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# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CURRENT SCHOOL CURRICULUM MONITORING

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The issue of monitoring the school curriculum according to the curriculum taught/curriculum learned is part of the issue of educational curriculum management. As a rule, this issue is addressed alongside the issues of conceptualization, design and implementation of the school curriculum. In other words, monitoring occurs at all stages of designing and implementing the school curriculum. In the given article, a concept of monitoring the school curriculum is proposed from the perspective of curricular/scientific research, but also from the perspective of continuity in the development of school curriculum. Continuity of curriculum development implies continuity of curriculum monitoring. Monitoring is a process of tracking, observing and supervising the functioning of school curriculum, in which information and data on the quality of taught curriculum are collected, analyzed and interpreted and decisions are made to realize the reverse connection and perspectives of continuous development of the school curriculum. The process of continuous monitoring of the school curriculum in function is carried out in stages and by means of specific tools: indicators, descriptors, methods. The emphasis is on the self-monitoring of taught-learned curriculum by the teacher in the classroom, being an active participant in the continuous development of the discipline taught curriculum.

***Keywords:*** *national curriculum, school curriculum, curriculum monitoring, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, curriculum impact, curriculum research.*

## CADRUL CONCEPTUAL AL MONITORIZĂRII CURRICULUMULUI ȘCOLAR ÎN FUNCȚIE

Problema monitorizării curriculumului școlar în funcție de curriculumul predat/curriculumul învățat face parte din problematica managementului curriculumului educațional. De regulă, această problematică se abordează alături de problemele conceptualizării, proiectării și implementării curriculumului școlar. Cu alte cuvinte, monitorizarea apare în toate etapele conceperii și aplicării curriculumului școlar. În articolul dat, se propune un concept de monitorizare a curriculumului școlar din perspectiva cercetării curriculare/științifice, dar și din perspectiva continuității în dezvoltarea curriculumului școlar. Continuitatea dezvoltării curriculare implică continuitatea monitorizării curriculare. Monitorizarea este un proces de urmărire, observare și supraveghere a funcționării curriculumului școlar, în cadrul căruia sunt colectate, analizate și interpretate informații și date privind calitatea curriculumului predat și luarea unor decizii de realizare a conexiunii inverse și a perspectivelor de dezvoltare continue a curriculumului școlar. Procesul de monitorizare continuă a curriculumului școlar în funcție se realizează în etape și prin intermediul unui instrumentar specific: indicatori, descriptori, metode. Accentul este pus pe auto-monitorizarea curriculumului predat-învățat de către cadrul didactic la clasă, fiind participant activ în dezvoltarea continuă a curriculumului la disciplina predată.

***Cuvinte-cheie:*** *curriculumul național, curriculumul școlar, monitorizarea curriculumului, dezvoltarea curriculumului, implementarea curriculumului, impactul curriculumului, cercetarea curriculară.*

### Introduction

In the last decades, the spectacular changes of society have become subjects of debates, analyzes and forecasts. In the background of globalization, a veritable „explosion” of technologies, information, values, alternatives, etc. can be identified. In fact, this state of affairs is characterized as a postmodern one.

In this sense, education, as a determining factor in the development of society, is no exception. Postmodernism in education is associated with the current trends characteristic of the development of system, but also with many prospective openings:

- valorization of the humanistic paradigm of education, which is oriented towards the maximum development of one’s own self, personality and own experiences;
- establishment of a knowledge society;

- establishment of new socio-humanistic relations based on: harmony with nature, cooperation and negotiation, equalization of chances, valorization of all resources, etc.

Postmodern education focuses on the interconnection of psychocentric and sociocentric paradigms, which led to the emergence of a new paradigm – the curriculum – having as priority the purposes of education designed according to the psychological, pedagogical, but also society's requirements for education.

The transformations at the level of educational curriculum aim at the resizing of informative and formative functions of education, the development of curricular products „in perspective", the valorization of interdisciplinarity/transdisciplinarity; the expansion of optional subjects, the unification of information and communication technologies, the formation of a new generation of teaching staff, the promotion of partnership relations between educational agencies, the stimulation of active, interactive learning, self-learning [3, p. 5].

In this context, the issue of monitoring the curriculum at all stages of development and implementation becomes a priority and timely one and approached from several perspectives. But the problem of continuous monitoring of the school curriculum in function is addressed sequentially, including from the perspective of curriculum research.

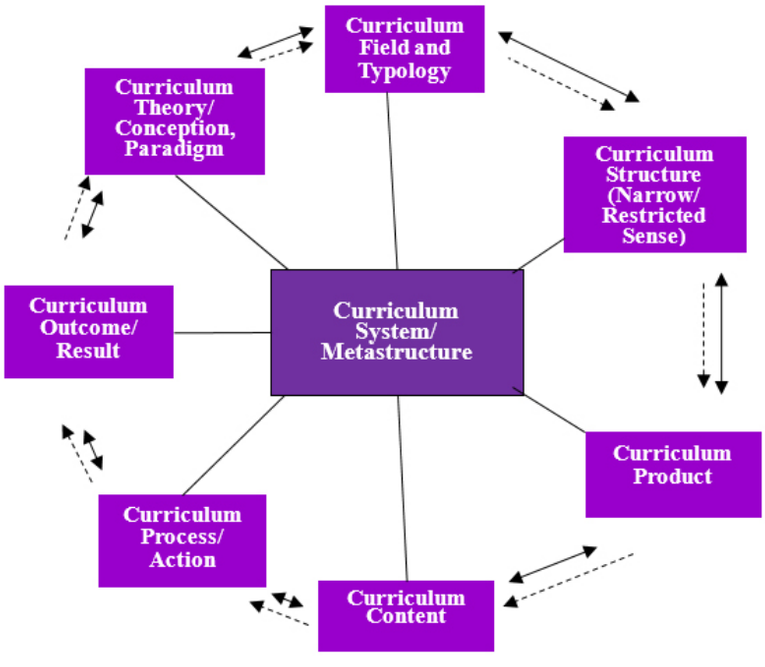
**Educational Curriculum as Object of Monitoring**

The systemic approach of the educational curriculum constitutes the foundation of construction/conception and development of the Educational Curriculum. The concept of "system", "systemic approach" correlates with something unitary, made up of components, in permanent connection and interdependence. At the same time, each component can perform its own specific functions, correlated with certain purposes, or each component is made up of separate elements.

Integrality represents the basic criterion of the unity of system, being the result of interconnection of the components of this system. The method of making the connection between the components takes the form of a structure.

In the context of these theories, at least six subsystems of the Educational Curriculum are identified, which are in permanent interdependence and interaction and, to a large extent, determine the efficiency/quality of education: curriculum concept/conception, curriculum domain, curriculum structure, curriculum product, curriculum content, curriculum process/action, curriculum outcome/result. Their structure falls within the logic of building educational (sub)systems with inputs and outputs, their own, specific functions within the cyclical and spiral development/functioning of the educational curriculum.

**Fig. 1. Educational Curriculum as System (Metastructure).**



The curriculum paradigm is focused on affirming the priority role of educational goals, at the level of any pedagogical project. Depending on the objectives, the other elements of curricular approach to training are also structured, i.e. teaching-learning methods, assessment strategies and contents.

In Sorin Cristea's view „the emergence of postmodern curriculum paradigm is due to the need to resolve the conflicts between the psychocentric and sociocentric approach to education, between education and training, between teacher and student" [4, p. 6-7]. In this sense, the constitution of curriculum paradigm:

- does not replace the general theory of education and the general theory of training, but on the contrary, ensures their unity, having as its object of activity the design of education and training;
- ensures the pedagogical, psychological and social correlation of the curricular elements at system level;
- ensures optimal communication between teacher and student.

The educational curriculum as a system and paradigm generates the concept and methodology of monitoring curricular processes.

**Concept and Methodology of Monitoring Educational Curriculum**

Monitoring is a continuous process of following, observing, supervising and controlling an educational fact or phenomenon, in which information and data are collected, analyzed and interpreted in order to evaluate the supervised educational fact or phenomenon and to take necessary decisions.

Monitoring the implementation/functioning of the school curriculum means the systematic and continuous monitoring of how the education system and process behaves in relation to the proposed changes. Regarding the education process, three types of monitoring are distinguished:

- administrative monitoring, which refers to the follow-up/supervision of compliance with the legal provisions regarding the education plan, curriculum, textbooks, the organization and development of the educational process, etc.;
- formative monitoring, focused on monitoring the learning process: for example, the periodic administration of criterion tests aimed at the essence of a study program, allows the identification of problems, difficulties in its development, etc.;
- monitoring/piloting school performance, which is generally achieved with the help of normative tests; they have the role of informing, in comparative terms, about what schools and classes „produce".

Other authors specify that the monitoring of a curriculum should establish to what extent it meets the following requirements/demands: coherence, quality, equity [8; 9].

D. Potolea claims that the monitoring of a curriculum must accompany each stage of its construction:

- when determining the goals, the following must be evaluated: cultural values; expectations of social forces; current school performance; assessment of educational needs;
- at the time of planning: the control of suitability of the objectives; the appropriate selection of contents, didactic strategies; the adequacy of school textbooks;
- during the performance: the observation of reactions of teachers and students; the study of students' results, etc.;
- during field experimentation: the reactions of those included in the experiment (the sample); program quality control under different conditions;
- during the introduction into school practice on a large scale (examination of the final form of the curriculum): control of the effectiveness of system as a whole; controlling the training of teaching staff for the promotion of respective curriculum;
- at the time of the quality control: the examination of quality of the curriculum's implementation: the study of causes of the variation in efficiency; possible correction suggestions, etc. [7, p. 126-127].

The monitoring of curriculum's implementation is designed in stages and is carried out in the following logical sequence:

- establishment of the curricular aspects that will be subject to monitoring;
- determination of the monitoring model of criteria and indicators that will be followed;
- selection and quality training of monitors (persons who will monitor);

- specification of the work methodology (how the monitoring will be carried out, which methods, tools will be used in the monitoring process);
- collection of information and data, their analysis and interpretation;
- formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

The design of a monitoring action requires compliance with all these stages, especially the good training of the people who will deal with monitoring, and the efficiency of a monitoring process depends on the quality of information collected, which, in turn, influences the quality of decision to be taken.

The monitors involved in the implementation/operation of curriculum will be interested in the following:
- ensuring the necessary conditions for the school curriculum's implementation/operation;
- the actual process of school curriculum's implementation/operation;
- monitoring the system of competences designed in the school curriculum in the teaching-learning-evaluation process;
- correlating the discipline-specific competences with transversal ones in the training process;
- adequacing the educational contents transposed in the school textbooks to the competences training process;
- valorizing the modern teaching-learning-evaluation strategies in the educational process;
- the degree of training of teaching staff for the implementation/operation of the curriculum centered on competences, etc.

The main purpose of monitoring is to evaluate the conditions of school curriculum's implementation/operation, the identification of possible problems or dysfunctions in the process of its implementation/operation at the level of educational institution, their operative solution in order to ensure the successful implementation/operation of the document in question and the achievement of pedagogical targets/purposes established at the level of the educational system and process.

The monitoring of curriculum's implementation/operation is oriented towards: knowing the real conditions for the curriculum's implementation; identifying the difficulties faced by teachers in the implementation process; providing, if necessary, methodological support in solving some problem situations that may arise in the process of curriculum's implementation/operation; evaluation of the impact produced by the curriculum on the student, the teaching staff, the training-development process of school competences; the accumulation of a database as a point of analysis and reflection for curriculum designers in the perspective of further curriculum development; promoting effective monitoring methodologies; implementation of monitoring tools; elaboration of methodological recommendations and normative acts for monitoring [6, p. 129-130].

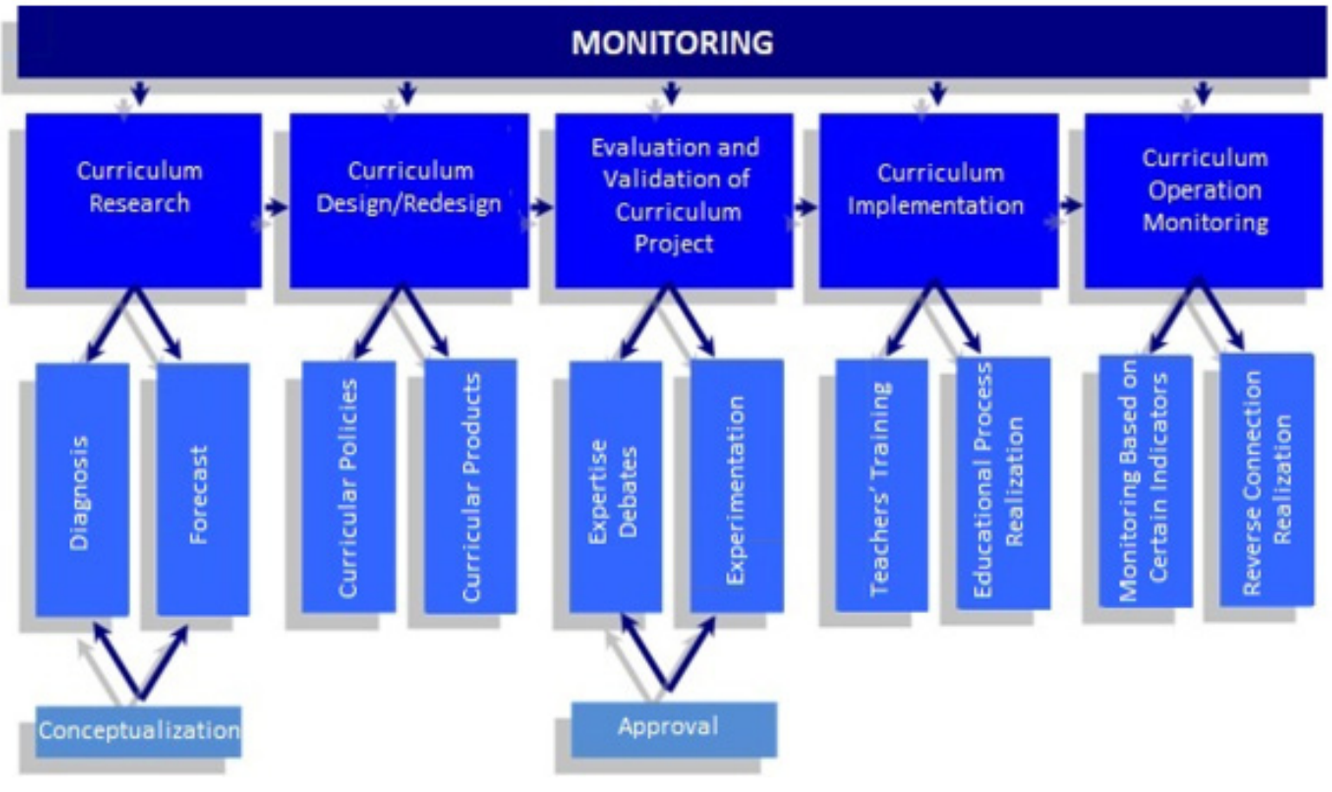
Curriculum monitoring is carried out through the actions of:
- establishing the actors involved in the process of monitoring the implementation/functioning of the school curriculum;
- elaboration of the Action Plan regarding the monitoring of process of the school curriculum implementation/operation;
- design of the methodology and tools for monitoring the process of school curriculum implementation/operation;
- validation of the methodology and tools for monitoring the school curriculum;
- training of monitors;
- implementation by monitors of the process of monitoring the implementation/operation of the taught curriculum – gathering information;
- processing and interpretation of data and information obtained from the monitoring process;
- data analysis and synthesis, formulation of conclusions and recommendations;
- implementation of the monitoring methodology at the institutional level.

The monitoring of school curriculum's implementation/operation is carried out with the support of the institutions and within the deadlines established by the program, and the monitors focus on the following basic aspects of the process of curriculum's implementation/operation:
- the conditions for curriculum's implementation/operation;

- the management of curriculum’s implementation/operation process;
- the adequacy of school textbooks to the competence-centered curriculum:
- the selection and organization of contents;
- the applicative size of the contents;
- the use of other didactic resources, etc.
- the assessment of school results:
- the procedures for evaluating school results are aimed at checking the level of disciplinary/ transversal competences?
- the assessment tasks are designed contextually and in relation to the requirements of authentic training and assessment?
- the performance criteria and indicators used to assess the level of competences mastery? etc.;
- teachers’ trening.

Therefore, the monitoring of taught curriculum aims to answer the following questions
- To what extent is a functioning curriculum timely and effective for students?
- To what extent is a curriculum effective?
- What changes can be made in the school curriculum in response to those questions?
- Who and how monitors the implementation/functioning of school curriculum in function?
- What structures should be involved in monitoring the school curriculum in function?
- How is the information „collected”, where is it stored and who processes it?
- How is the reverse connection ensured?
- Who and how should ensure the connections between the curriculum research dimension and the curriculum monitoring dimension?

**Fig. 2. School Curriculum Monitoring: Concept and Process.**




Therefore, monitoring „accompanies” all curriculum processes: curriculum research, design/redesign, evaluation, validation, implementation, monitoring itself.

Each procedural aspect involves specific monitoring criteria and tools, which can be carried out at different levels: national level, rational/municipal level, institutional level and student class level. In turn,

each level involves the objectives, the specific tools for monitoring the school curriculum, but also the specific training of the monitors on different aspects of the curriculum. In the given case, we focused on the foundation of a concept of curricular monitoring at class level, also valorizing the school curriculum's self-monitoring by teachers. In this case, the subject of monitoring is the curriculum taught and the curriculum learned (impact). The research monitor and the teaching staff have a specific methodology, which involves the development of a register in which all the vulnerable aspects and difficulties of the curriculum will be fixed in the school discipline in question. This register will be developed in relation to the purposes generated by the written curriculum and the way of their evaluation. Therefore, the school curriculum's monitoring in general and in the classroom, in particular, is approached from three perspectives: pedagogical (indirect monitoring targets, feedback); psychological (dynamics of development, intellectual abilities); managerial (the way of organizing the school curriculum's monitoring).

As we mentioned, the monitoring of school curriculum in function can be carried out at the level of class, of educational institution, at the rational level and at the national level. The school curriculum's monitoring at each level pursues the same goals as those specific to each level.

This concept of school curriculum's monitoring involves the following principles:

- The principle of monitoring the degree of adequacy of the taught-learned curriculum to the written/ designed curriculum.
- The principle of monitoring the complexity and accessibility of the school curriculum according to function.
- The principle of monitoring the school curriculum's coherence with the purpose of each level of study.
- The principle of monitoring the relevance of school curriculum in function.
- The principle of monitoring the impact of school curriculum in function.
- The principle of monitoring the relevance of school curriculum in function.

Each principle generates a system of variables, criteria and tools for monitoring the school curriculum in function.

Resources for Monitoring School Curriculum in Function

To monitor is to oversee and confront a body of information against a set of criteria. The school curriculum's monitoring is approached as a curricular research carried out in a logic that leads to obtaining relevant conclusions and recommendations to argue for making decisions regarding curricular development.

Curriculum research recognizes that the process of school curriculum's monitoring can be influenced by significant factors:

1. Measuring the effects requires increased attention to the following aspects: monitoring reliability, validity, depth.
2. Validity of causal interferences. The monitor is required to determine the extent to which the curriculum produces an observable result.

The curricular research regarding the school curriculum's monitoring is carried out in stages: the preparation stage, the actual monitoring stage and the stage of formulating conclusions and recommendations. During the school curriculum's actual monitoring stage, different forms and methods generated by the monitoring indicators and objectives are applied. There are several methods of school curriculum's monitoring: context analysis, association matrix, concept development map, expertise, observation, questioning of teachers and students [2].

**General Conclusions**

The given article represents the first attempt to address the problem of monitoring the school curriculum according to the perspective of curriculum research. The proposed concept will be developed both theoretically and practically, valorizing the following ideas: the implementation of curriculum's self-monitoring by the teachers, the development and implementation of a registry for fixing the errors established in the process of school curriculum's monitoring, the creation of a feedback mechanism regarding updating the school curriculum in function or building a new curriculum.

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