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SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF CURRICULUM FOR LEARNING AND EDUCATION OF ADULTS

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This article addresses the issue of the curriculum for adults' learning and education in formal and non-formal terms from the perspective of social and psychological influences. In this sense, learning and education of adults are strongly focused on the psychocentric and sociocentric approaches, which must be relevantly reflected in the curriculum. Namely the curriculum has as object of reflection the relationship between the individual, the society and the educational (learning) institution. The socio-psychological approach of the curriculum for adults' learning and education is focused on the following conceptual approaches: the process of changing/developing the curriculum in relation to social and psychological factors; organizing and conducting adult education through a curriculum that creates contexts for active learning and respects personal and professional needs.

Keywords: *educational curriculum, psychocentrism, sociocentrism, learning and education of adults, social values, metacognition, motivation, adult's personality, psychic processes.*

CADRUL SOCIAL ȘI PSIHOLOGIC AL CURRICULUMULUI PENTRU ÎNVĂȚARE ȘI EDUCAȚIE A ADULȚILOR

În articolul dat se abordează problema privind curriculumul pentru învățarea și educația adulților în plan formal și nonformal din perspectiva influențelor sociale și a celor psihologice. În acest sens, anume învățarea și educația adulților sunt puternic centrate pe demersuri psihocentrice și sociocentrice, ceea ce trebuie să fie relevant reflectat în cadrul curricular. Anume curriculumul are ca obiect de reflecție raportul dintre individ, societate și instituția de învățământ (de educație). Abordarea sociopsihologică a curriculumului pentru învățarea și educația adulților este axată pe următoarele demersuri conceptuale: procesul schimbării/ dezvoltării curriculumului în raport cu factorii sociali și psihologici; organizarea și realizarea educației adulților prin curriculum care creează contexte pentru învățarea activă și respectă nevoile personale și profesionale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *curriculum educațional, psihocentrism, sociocentrism, învățarea și educația adulților, valori sociale, metacogniție, motivație, personalitatea adultului, procese psihice.*

Introduction

The development of educational curriculum, including the one for adults' learning and education is determined, first of all, by the social changes, the value and professional orientations of the adults in relation to the challenges of contemporary world.

The development of the curriculum for adults' learning and education is an ongoing process that focuses on the following landmarks:

- reporting on the dynamics and on the professional and individual needs of adults, but especially on the purposes necessary for a more efficient integration into the labor market and for the ensurance a more decent living;
- reporting on the general trends in the evolution of education and on the international standards unanimously accepted, first of all, in the concept of lifelong learning;
- reporting on those traditions, social and professional values that are relevant from the point of view of developing the curriculum for adults' learning and education;
- reporting on the psychological peculiarities of adults.

In this sense, society and education in general and adults' education in particular, are complex phenomena with their own tendencies and laws, viewed in interconnection. The curriculum, as a basic component of learning and education, is determined by the concrete socio-psychological conditions, national traditions and the level of material and spiritual culture of a certain society. Consequently, adults' education directly and indirectly influences, through the human factor, all spheres of activity of society.

Social and Psychological Factors Regarding Development of Curriculum for Learning and Education of Adults

Social Factors. Education is eminently social [1]. Regardless of the goals it pursues or the technologies it uses, education always responds to social needs and wants. Education facilitates the adaptation of the indi-

vidual to a developing society, ensures the transfer, production and valorization of the social experience and the formation of human resources in the specially created conditions - the basic element of the society. The interaction between society and education is subject to the general laws of development. Within this interaction, the mechanisms of society's action on education (social determination) and the mechanisms of education's influence on society (social functions) are delimited.

The issue of the interaction of society and education has always been a topical and debated one. Thus, J.Dewey considers that there is a parallel between the historical evolution of mankind and the individual development of each human being, the individual crosses parallel stages of cultural epochs. In other words, the author argues for individual characteristics in relation to societal values. "The hierarchy of values determines the contribution of each educational system in choosing from the cultural heritage of contents, beliefs about the nature of human knowledge, which are expressed by their relative importance and will be given to different ways of thinking" [2].

N.Postlthwaite highlights the importance of identifying the requirements of modern life, the changes in the labor market and the potential for social evolution by transferring them in terms of skills needed to adapt the individual to contemporary life [3].

Ronald Doll extensively analyzes the influences of social structures on the individual who learns the family, the environment, the ethnic group, etc., from the perspective of specific values and the cultural code in general [4].

Many authors in the approach of social factors are based on the layers of socialization: individual, family, group (environment), global society. At these levels the main parameters that intersect are determined, and these are: the phenomena (descriptive aspect), the attitudes and intersections (qualitative aspect) of the factors involved. On the third co-ordinate are placed the factors related to the evolution of knowledge: tradition, science, psychology, the system of education sciences, the value systems.

In this model, by identifying the types of activity, attitudes and interests towards social variables, stated as elements of knowledge, by describing them as a phenomenon of human behavior, there can be identified the curriculum components to be applied in the educational act. The relationships in these settings are multiple. It is true that the mentioned approach benefits the implications of the social approaches, the individual ones, as well as the pedagogical ones, representing only one "floor" in this construction, with one central "cube" each. The other approaches constitute associated relations, because the social aspects "inflate" the rest of the volume of these phenomena, which is justified by the complexity of the social relations that a mechanism of this type tries to capture in the area of a network in order to be understood. Reality consists of relationships and interferences on several dimensions [5, p.110].

Therefore, we encounter various theories on the social landmarks of curriculum design, including for adults' learning and education. All these theories can be divided into two categories: the first category concerns the process of change in the curriculum and describes the role of factors in sequences or stages and the second category reflects the analysis of the influences on the curriculum, without worrying about the side of evolution in its transformation.

The first category of ideas is realized in several sociological approaches to the curriculum. The model developed by D'Hainaut deserves special attention. It distinguishes three levels of educational action: (1) the definition of an education policy; (2) the management of this policy; (3) the effective accomplishment of the educative action.

A curriculum's design starts with identifying the education needs and demands specific for adults. There are several types of educational needs: individual needs in personal life and systematic functional needs (achieving professional, economic and social goals). The needs directed towards the achievement of the society's objectives correspond at the same time to the individual needs (communication skills, integration in the society, access to the cultural heritage). The educative needs can be divided into 3 main groups: the group oriented towards "personal perfection", the group of "personal appreciation" of the individual regarding his/her own needs; the "gap between social systems" group [6].

Based on D'Hainaut's curriculum, there are "convictions about what is real and what is desired; the former are existential beliefs, the latter are values. The deepest sources of education are the values and beliefs that do not appear in isolation, but in cultural, professional, moral systems. Educational outcomes are established in correlation with these systems of existential values and beliefs (philosophy of knowledge), the nature of values determining the nature of society's needs and individual demands. So one of the foundations in curriculum design is the educational policy that represents the expression of a choice of values. The establishment of educational outcomes is a component of the curricular foundations, which depend on three dimensions:

the psychological characteristics of the population (interests, culture, intellect, habits, perception, etc.), the social results expected by the population from education), values, way of thinking and living, but also professional, social, environmental and cultural content [7, p.108-109]. The analysis of social factors and landmarks regarding the curriculum for adults' learning and education allows us to deduce the following provisions:

1. The factor of sociocentrism is the one on which the design of curriculum for adults' learning and education focuses, having as argument:
 - clearer and more concrete needs of the adult related to the social, economic and professional framework;
 - individual needs materialized and outlined in the area of professional and/or personal growth/development.
2. The curriculum which focuses on the principle of sociocentrism, applied in the process of adults' education, offers great opportunities for their social integration and professional development.

Psychological Factors. There are several psychological factors that influence the process of designing and operating the educational curriculum, including the one for adults' learning and education.

The first factor is the capitalization of the modern conception of personality and, in our case, of the adult's personality.

There is no unanimously accepted definition of personality in philosophy and psychology. However, in most definitions, the personality is presented on the one hand as a genus (type) of *Homo Sapiens* and an individual, and on the other hand, as a personality – subject and object of the historical development. "Personality is a human individual as a product of social development, subject of labour, communication and knowledge determined by the concrete historical conditions of social life" [8].

Therefore, if the personality is a product of knowledge, then any curriculum must be oriented to the formation/development of this personality and reflect the structure of personality in the essence of curricular components.

In order to valorize more efficiently in the process of designing the curriculum for adults' learning and education, the modern concept of personality has been complemented by its structure, including its basic features and concepts (see Fig.1).

In the structure of personality as a unitary dynamic system, according to its structure and properties, 4 separate planes can be highlighted.

The first plane includes the experience of personality; the functional mechanisms of psyche, the typological sides of personality. This plane is important for determining the components and structure of the curriculum.

The second plane highlights the dynamics of structure, which includes two aspects: activity and personality change over time. This plane is important for determining the goals and objectives of learning and education.

The third one characterizes personality in ontogenesis and phylogeny.

The fourth represents the correlation between the natural and the social in personality. This line crosses all the other planes.

Basic Personality Traits		Components of Basic Personality Traits
I. Personality's experience	General qualities in a narrow sense	General guidelines; cognitive qualities; labor force; communicative qualities; aesthetic qualities; physical qualities.
	Experience differentiated by types of activity	General acquisitions; professional acquisitions.
	Experience differentiated according to the criterion of creativity	Reproductive type activity; Creative type activity.
II. Functional mechanisms of psyche		Perception; memory; thinking and speaking (language); psychomotor skills; self-regulating subsystem.
III. Typological personality traits		Character; temper; skills, abilities.
IV. Personality's progressive dynamics		Activity; development.
V. Personality's individual qualities		

Fig.1. Personality Structure.

To make a generalization, we will answer the following question: How does personality structure determine the curriculum for adults' learning and education?

As an example we will take one of the basic aspects of the personality structure – the experience of personality, which is expressed through four basic components:

- 1) the general qualities of personality, the qualities of knowledge, the orientation of personality, the labour force, the communicativeness (language), the aesthetic and physical qualities determine the place and the types of knowledge, abilities and attitudes in the structure of adult's training profile;
- 2) the differentiated experience according to the psychological criterion determines the content of transversal competences structured on knowledge, abilities and attitudes;
- 3) the experience of personality, differentiated according to the criterion of creativity determines the coherence between the reproductive and the creative knowledge in the structure of transversal and specific competences;
- 4) the experience of personality differentiated according to the type of activity which determines the structure of training profiles [9, p.131-132].

Another psychological *factor* that influences and largely determines the concept of curriculum for adults' learning and education is related to the identification/reflection of metacognitive dimension in the curriculum. The rapid changes that are taking place in the labor market, as well as the growing volume of information, require a rethinking of learning in general and the learning and education of adults in particular. In this sense, learning must become more and more a learning for accessing and processing information at a higher level. This corresponds to the first plane of the motivational and personality factors about taking personal responsibility for the resources and the effective means of action in a given context. The learners' performance is closely related to their metacognitive skills. Flavell J.H. encapsulates the notion of metacognitive competence in the formula "cognition about cognition" or "learning to learn". Importantly, this approach to metacognition is valid for lifelong learning. "Metacognition is the ability to represent your own cognitive activity, to evaluate its means and results, to adjust it to different types of problems or situations by deliberately choosing strategies and rules and especially to establish the true or false nature of representations "[10].

The process of metacognition involves, on the one hand, the valorization of metacognitive competence, and, on the other hand, the training/development of this competence in learners. In our view, metacompetence is a dynamic combination of cognitive/metacognitive knowledge and cognitive/metacognitive abilities, attitudes and values. The concretization of this definition can be presented as follows:

Metacognitive competence represents an integrated system of metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive abilities and attitudes practiced by educators in a specialized way and in different situations and contexts.

The Valorization on the metacognitive approach in the learning process means the adult's awareness of the way he/she learns, of the techniques he/she uses, and of the results he/she expects.

In this context, the formal or non-formal curriculum for adults' learning and education can be complemented with the components of metacognitive competence:

- *at the knowledge level* (knowledge of learning methods, learning situations/context, etc.);
- *at the application level* (planning the learning activity, carrying out different activities, assessing the results, the time for learning, etc.);
- *at the integration level* (transferring successful strategies in solving new tasks, changing learning strategies in relation to new skills, or in relation to the needs of the labor market and the needs of personal development, etc.).

In order to improve the updating of metacognitive competences, the curriculum should include activities to engage the adult in reflections on learning. Approaching the process of learning and education of adults from the perspective of metacognitive competences, they will be able to improve learning, to produce new knowledge with more opportunities for success, transferability and applicability. Hence the idea of the need for activities specifically aimed at the formation of metacognitive competences, which allow the learner to be aware of the methods applied, to evaluate their effectiveness, to intervene on their regulation in relation to the objectives obtained. At the same time, the designers of the curriculum for adults' learning and education, as well as the trainers, must start from the fact that there is no clear distinction between metacognition and cognitive activity.

Metacognition is a mental process whose object is either a cognitive activity, or a set of cognitive activities that the subject has performed or is performing, or a mental product of these cognitive activities. Metacognition

can lead to a judgment (usually unspoken) on the quality of the mental activities in question or their outcome, and possibly a decision to alter the cognitive activity, the outcome, or even the situation that caused it [11, p.19].

Within the metacognitive process, Noël [12] distinguishes three stages:

1. The mental process itself, which includes the subject's awareness of the cognitive activities he/she performs or their outcome, which translates into explaining his/her mental processes. This stage is that of *awareness*;
2. The judgement, expressed or not by the subject, regarding his/her cognitive activity or the mental result of this activity. In this case, it is a question of *metacognitive judgement*;
3. The decision that the subject makes to change or not his/her cognitive activities, their result or any other aspect of the situation depending on the metacognitive judgement. In this case, it is a *metacognitive decision*.

Metacognition can be limited to the first stage if the subject does not try to evaluate his/her cognitive activities; it can stop at the second stage if the subject is satisfied with the judgment and does not make any decision; and, if all the stages are completed, *the regulatory metacognition* is reached [13, p.190-191].

We support the concept of S.G. Paris and P.Winograd, which includes the concept of "metacognition" and the affective component (attitudes), as it is difficult to distinguish between cognitive, metacognitive, and affective competences in learning and education, including the ones of adults [14].

No less important psychological factor that must be taken into account in the process of designing the curriculum for adults' learning and education, is the factor of manifestating the psychic processes in adults.

Table 1

Peculiarities of Psychic Processes in Adults

Perception	Memory	Thinking	Attention	Personality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In adulthood, the informational content of perception is rich, complex and objective. • All the senses (auditory, visual, gustatory, olfactory) register a decline after a certain point during maturity (after the first period – 45 years of age), but this is gradual and relatively small. In addition, the loss of sensory capacity can be compensated by causing minor lifestyle changes. • From a sensory point of view, it has been found that different professions improve visual perception and observation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualities of memory (volume, flexibility, fidelity) are dependent on the structure of life demands, the use of mnemoschemes, memory strategies. • Mechanical memory decreases after 40 years of age, and short-term memory after 50 years of age, but ideas are retained even after the age of 60, due to their own "semantic anchors". • Fixation and retention have a longer "longevity" compared to recognition and reproduction, which decreases slightly after 55 years. • Professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a cognitive point of view, it is considered that at this age adults think integratively and that they solve most efficiently the practical problems, having the best performances in this sphere, compared to people in other stages of life. • In terms of intellect, a good performance is maintained up to 55-60 years of age (verbal comprehension, cognitive mobility, reasoning); technical intelligence and intuition are maintained with good performance up to 60-65 years of age. • The results indicate that during maturity there is a level of performance approximately equal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adult is characterized by openness to new experiences, promptness, freshness in appreciations (non-conformity, lack of rigidity) • Distributive attention is "efficient" between the age of 25 and 50, slightly decreases the ability of long-term attention and visual acuity, requiring glasses. • Adult attention evolves under the influence of social, cultural, extra-professional, informal/non-formal concerns, which create important resources for balance and expression. • Lifelong learning, adult educa- 	<p>Abraham Maslow enumerated a series of peculiarities on the basis of which we could characterize the adult age of a personality, which is actualizing itself to the maximum and realizing its potential, these being the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acceptance of reality; • acceptance of own person and others; • passion for his/her occupation/ profession, goal orientation, activity; autonomy, independence (in thought, action); • social feeling – attentive and benevolent attitude towards other people, ability to help others; • openness to new experiences, freshness in appreciation (non-conformity, lack of rigidity);

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes are dependent on human professional activity, some sensory abilities being perfected or maintained through professionalization. 	<p>identity influences and gives a certain meaning to life.</p>	<p>to the one during youth for thinking, memory and verbal fluency, and spatial orientation.</p>	<p>tion alleviates existing inequalities in training and prolongs the duration of participation in social life by training all functions and cognitive psychic, motivational-affective, volitional phenomena.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spontaneity and authentic/true/natural/authentic behavior; • ethical certainty – the delimitation of the purposes of means, of the good from evil; • sense of humor; • deep but selective social relations; • creative spirit.
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Based on the peculiarities of manifestating the psychic processes in adults, the curriculum designers, and also the trainers, will design the educational aims and the learning process in such a way as to take into account these peculiarities. For example, in relation to the specifics of adults' memory, learning activities will be less focused on information memory, but on the practical application of this information.

One of the dominant factors in adults' learning and education is motivation. Despite the existence of different approaches to this concept, most specialists define "motivation as a whole, a system of heterogeneous and dynamic psychological factors that determine the behavior and activity of an individual". "Motivation is a complicated mechanism of correlation by the personality of external and internal factors of behavior, which determines the launch, direction, and methods of achieving concrete forms of activity" [15, p.148].

Motivation for learning is a generalizing notion that includes the processes, methods, means that determine the productive cognitive activity of the personality. Motivation allows the personality to identify not only the direction, but also the means to achieve the learning activity. Motivation can also be the effect of productive learning activity: the performance of learning act, the satisfaction of being learned, the satisfaction of the educational process, the perspectives of more efficient social and professional learning.

With age comes the development of interdependent needs and motives, the change of dominant needs and their hierarchy. In general, "... learning motivation is made up of a series of triggers that change and interact constantly (needs, meaning of learning, motives, goals, emotions, and interests). Therefore, the formation of motivation is not simply the amplification of positive or negative attitude towards learning, but the completion of motivational sphere's structure situated behind this process with the triggers included in the motivational sphere, the appearance of new, more complex relationships, sometimes even contradictory between these triggers" [16, p.225].

Thus, in the process of approaching the learning motivation it is necessary at least:

- to establish the dominant trigger (reason);
- to take into account the motivational structure of the personality as a whole;
- to classify the "reasons" (concrete causes of the subjects' involvement in the learning activity);
- to correlate the "reasons" with the blocks of reason and the stages of motivational process, which take into account the age and gender of the trainee, the social and professional experience, etc.

Due to the fact that the process of forming the motive (motivation) is related to the training of several personality factors, gradually constituted, as the personality develops, in each stage of age certain particularities of the motivation and the structure of the motive are manifested. Iliin notes that the structural and content changes of the motives according to age are summarized as follows [17, p.204]:

1. As the personality develops, new psychological formations appear, which give complexity to the motivational process, as well as to the structure of motive, enlarging the composition of the motive's constituent factors.
2. The previous components of the motive develop: the level of self-evaluation develops, the range of interests increases, the level of morality increases.
3. The linear character of psychic formations, triggers of actions is replaced by their hierarchy and systematicity.
4. There is a periodic change of dominant needs, values, orientations and other motivators and in connection with this the personality's tendencies change in different periods of age; thus, with age, social and professional motives begin to hold a dominant place in human life.

5. The degree of motive's structure awareness increases, the own behavior is realized as intrinsically determined and not only as a "reactive" response to triggers of extrinsic origin.
6. With age, the number of cases of blocking the triggers of needs (desires) increases, i.e. the "negative" reasons become more frequent.
7. The number of motivational guidelines related to the social and professional needs of adults is increasing.

In this context, the motivation for adults' learning is a procedural-situational, and an affective one determined by previous educational experiences and current fears, stimulated by openness, requirements or social-professional needs.¹

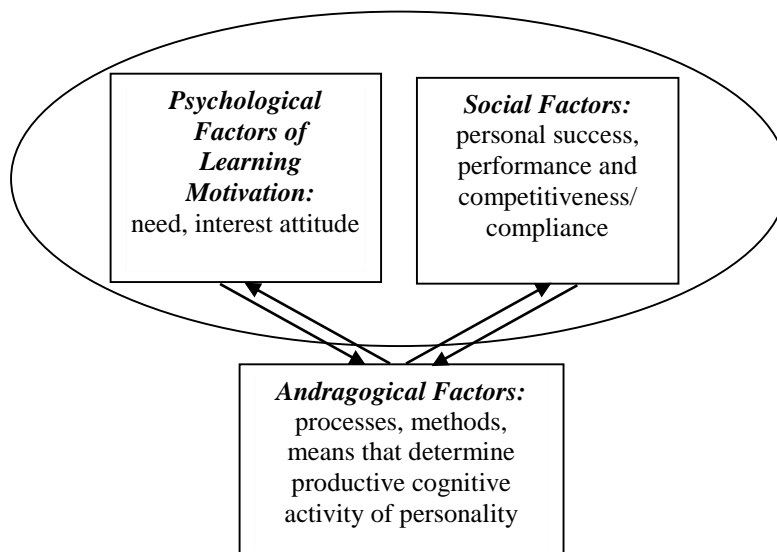


Fig.2. Factors Motivating Adults for Learning.

Therefore, the motivation of adults for learning is formed throughout life through the laws of personal development, ontological stages and psychosocial processes of training the reasons of human activity, including learning activity. And the structure of motivation in pedagogical situations includes, at the same time, updated and latent factors.

In the context of approaching the learning and education of adults from the perspective of motivational factors, curriculum designers must structure an educational curriculum that would valorize on the motivational framework through the constituent components:

1. *The conceptual component* will include specific theoretical provisions for motivating adults for learning and development.
2. *The component of outcomes* (competences) will include the formation of motivational attitudes in adults.
3. *The "contents" component* will include topics current for adults.
4. *The procedural component of the curriculum* will include strategies for valorizing on motivators: socio-economic, normative-institutional, psycho-pedagogical.

Methodology and Express Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the relevance of the taught/procedural curriculum of lifelong professional training of teachers from the perspective of social and psychological influences.

This study was conducted within a Lifelong Education Center. Questionnaires were applied, which included eight questions and interviews respectively with respondents – 42 in number. Respondents' answers were estimated as a percentage. The study's results are generalized and presented in Table 2.

¹ *Andragogy* – pedagogy for adults.

Table 2

Reflections of Teachers on Curriculum Taught from a Sociocentric and Psychocentric Perspective in Lifelong Vocational Training (%)

	Questions/Indicators	Appreciation		
		To Small Extent	To Medium Extent	To Large Extent
	To what extent does the lifelong education curriculum:			
1.	reflect the social dimension with reference to education	60	40	0
2.	reflect changes in the labor market, including education	40	40	20
3.	aim at "raising" the prestige of teaching profession	75	25	0
4.	respond to personal and professional needs	30	60	10
5.	correspond to the psychological peculiarities of adults	25	65	10
6.	orient towards valorizing on own professional experiences	60	60	10
7.	orient to the development of professional competences	20	65	15
8.	provide the motivational framework for professional and personal development	60	30	10

The analysis of the obtained results allows us to deduce and formulate the following provisions:

1. Sociocentric Dimension

Before interviewing the respondents, we conducted interviews with some of them. In the interviews, we found that most of them did not correlate in any way the relevance of curriculum taught with the social influences upon it. The respondents were strictly focused on the topics related to their professional training or on the criticism of the state's and of the society's attitude in general towards their social status. However, after explaining our expectations and the essence of questions asked, the respondents completed the questionnaires, having a clearer vision on the issues covered.

Therefore, 60% of the respondents indicated that the taught curriculum reflects the social dimension to a small extent, the emphasis being on the didactic dimension. They also wanted to discuss the controversies related to the formation of attitudes, the value orientations, the activity in crisis situations, etc.

A positive appreciation of the curriculum taught by the respondents is related to the reflections related to the changes promoted in the education system. They mention that the trainers, first of all, inform them about these changes and motivate the participation of teachers in their realization.

Respondents were more categorical about assessing the status of teachers in society. In this context, the trainers did not link the teacher's status in the society with the taught curriculum but only with the educational/social policies of the state. Although, in our view the status of the teachers largely depends on their professional quality, the quality of initial and continuing professional training, and last but not least, the quality of designed and taught curriculum.

2. Psychocentric Dimension

The results in the psychocentric dimension reflect a dispersion of the respondents' visions on the same variables.

Although, the averages presented in percentages reflect less these discrepancies. However, it was established that the majority of respondents (60%) indicate that their professional experiences are not taken into account in the training process, and there is no emphasis on valorizing on motivational mobiles.

A positive appreciation of the taught curriculum is related to its orientation towards the training of professional competences and not on sequential knowledge (information).

The results of the study allow us to make two important suggestions:

- It is necessary to create conditions and create opportunities for curriculum development for adults' learning and education, valorizing on the principle of sociocentrism and the principle of psychocentrism;
- It is necessary to train adult curriculum designers as well as trainers on the development and implementation of a contextual curriculum, focused on professional and personal development reasons.

Conclusions

1. The analysis of social factors that influence the design of a curriculum for adults' learning and education generates the updating of the *sociocentric principle*, related to the concrete social and professional context.
2. The diversity of psychological factors – the personality's structure, metacognition, motivational framework – generates the updating of the *psychocentric principle* related to the individual potential of the learner, in this case, to the adult's one.

Adults – a segment of the active economic population, must be continuously trained and informed in order to keep up with rapid changes. Consequently, education has the function of responding to challenges and changes in the labor market, but also in society in general.

Learning at this age is becoming more and more a phenomenon related to the adult's profession, his/her job, lifelong education, but also/or personal development.

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