

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**

Doctoral School: Education, Reflection, Development

HABILITATION THESIS

**Personalized Education in Multiple Disabilities. Contributions to the
Theory and Practice of Psychopedagogical Intervention and Inclusive
Approaches**

Field of Doctoral Studies: Educational Sciences

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Summary of the habilitation thesis

My habilitation thesis presents the academic, scientific and professional development, a career that has been dedicated to the development of educational and rehabilitation programs for children and young people with multiple disabilities, deafblindness, and visual impairment. Structured in four chapters plus resources and annexes, the thesis documents twenty-five years of activity across university teaching, curriculum development, national education policy, European project coordination, international scientific recognition, and a coherent scientific research programme, before concluding with a forward-looking plan for doctoral supervision and continued career development. The thesis presents the main stages of the professional development from graduating in Special Education (1999) up to doctoral studies in Psychology, finalized with a PhD thesis on communication development in deafblindness. Continuous professional development is documented through numerous training courses (Sense International UK, Perkins International USA, national trainer certificate in multiple sensory disability/deafblindness, quality assurance and audit certifications, and training-of-trainers programmes). Contributions to public policies and coordination of in-service programmes, including several international summer schools on multiple disability, alternative and augmentative communication, professional burnout prevention are part of my professional activities.

Over the past decade I have coordinated and contributed to seven Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership projects, one Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) project, and projects under the CERV and CEEPUS programmes. The impact of the implementation of these projects is analyzed along three dimensions: contributions to specialized literature (needs analyses and evidence reviews), innovation of best-practices (e.g., a communication-profile screening tool for children with MDVI, the Burnout Free ECI methodology, museum accessibility guidelines), and professional training of teachers and specialists across multiple countries, most substantially through the AURORA project, which reformed teacher-education curricula across twelve partner institutions in India, Nepal, and Europe.

Regarding scientific and research directions, my contribution started with the doctoral thesis, "Development of Communication Abilities in Deafblindness," which conceptualized deafblindness as a distinct disability category, systematized its typology and etiology, and operationalized a model of communication development from pre-symbolic to symbolic communication, grounded in the work of van Dijk, Rowland and Stremmel-Campbell, and related specialists. Building on this foundation, I approached several domains, such as

- Conceptualization and dissemination of knowledge on multiple disabilities and deafblindness, such as the coordination of the book series "Educating Persons with Multiple Disabilities" (three volumes, Presa Universitară Clujeană).
- Functional evaluation and evidence-based intervention, systematizing assessment instruments (e.g., the Callier-Azusa Scale) and intervention models (Van Dijk approach, Intensive Interaction, Routines-Based Intervention, Positive Behavioral Support).
- Inclusive education, addressed through a shift of paradigm from the medical model of disability toward social, identity-based, and rights-based models (based on models of identity-development), published in prestigious national and international volumes (Polirom, Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan).

- Professional training of specialists, with a series of publications on reflection-based training strategies for professionals working with children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities (MDVI).
- Visual impairment research and practice, covering tactile literacy, functional vision assessment, and socio-emotional development, largely grounded in her early professional experience at the Cluj-Napoca school for the visually impaired.

The final part of the thesis refers to the further development of the academic career, in terms of teaching, research and community-oriented programs, with a structured plan organized around four interdependent dimensions: scientific research, teaching activity, doctoral supervision, and international visibility, complemented by continued contribution to educational policy. Four thematic research directions are proposed: (1) development of communication in multiple disabilities and deafblindness, using single-case experimental designs to study the transition from pre-symbolic to symbolic communication; (2) functional evaluation and evidence-based intervention, including cross-cultural adaptation and validation of assessment instruments for the Romanian context; (3) interventions in Down syndrome, extending an existing master's course into a dedicated research and publication programme; and (4) accessibility, inclusion, and diversity.

Concrete objectives include publishing at least three ISI/BDI-indexed studies on communication in multiple disabilities, initiating international research collaborations and instrument-validation studies, developing a research team of master's and doctoral students within the Language and Communication Research Laboratory, and developing an English-language master's programme.

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