on the idea that education is necessary to be be pursued throughout the entire life. Seneca, for example, advocated that the elderly should also learn, Comenius claimed that for every man his life is a school, from the cradle to the grave, and Nicolae Iorga stated that a learned man is one who learns constantly and who constantly teaches others.

However, lifelong learning becomes a vital necessity of the contemporary society, it is a theoretical and action principle aiming to put order in a reality specific to our century. It is a permanent process in time (taking place throughout life) and extensively in space (it includes both school education and education that takes place outside of school).

The fundamental purpose of lifelong learning is to maintain and improve the quality of life. It represents the democratisation of education, being at the same time an organisational principle for all types of education, thus fulfilling multiple functions: adaptation, correction and innovation.

The permanent character of education lends a new perspective to education as an activity aimed at the development of the human personality. The permanence of education makes education no longer conceived as mere preparation for life, but becomes a dimension of life, an existential continuum, whose duration overlaps with the duration of life itself. This abolishes the division of life into two stages: one for the acquisition of knowledge and another for its use. Education is no longer limited to what is achieved in school, but it continues after graduation (post-graduate education, various forms of training and development, including self-education).

At a theoretical level, lifelong learning is, on the one hand, a fundamental pedagogical concept, an integrative one, which encompasses all aspects of the educational act, and on the other hand, an operational pedagogical concept, which extends its applications to all aspects of education.

As an open pedagogical model, lifelong learning fosters curriculum design in school, achievable at all levels, and the subjects of study in relation to all training and development resources of the student, capitalisable throughout life, in a moral, intellectual, technological, aesthetic, psychophysical way; formally, non-formally, informally.

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