

HABILITATION THESIS

Didactic values and metacognitive structures in the learning behavior of students in pedagogical higher education

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SUMMARY

The habilitation thesis titled "Didactic Values and Metacognitive Structures in the Learning Behavior of Students in Pedagogical Higher Education" highlights the main scientific and professional achievements obtained throughout the university teaching career.

During the 28 years spent teaching, as a tenured faculty member in the Department of Teacher Training and Professional Development (renamed in 2013 as the Department of Specialized Psychopedagogical Education), I have progressed through all the specific stages of advancement in the academic teaching career: university assistant (1996-2000), assistant professor (2000-2006), lecturer (2006-2015), and associate professor (2015 – present). Throughout these years, I have systematically carried out teaching and research activities in the field of "Educational Sciences," with a growing interest in the fundamental and integrative concept of learning. This interest became particularly pronounced shortly before beginning my doctoral studies under the guidance of Professor Emeritus Ioan Neacșu from the University of Bucharest.

The contents of the habilitation thesis detail the evolution of the academic teaching career, from 1996 to the present, emphasizing the main development directions within the global context of significant and current scientific achievements in the field of "Educational Sciences." Additionally, the thesis underscores the organizational and coordination capacity for teaching and research activities conducted within the academic environment.

The habilitation thesis is structured into three chapters encompassing scientific and didactic achievements, career development plans, as well as references, a list of figures, and tables.

Chapter I includes, in the first part, aspects regarding the professional trajectory from a scientific and didactic perspective (subchapters I.1. Milestones in the evolution of the professional career and I.2. Academic trajectory prior to and during the attainment of the doctoral degree in the field of "Educational Sciences"), particularly focusing on initial and continuous training, the nature of the disciplines taught at the beginning of the teaching career, and related activities that contributed to the formation of professional competencies (communication skills, human resources management, psychological evaluation, etc.).

The same chapter provides a succinct overview of the collaboration with the doctoral thesis supervisor and the advisory committee members, as well as the content of the doctoral thesis (subchapter I.3. "The Doctoral Thesis – A Premise for Subsequent Scientific Investigations"). This subchapter emphasizes the relevance of the topic addressed, as well as its theoretical and practical contributions. Furthermore, other relevant studies are presented, apart from those included in the doctoral research (specialized books, chapters in books, and articles in volumes from scientific conferences), highlighting the connections between the research outcomes obtained over time. The progressive refinement of theoretical and practical content demonstrates a consistent interest in the research topic and its integration into the matrix of a modern, high-quality educational system.

In subchapter I.4., "Expanding the Scope of Educational Investigations," the current research directions are outlined (educational policies and curriculum reform, the use of artificial intelligence tools in developing metacognitive behavior, continuous professional development of teachers in pre-university education).

Subchapter I.5. captures the relevance and originality of personal contributions, the citations of published articles in Romania and abroad.

Subchapter I.6., titled "Didactic Activity and Postdoctoral Professional Development," presents relevant aspects regarding the diversity of disciplines taught after completing doctoral studies, as well as activities complementary to teaching duties, aimed at students and teachers in pre-university education. This subchapter also references university management responsibilities and continuous training activities that contributed to professional development.

Subchapter I.7. provides information on impactful publications in the field of "Educational Sciences," involvement in various research projects conducted within the university or through collaborations with other institutions. Furthermore, it mentions coordinated volumes and those including peer-reviewed works presented at national/international conferences.

Chapter II of the habilitation thesis is titled "Scientific Considerations and Achievements on the Research Topic: 'Developing the Metacognitive Behavior of Students in Pedagogical Higher Education'" and comprises, in its three subchapters, relevant aspects regarding the optimization of the initial and continuous training process for teachers. The topic addressed reflects innovative contributions to the didactic field over nearly 30 years of experience in higher education.

Chapter III, titled "University Career Development: Perspectives on Scientific, Academic, and Community Activities," is the final chapter of the thesis. This chapter outlines short- and long-term research objectives, main research directions, areas of interest, and professional development perspectives.

The habilitation thesis concludes with a list of bibliographical references cited throughout the content of the thesis.

Synthesizing the results obtained from the research conducted so far, we provide an overview through the following SWOT analysis:

1. Strengths

- The research outcomes contribute to improving academic performance.
- The cognitive and metacognitive development strategies described in the habilitation thesis can be easily adapted to various disciplines, offering significant flexibility in implementation.
- The research directions and proposed topics support the initial and continuous training of educators through a process based on affirming diversity, understanding the dynamics of educational contexts, and flexible, multidimensional adaptation (curricular, methodological, technological, organizational, emotional, etc.).

2. Weaknesses

- The adoption and integration of metacognitive strategies require significant changes in traditional teaching methods and teacher attitudes, and the research conducted so far does not provide a sufficiently clear picture in this regard.
- The proposed activities for teacher training require more human, temporal, and material resources to cover a larger number of participants.
- The impact of metacognitive strategies can be challenging to evaluate objectively, which remains a genuine challenge for both teachers and students.

- Insufficient funding was available to complete research based on the implementation of metacognitive strategies in special education.

3. Opportunities

- The research conducted so far can serve as a foundation for future research, supporting innovations in education.
- The studies have facilitated valuable inter-institutional and interdisciplinary collaborations that can also benefit future initiatives.
- The research results and future directions aim to develop adaptive competencies.

4. Threats

- Resistance to change may hinder the execution of research within the framework of future research directions.
- A lack of resources could impede the large-scale implementation of metacognitive strategies.
- Educational policies and academic regulations might obstruct or limit the implementation of metacognitive development programs.
- Excessive focus on immediate academic results could discourage long-term investment in research aimed at achieving medium- and long-term objectives.

The teaching and research experience in the field of "Educational Sciences," accumulated over 28 years in higher education, forms the foundation for shaping the development path in the academic career. Anticipating the pace of social and educational changes, scientific and academic perspectives on the initial and continuous training of teachers become highly challenging. Therefore, the added value I aim to bring to the activities conducted so far (both teaching and research) focuses on the mechanisms for regulating educational practices.