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The Concept of Permanent Education – Paradigmatic Approaches

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Abstract

When we speak about the concept of “permanent education”, our attention focuses on comprehensive and broad approaches to the instructive-educational process that go beyond, or, at least, should go beyond what we call or we mean by the traditional boundaries of school and formal education. In fact, the lifelong education constitutes sine qua non a continuing process of learning and development throughout life, a process that takes place in various contexts and at different stages of our lifetime. In this context, we can state that the permanent education must be in agreement with everything that means, on the one hand, the educational market, and on the other hand, the economic market corroborated with the idea of the labor market.

We believe that such an assumption is justified by the very demands and new orientations of the labor market as well as by the need of the human being to continuously develop himself in relation to himself and also to everything that is around him. Such a reform of the educational society (Comenius) and of the human being (Dewey), in relation to what the continuous development entails, only brings into discussion a series of ideas such as the continuous learning, the (self) exploration, the personal development and so on. Therefore, the analysis of this paper will focus on the one hand, on the paradigmatic approach to the concept of “permanent education” (from a diachronic and synchronic viewpoint), and on the other hand, on the analysis of specific features of some paradigms related thereof. Thus, *we will try* to show that its benefits and impact may vary according to individual context and needs.

Keywords:

permanent education; continuous learning; personal development; social interaction.

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Introduction

The transformation of the classical education into permanent education implies a fundamental change in the approach and practice of education. Rather than being limited to the formal period of schooling, the lifelong learning recognizes that the learning and the development can take place throughout life and in various contexts. Thus, in the lifelong education, learning does not stop with the completion of a formal stage of education but it is seen as a continuous and sustainable process throughout life, where the individual has constant opportunities to learn, develop and improve their skills.

The paradigmatic approach to the concept of “permanent education” - from the classical education to the permanent education

The school provides a formal educational setting where children and young people acquire basic knowledge and skills. This can be seen as a foundation on which further continuing education can be built. However, the lifelong learning goes beyond what is learned in school and it recognizes that the lifelong learning and development is not limited to the schooling period. The lifelong education involves learning outside of school and in various contexts, such as the non-formal and the informal education, the workplace or community learning. Thus, although the schooling can be considered an initial stage in the formation of the lifelong education, it is important to recognize that the continuous learning and development does not stop with the completion of formal schooling. (D'Hainaut, 1997) The lifelong education encourages the lifelong learning, regardless of age or the context in which learning takes place. Through the formal education system, the school offers a structure and a study program that covers a wide range of subjects and disciplines. (Strauch, Jutten, Mania, 2010). The pupils develop their reading, writing, math and learning skills within an organized and supervised environment. At the same time, the lifelong education extends beyond the traditional school environment. This can take place in various environments and contexts, including the online learning, distance learning, professional training programs, workshops, informal learning communities, etc. The flexibility in time and space allows the individual to engage in learning according to their own needs and pace.

Also, the transformation into lifelong learning meets the needs of a constantly changing world. The advanced technology, the evolution of the labor market and the social and cultural changes bring new demands and opportunities for learning. The lifelong education seen as a “perfecting of personal, social and professional development throughout the life of individuals” (Dave, 1991, 71) encourages the adaptability and the development of relevant skills to respond to these changes.

The paradigmatic approach, in the context of the concept of “permanent education”, refers to the way in which the fundamental aspects of the permanent education are analyzed and understood. A paradigm is a conceptual matrix or theoretical model (Kuhn, 2012) that guides perspective and research in a particular field. Thus, the paradigmatic approaches associated with lifelong education represent different theoretical and conceptual frameworks through which the phenomena related to the lifelong education are understood and interpreted. These approaches influence how the aims, methods, contexts and benefits of a continuing education are perceived.

We can talk about a paradigmatic approach to the idea of lifelong education when there is a distinct theoretical and conceptual perspective upon it, which guides understanding and practice in the field of the lifelong education. (Topa, 1978) Such a paradigmatic approach is based on fundamental principles and values and it provides a conceptual framework in which the concept of “lifelong education” can be explored and developed.

For instance, a paradigmatic humanistic approach in the lifelong education would emphasize individual development, self-exploration and self-determination in the learning process (Dimitriu, 1978), throughout life (Iucu, 2004). Instead, a paradigmatic socio-cultural approach would highlight the role of the social interaction and the cultural context in learning. The paradigmatic approaches are important because they help us understand and approach lifelong education from various perspectives and identify key elements that influence the learning process throughout life. They provide us with a frame of reference for research, curriculum planning, the development of policies and practices in the field of the ongoing education (Cucuş, 1994).

Through the continuing education, the necessary skills can be improved and updated in order to increase the chances of a career success (Anghel & Anghel, 2022). In a world where technology and job requirements are rapidly evolving, the continuous learning becomes essential to stay relevant and competitive in the job market. (Schwartz, 1974). A clear paradigmatic approach brings with it a number of directions and implications for policies, programs and educational practices related to the lifelong learning. This provides a theoretical and conceptual basis for the development of a coherent and sustainable framework where the lifelong education objectives, strategies and assessments can be defined.

New paradigms in the continuing education and epistemological explanations by reference to the idea of a permanent self-education

The continuing education provides the opportunity to expand one's knowledge, or to develop personal skills and to explore lifelong interests. Such a state of fact allows for the development of the human being as an individual, as well as for the improvement of the quality of life. In a constantly changing world with new technologies and information, the continuing education helps in the process of adapting to new demands and opportunities. The permanent education thus marks a value leap at the level of standing out paradigms (Cristea, 2011, 54-56) in the education policy. Through the continuous learning, any human being can prepare or be prepared for changes in the career, the society and the personal life.

Therefore, we believe that the idea of a permanent education can be correlated with the phrase “lifelong learning”. Moreover, “lifelong learning” means learning throughout life and it emphasizes the fact that the learning process does not stop with the end of a formal stage of education. This phrase underlines the importance of a continuing learning throughout life and it recognizes that learning occurs in all areas of life, in various contexts and at different stages of one's development.

The lifelong education, like the lifelong learning, emphasizes the learning throughout one's lifetime, recognizing that learning takes

place throughout our existence and is not limited to school or youth. They promote the idea that learning is a continuous and sustainable process that contributes to the personal, professional and social development throughout life. (Ogata, & all., 2021, Neculau & Anghel, 2022)

Thus, both concepts emphasize the importance of the adaptability, the resilience and the ability to learn in the face of changes and new requirements. They recognize that in an ever-evolving world, where technology advances rapidly and the new knowledge and skills become necessary, the continuous learning becomes essential to remain relevant and adaptable. We can also appreciate that the lifelong education and the phrase “lifelong learning” complement each other, as both express the importance of the lifelong learning and they promote a continuous and sustainable approach to education in a changing context.

The continuing education helps in the process of developing critical thinking, improving and understanding social, political and cultural issues. (Lengrand, 1973) In addition, the continuous learning can bring personal satisfaction and achievement in life. (Păun, 2003) The discovering of new areas of interest, the acquiring of new skills and achieving personal goals can contribute to the self-esteem and the overall satisfaction in life.

In the paradigmatic approaches associated with the lifelong education, a series of perspectives are visible which are aimed at providing possible solutions or viable alternatives at the social, educational and, last but not least, economic level:

- *The humanistic paradigm:* This approach focuses on the full development of the individual, understanding that the learning is not limited to certain periods of life, but it is a continuous process. In this paradigm, the emphasis is on the personal development, the self-exploration, the experiential learning and the self-determination.
- *The socio-cultural paradigm:* This approach highlights the role of the social interaction and the cultural context in learning. From this perspective, the lifelong learning is considered to be a social process in which individuals construct knowledge and understanding through interaction with others and the environment.

- *The economic paradigm:* This approach emphasizes the importance of the lifelong learning in the context of the economic development (Anghel & Anghel, 2023). In a constantly changing and globalized world, the up-to-date and adaptable skills and competences are vital for the professional success and the adapting to new labor market demands

- *The critical Paradigm:* This approach emphasizes the importance of the lifelong education in the fight against social inequalities and injustice. The lifelong education can be a tool for emancipation and critical thinking, by enabling individuals to understand and challenge power structures and actively participate in the society.

These paradigmatic approaches are not exclusive and they can coexist in different contexts and perspectives. The lifelong education is a complex approach that recognizes the importance of the lifelong learning and it encourages the continuous development of the individual in all areas of his existence.

The self-education and the lifelong learning are closely related concepts and they can connect in many ways. Thus, it involves taking individual responsibility for one's own learning and it is actively seeking knowledge and personal development. (Albu, 2016) In the context of the lifelong education, the focus is on lifelong learning. The self-education encourages the individual to be autonomous in his learning process and to continue to develop his knowledge and skills throughout his life.

The lifelong education promotes the flexibility of learning and the self-education fits perfectly with this idea. (Comănescu, 1996). Through the self-education, individuals can choose their own study topics, pace and learning methods. They can choose to engage in the online learning, they can access educational resources, attend classes, or they can engage in personal projects. The self-education offers the freedom to customize learning according to individual interests and needs, consistent with the principles of the lifelong learning.

The self-education can also play an important role in continuing the professional development and career management. In a world where job demands change rapidly, individuals need to be able to adapt and constantly improve their skills. The self-education enables the individual to identify developmental needs and engage in learning

accordingly, thereby contributing to the lifelong professional development. (Miccas & Batista, 2014). The self-education and the lifelong learning therefore support each other by providing individuals the opportunity to be autonomous in their learning and to continue to develop their knowledge and skills throughout their lives.

Conclusions

The paradigmatic approach may imply a certain philosophical, theoretical or methodological perspective on the lifelong education.

- The socio-cultural approach emphasizes the importance of the social interaction and the cultural context in the learning process. The critical approach addresses issues such as the power, the inequality and the social justice in the continuing education. For example, the humanistic approach emphasizes the personal development, the experiential learning and the individual self-determination.
- The continuing education places an increased emphasis on the personalization and the diversity. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all learning model, it recognizes that each individual has various needs and interests. Thus, the continuing education offers a wide range of educational options and resources to meet the individual diversity and preferences.
- The lifelong education considers not only the academic development, but also the personal, professional, social and cultural development of the individual. The holistic understanding of the human development and the individual needs is essential in transforming the classical education into lifelong education. The transformation of classical education into lifelong education involves a paradigm shift in the way we perceive learning and education. It promotes continuous and sustainable lifelong learning and it recognizes the importance of adaptability and constant development of the individual in a rapidly changing world.
- The self-education can serve as an essential tool in achieving lifelong education. Through the self-education, individuals can continue to develop their knowledge and skills outside of the school environment and they can explore new and diverse subjects.

The self-education allows individuals to remain permanently in a learning process, regardless of age or context.

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