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CURRICULUM AT SCHOOL DECISION IN DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL DELIMITATIONS

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This article addresses the issue of school-decided curriculum in development as a component of the educational curriculum. The emphasis is on defining and describing the notion of "school-decided curriculum", in comparison with the notion of "optional curriculum", but also on the development directions of the school-decided curriculum: deepening the curriculum by subjects, focusing on students' needs, expanding the existing curriculum in response to students' special learning capabilities; optional subjects that introduce new study subjects, in addition to those provided for by the curriculum plan. The functions of school-decided curriculum and the optional curriculum are also described: the function of flexibility, the function of individualizing the learning act, the function of social adaptation. It should be noted that the school-decided curriculum and the optional curriculum as a concrete form of realizing the school-decided curriculum are closely related to compulsory school subjects, but also to possible new subjects with optional functions.

Keywords: *educational curriculum, curriculum by study subject, curriculum at school decision, optional curriculum, national curriculum.*

CURRICULUM LA DECIZIA ȘCOLII ÎN DEZVOLTARE: DELIMITĂRI CONCEPTUALE ȘI METODOLOGICE

În articolul dat se abordează problema curriculumului la decizia școlii în dezvoltare ca componentă a curriculumului educațional. Accentul se pune pe definirea și descrierea noțiunii „curriculumului la decizia școlii", prin comparație cu noțiunea „curriculumului opțional", dar și pe direcții de dezvoltare ale curriculumului la decizia școlii: aprofundarea curriculumului pe discipline, focalizarea pe nevoile elevilor, extinderea curriculumului existent ca răspuns la capacitățile de învățare deosebite ale elevilor; opționale care introduc noile discipline de studiu, în afara celor prevăzute de planul de învățământ. Se descriu și funcțiile curriculumului la decizia școlii și ale curriculumului opțional: funcția de flexibilizare, funcția de individualizare a actului de învățare, funcția de adaptare socială. E de menționat că curriculumul la decizia școlii și curriculumul opțional ca formă concretă de realizare a curriculumului la decizia școlii sunt în strânsă legătură cu disciplinele școlare obligatorii, dar și cu posibilele noi discipline cu funcții opționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *curriculumul educațional, curriculumul la disciplina de studiu, curriculumul la decizia școlii, curriculumul opțional, curriculumul național.*

Introduction

The concept of ***curriculum*** occupies a central place in contemporary educational theory and practice, being considered one of the fundamental categories of education sciences. In a broad sense, curriculum designates the structured set of educational purposes, learning contents, teaching strategies, training experiences and assessment methods that organize and guide the instructional-educational process. Through the curriculum, the values and objectives of educational system are transposed into concrete pedagogical practices, ensuring the coherence and continuity of the process of forming pupil's or student's personality.

Conceptual Delimitations

In pedagogical literature, the concept of ***curriculum*** has evolved significantly, going beyond the traditional perspective that limited it to a simple list of subjects or a education plan. In modern approaches, curriculum is understood as ***a complex and dynamic system*** that integrates not only the contents taught, but also the learning experiences offered to students within the educational institution, including formal, non-

formal and, in certain interpretations, informal activities. Thus, the curriculum reflects both the projective dimension of education (what is intended to be achieved) and the experiential dimension (what students actually experience and internalize in the learning process).

One of the classic authors who significantly contributed to the theoretical foundation of the concept is Ralph Tyler, a representative of the rational-technological orientation in curriculum. In his fundamental work *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), Tyler defines the curriculum as ***the totality of learning experiences planned and organized by the school institution in order to achieve educational objectives.*** This perspective emphasizes the intentional and planned nature of educational process, emphasizing the fact that learning activities must be designed systematically, in accordance with the purposes of education and the training needs of students.

The curriculum model proposed by Tyler is based on four fundamental questions that structure the curriculum design process [12]:

- *Which educational objectives should the educational institution pursue?*
- *Which learning experiences can contribute to the achievement of these objectives?*
- *How can these learning experiences be organized efficiently?*
- *How can the extent to which the objectives have been achieved be assessed?*

Through this systemic approach, the curriculum becomes an essential tool for planning and managing the educational process, guiding teaching activity towards the achievement of clearly defined formative outcomes. At the same time, Tyler's model has profoundly influenced the development of subsequent curriculum theories, constituting the starting point for numerous contemporary perspectives that emphasize flexibility, interdisciplinarity and student-centeredness.

In the context of modern education, the curriculum is increasingly viewed as ***an integrative framework of the educational process,*** which correlates the purposes of education, learning contents, teaching strategies and assessment mechanisms. Therefore, the development and implementation of the curriculum presuppose a systemic and interdisciplinary approach, capable of responding to the demands of contemporary society and contributing to the formation of competences necessary for the personal and professional development of the individual.

In the development of curriculum theory, the contributions of American philosopher and educator John Dewey have had a significant impact on the way curriculum is understood and conceptualized. Representative of pedagogical pragmatism and progressive education, Dewey promoted a vision of education centered on the direct experience of the student and his/her active participation in the learning process. In this perspective, the curriculum is not reduced to a simple content structure or a formal study plan, but is interpreted as ***the set of educational experiences lived by the student within the school environment and his/her interaction with social and cultural reality*** [8].

According to Dewey, the educational process must start from the interests, needs and previous experiences of students, and learning becomes truly meaningful when it is integrated into authentic and relevant activities for everyday life. Thus, the curriculum is designed as a flexible framework, which facilitates ***the active construction of knowledge through experience, reflection and social interaction.*** In this approach, the emphasis shifts from the passive transmission of information to the development of students' ability to think critically, investigate and solve real problems.

In his work *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey emphasizes that the educational value of an experience depends on how it contributes to the subsequent development of the individual. Therefore, the curriculum must be organized in such a way that learning experiences are ***continuous, coherent*** and ***progressive,*** with each educational activity preparing the ground for subsequent more complex experiences. This idea is reflected in the principle of continuity and interaction, which are fundamental elements of the theory of experiential education promoted by Dewey [8].

In his vision, the school is conceived as ***a democratic learning community,*** in which students actively participate in building their own knowledge through cooperation, dialogue and exploration. Consequently, the curriculum must include practical activities, projects, problem-solving situations and collaborative experiences that stimulate students' reflective thinking and intellectual autonomy.

This perspective contributed to redefining the concept of curriculum in contemporary pedagogy, orienting it towards ***a student-centered approach,*** in which the learning process is conceived as a dynamic and contextualized experience. By emphasizing experience, interest and active participation, Dewey's conception influenced the development of modern curricular models based on discovery learning, project-based learning and constructivist education.

The contributions of the educator and researcher Hilda Taba, in the evolution of curriculum theory, occupy an important place, developing a systemic and rational approach to the curriculum design process. In her view, the curriculum is conceived as ***a coherent and structured learning plan,*** which integrates educational objectives, study contents, teaching strategies and assessment methods, all of which are organized in a logical and functional way to facilitate the achievement of educational goals [11].

Hilda Taba considered that the development of curriculum must start from the analysis of educational needs of students and society, as well as from the clear identification of the educational goals pursued. In this perspective, the curriculum represents not only a simple planning of teaching contents, but ***an integrated system of interdependent components,*** which ensures the orientation and organization of the instructional-educational process. Thus, educational objectives define the expected results of the learning process, the contents provide the conceptual and informational basis necessary for the training of students, teaching strategies establish the ways in which these contents are valorized in the teaching-learning activity, and evaluation allows the verification and assessment of the degree of achievement of the proposed objectives.

A defining element of Taba's conception is ***the inductive model of curriculum development,*** which assumes that curriculum design must start from the level of educational practice and the experience of teachers. According to this model, teachers play an essential role in the development and adaptation of curriculum, since they know best the peculiarities of students, the educational context and the real needs of the learning process. Consequently, the curriculum is not perceived as a rigid and definitive document, but as a flexible framework, which can be adjusted and improved depending on the results obtained and the evolution of educational requirements.

Hilda Taba also proposed ***a sequential model of curriculum development,*** which includes several interdependent stages: diagnosing educational needs, formulating objectives, selecting and organizing content, choosing appropriate learning experiences, establishing evaluation methods and verifying the efficiency of educational process. Through this rigorous methodological structuring, the curriculum becomes a tool for planning and managing teaching activity, capable of ensuring the coherence and efficiency of the training process.

Therefore, in Hilda Taba's conception, the curriculum represents ***a systematic learning plan,*** within which the objectives, contents, teaching strategies and assessment are correlated in a logical and functional manner, so that the educational process responds to both the development needs of students and the requirements of contemporary society. This perspective has contributed to the consolidation of modern approaches to the curriculum, oriented towards rigorous pedagogical design, flexibility and the active involvement of teachers in curriculum development.

In Romanian pedagogical literature, the concept of *curriculum* is analyzed and defined through a variety of theoretical perspectives, which highlight its complexity and multidimensional character. Researchers from the Romanian educational space have significantly contributed to the development and nuance of this concept, emphasizing both its projective dimension and its role in organizing and guiding the instructional-educational process.

Thus, the pedagogue Sorin Cristea interprets the curriculum as ***the set of school programs and learning experiences designed and organized in order to achieve the goals of education.*** In this perspective, the curriculum goes beyond the limits of a simple normative document, being conceived as a conceptual and operational framework that regulates educational activities and guides the process of training students. Through the curriculum, the main directions of the educational process are established, the learning contents are selected and organized, and the formative experiences necessary for the development of students' competences are configured [5].

A complementary approach is proposed by the pedagogue Constantin Cucoș, who considers the curricu-

lum as ***an organized system of educational experiences through which the training and development of the student's personality is achieved.*** In this interpretation, the curriculum is viewed as a complex pedagogical structure, which integrates multiple dimensions of the educational process – cognitive, formative, axiological and social – with the aim of harmonious development of the individual. The emphasis is on the role of curriculum in facilitating relevant learning experiences, capable of contributing to the formation of students' intellectual, moral and social competences [4].

At the same time, the analysis of curriculum concept highlights the need for ***a multidimensional approach,*** which allows it to be understood from several complementary perspectives. Three main levels of analysis are frequently identified in the specialized literature.

1. From *a functional perspective,* the curriculum is conceived as a tool for guiding and regulating the educational process. It establishes the educational goals and objectives to be achieved and, through them, directs the organization of teaching, learning and evaluation activities. In this sense, the curriculum fulfills the role of a strategic framework for education, providing benchmarks for the design and implementation of the instructional-educational process.
2. From *a structural-functional perspective,* the curriculum is viewed as an integrated system of interdependent components. Among its fundamental elements are educational goals, instructional-educational content, teaching and learning strategies, evaluation strategies, as well as the temporal organization of training activities. The interaction of these components ensures the coherence and efficiency of the educational process, contributing to the achievement of established training objectives.
3. From *a product perspective,* the curriculum is embodied in the set of pedagogical documents and tools that regulate and support educational activity. This category includes curricula, school programs, textbooks, methodological guides, teaching aids and other curricular materials. These curricular products represent the institutionalized form through which the theoretical orientations of the curriculum are transposed into educational practice.

Therefore, the approaches proposed in the Romanian pedagogical literature highlight the fact that the curriculum constitutes ***a complex and integrative concept,*** which encompasses both the projective dimension of education, as well as the concrete learning experiences and the institutional instruments through which they are organized and achieved. This multidimensional perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the role of curriculum in the organization and development of contemporary educational system.

In the Republic of Moldova, the curriculum issue is analyzed in a complex and systematic way by the researcher Vladimir Guțu, who proposes an integrative approach to this concept, highlighting its multiple dimensions. According to the author, the curriculum can be understood as a complex pedagogical system that includes several interdependent components: ***the concept of curriculum, its content, the implementation process, the curricular product and the educational objectives pursued.*** This systemic perspective emphasizes that the curriculum does not represent just a set of normative documents or disciplinary contents, but a conceptual and operational framework that structures and orients the entire educational process [9].

In this theoretical context, ***the curriculum at the school's decision*** is interpreted as a flexible component of the national curriculum, intended to offer educational institutions the opportunity to adapt the educational process to the particularities of school environment and the requirements of community. This curricular component reflects the principle of institutional autonomy and decentralization of education, allowing schools to capitalize on local resources, the experience of teaching staff and the interests of students in the design of learning activities. Through the curriculum at the school's decision, the premises are created for a better correlation between the objectives of education, the specifics of community and the real needs of the beneficiaries of educational process.

A concrete form of implementation of this curricular component is ***the optional curriculum,*** which includes subjects or study modules selected either by students, depending on their educational interests and aspirations, or proposed by the educational institution in order to complete and expand the compulsory curriculum. The optional curriculum allows for the deepening of areas of interest, the exploration of interdisciplinary topics or the development of specific competences that are not sufficiently addressed within the compulsory subjects.

Through this type of curriculum, several educational objectives relevant to the modernization of educational process are pursued. First, the optional curriculum contributes to ***the diversification of educational offer,*** offering students the opportunity to access various areas of knowledge and to build more flexible educational paths. Second, it favors ***the development of students' interests, skills and individual potential,*** stimulating motivation for learning and active involvement in the educational process. Last but not least, the optional curriculum facilitates ***the adaptation of education to the social, cultural and economic context,*** contributing to the correlation of educational content with the realities and needs of contemporary society.

Therefore, from the perspective of modern pedagogy in the Republic of Moldova, the school-determined curriculum and the optional curriculum are important tools for achieving a flexible education, centered on the student and oriented towards the development of competences necessary for active integration into the knowledge society [9].

School-Decided Curriculum – A Component of Educational Curriculum

In the context of current transformations of educational systems, a modern education involves achieving an effective correlation between the different components of the school curriculum, as well as the development of *a new model of didactic thinking,* adapted to contemporary developments in education sciences. Such an approach involves overcoming the traditional boundaries of disciplines and orienting the instructional-educational process towards *interdisciplinarity,* the integration of knowledge and the development of students' transversal competences.

Within this conceptual framework, *the school-decided curriculum* can be defined as the set of educational processes and learning experiences that the educational institution proposes to students autonomously, within its own curricular offer. This curricular component reflects the school's capacity to adapt the educational approach to the peculiarities of students, to the specifics of community and to the available institutional resources. The choice, design and implementation of school-decided curriculum open up important perspectives for *the manifestation of pedagogical creativity* at the level of teaching activity. In this sense, teachers are oriented towards the formulation and achievement of *clearly defined competences,* which they systematically pursue in the learning process, valorizing accessible and relevant contents for students and applying teaching strategies focused on their needs, interests and peculiarities.

In the specialized literature, the term "optional curriculum" is frequently used, alongside the phrase "school-determined curriculum", the two concepts being closely correlated. The school-decided curriculum represents the flexible component of the national curriculum, established and organized at the level of educational institution, while *the optional curriculum* constitutes the concrete form of achieving this component, materialized in subjects or study modules that complement the core curriculum. Therefore, the optional curriculum can be considered *a subcomponent of the school-decided curriculum,* through which the educational offer of the school institution is diversified.

In order to truly contribute to increasing motivation for learning, the school-decided curriculum must meet certain fundamental pedagogical conditions. First, it must be *relevant to the needs and interests of students in the local community,* actively involving them in the process of choosing and configuring their own educational path. Second, its implementation must be *methodologically diversified,* by using modern and interactive teaching strategies, which favor the active participation of students and the development of critical thinking. At the same time, the curriculum must have a *motivating* character, by creating a positive educational climate and by providing constant feedback, oriented towards valuing the individual progress of students [1].

The integration of these dimensions in the curriculum design process contributes to the creation of *a coherent and efficient school-decided curriculum,* integrated into the general structure of the national curriculum and oriented towards the valorization of contents' interdisciplinarity. In this way, the educational process becomes more flexible, more adaptable and more relevant for the development of competences needed by students in contemporary society.

The decision-making freedom granted to educational institutions in the development of part of the curriculum is consistent with *the principles of democratization of education* and reflects the orientation of educational system towards an open model, characterized by curricular pluralism and diversity of educa-

tional options. This freedom allows schools to configure their own curricular offers, adapted to the specific educational context and oriented towards the valorization of students' potential.

At the same time, the inclusion of school-decided curriculum in the education plans can constitute *an important pedagogical opportunity,* as it offers teachers the possibility to overcome the limits of contents provided for in the common core, which often cannot be sufficiently deepened within the limited number of hours allocated to compulsory subjects. The multiple choice system creates favorable conditions for *diversifying learning experiences and for configuring individualized educational paths,* adapted to the interests and abilities of students.

At the same time, the process of developing and implementing the school-decided curriculum also presuposes *the involvement of family in the life of educational institution,* which strengthens the relationship between the school and the community. The new curriculum programs are oriented not only towards the transmission of theoretical knowledge, but also towards the development of certain *functional and complex competences,* which include cognitive, social, practical and attitudinal dimensions. In this perspective, the school-decided curriculum contributes to the formation of an autonomous and responsible personality, capable of adapting to the requirements of a society in a continuous process of change [10].

The analysis of existing relationships between *the curriculum of basic subjects and the school-decided curriculum,* including its forms of concretization through the optional curriculum, highlights the functional complementarity of these components within the national curriculum. If the compulsory subjects ensure the achievement of common training framework and the transmission of fundamental core of knowledge and competences, the school-decided curriculum introduces a dimension of flexibility and adaptability, which allows the adjustment of educational process to the peculiarities of institutional context and the student profile.

From this perspective, the school-determined curriculum and the optional curriculum fulfill a series of ***essential pedagogical functions*** in the organization and development of instructional-educational process:

- First of all, they exercise *a function of flexibility,* as they allow the adaptation of contents and learning activities to the specifics of educational institution, to the available resources and to the dynamics of contemporary educational requirements.
- At the same time, they contribute to the achievement of *a function of individualization of learning,* by capitalizing on the interests, skills and potential of students, offering them the opportunity to opt for fields of study that correspond to their preferences and educational orientations.
- Another relevant dimension is *the function of didactic innovation,* as the introduction of optional subjects stimulates the initiative and creativity of teachers in designing original educational approaches, adapted to the concrete pedagogical context. Through this curricular component, teachers can experiment with new teaching methods, integrate interdisciplinary approaches and capitalize on various educational resources.
- At the same time, the optional curriculum also fulfills *a social adaptation function,* as it facilitates the correlation of educational offer with the needs and specificities of the community, contributing to the formation of relevant competences for the integration of students into social and professional life.

Regarding its structure, the optional curriculum can be organized into several ***types or forms of implementation,*** depending on the educational objectives pursued:

- *the in-depth optional,* oriented towards expanding and consolidating the contents of a basic subject, offering students the opportunity to delve deeper into certain concepts or thematic areas;
- *the extension optional,* which introduces new themes or subjects, complementary to the reference subject, contributing to the enrichment of knowledge area addressed in the learning process;
- *interdisciplinary optional,* which integrate contents and methods from several fields of study, favoring the formation of a global and complex perspective on the phenomena analyzed;
- *integrated electives,* which address complex themes from multiple perspectives, capitalizing on the connections between different curricular areas and facilitating the development of systemic thinking and transversal competences.

By granting educational institutions the right to decide on part of the curricular contents and activities, the curriculum at school's decision is, in essence, the expression of pedagogical autonomy of the school unit.

This autonomy derives from the possibility of intervening on a segment of the national curriculum, which allows the configuration of differentiated educational paths, adapted to the profile of institution, the peculiarities of student community and the requirements of social environment. In this sense, the curriculum at school's decision can be considered an indicator of the institution's capacity to capitalize on decision-making freedom in order to develop relevant and innovative educational practices.

The process of introducing and developing ***the curriculum at school's decision*** within contemporary educational systems is based on a series of pedagogical and managerial premises that justify the need for the direct involvement of educational institutions in the design of part of the curricular offer. The specialized literature emphasizes that the development of curriculum at the school level is based on the idea that *the educational actors directly involved in the training process know best the peculiarities of educational context and the real needs of the students.* In this sense, teachers are considered the most competent in identifying the learning interests and potential of students, which allows them to formulate curricular decisions appropriate to the specifics of institution in which they carry out their teaching activity [3].

At the same time, decisions regarding the curriculum are interpreted *as a continuous and dynamic process,* subject to permanent adaptations depending on the evolution of educational, social and institutional context. Therefore, the adoption of curricular decisions at the school level facilitates the progressive improvement of the curriculum, as it allows its adjustment and improvement in relation to the conditions and requirements newly emerging in the educational environment [3].

Another important premise is related to *the democratic dimension of the educational process.* The development of curriculum at school's decision creates the necessary framework for the active participation of teachers, students, parents and representatives of the local community in the decision-making process regarding the contents of education. This participation contributes to the consolidation of collective responsibility and to the increase of degree of the involvement of all educational actors in the organization of educational process, which can lead to the improvement of education quality provided in school institutions [3].

At the same time, the involvement of *local public administrations* in the development and implementation of the curriculum determines a better understanding of the problems faced by educational institutions and favors their active participation in the identification and resolution of these problems. In this way, the relationship between the school and the local community is strengthened, contributing to the development of a sustainable educational partnership.

In a broader perspective, it is considered that *the school and the local community form an interdependent system,* within which the educational activity reflects the particularities of social, cultural and economic environment in which the institution operates. Therefore, a curriculum developed at the school level is able to capitalize on the specifics of the local context and respond more effectively to the community needs. This approach implicitly determines *the diversification of educational offer* between different educational institutions, each of which can develop educational programs adapted to their own conditions and resources [3].

From a conceptual and functional point of view, ***the curriculum at school's decision*** is characterized by a series of defining features. First of all, it constitutes *an integral component of the national curriculum,* being designed in close correlation with the core curriculum. Therefore, it does not operate independently, but is planned and organized in accordance with the objectives and structure of the general curriculum of the educational system.

At the same time, this curricular component aims to develop certain *competences that are not explicitly or sufficiently addressed within traditional academic disciplines.* These include competences related to personal development, preparation for social and professional integration, cultivating civic responsibility and forming attitudes and values necessary for active participation in community life. In this perspective, the school-based curriculum contributes to achieving a more complete education and better adapted to the requirements of contemporary society.

This curricular component also has the role of *optimizing the functioning of entire school curriculum,* by completing and expanding the national curriculum. Supplementation should not be carried out exclusively at the level of content, but should also support the processes through which students learn, stimulating the use of various teaching methods and relevant learning experiences. In this sense, the school-decided cur-

riculum is characterized by a clear ***student-centered*** orientation, emphasizing their interests, motivations and individual peculiarities [10, p. 28].

From an organizational point of view, ***the curriculum at school's decision,*** frequently materialized through optional subjects, can cover the difference between the minimum number of hours provided for by the core curriculum and the maximum number of hours established by the curriculum for each level of study. This difference is completed by introducing optional subjects or modules, which diversify the structure of study program.

Depending on the method of organization and the area of application, optional subjects can be structured at several levels:

- *The optional at the disciplinary level* includes activities, modules or projects that are not found in the mandatory curriculum or that belong to subjects that are not included in the curriculum. Through them, students have the opportunity to explore new areas of knowledge or to deepen certain topics of interest.

- *The optional at the curricular area level* involves the selection of a common theme that involves at least two subjects from the same curricular area. In this situation, starting from the specific competences of the disciplines involved, units of competence adapted to the theme addressed are formulated, which facilitates an interdisciplinary approach to educational content.

- *The optional at the level of several curricular areas* is also known as the transversal or transdisciplinary optional and involves the integration of disciplines belonging to different curricular areas, and the information and learning experiences acquired by students take on a complex character, favoring the development of transfer competences and integrative thinking on the phenomena studied.

The efficient implementation of ***the curriculum at school's decision*** implies the assumption of *specific responsibilities by different educational actors.* First of all, the leadership of educational institutions has the role of ensuring efficient management of the curricular process. This must capitalize on the existing human resources in the school, correlate the competences of teachers with the interests of students and the requirements of parents and the local community, as well as create the organizational conditions necessary for the implementation of optional subjects, including by establishing an adequate schedule and ensuring spaces for conducting teaching activities.

The school management is also responsible for approving the proposed optional subjects based on certain *reasoned curricular projects,* which include the subject syllabus, the planning of topics and contents, as well as the teaching strategies used. At the same time, the institution must present the optional educational offer in a transparent manner, ensure correct information for students and parents and obtain their consent for participation in the chosen optional subjects.

As for teachers, they have a central role in designing and implementing the curriculum at school's decision. Teachers must develop curricular offers based on their professional competences, design learning activities adapted to the level and interests of students and develop their own curricular programs for the proposed optional subjects. At the same time, they must establish the duration of curriculum implementation (semester or annual), define the type of optional and the concrete ways of achieving it.

At the same time, teachers are encouraged to adopt *interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches,* going beyond the traditional boundaries of subjects and cooperating with other teachers in the implementation of integrated electives. This collaboration aims to develop a formative education, oriented towards the development of students' intellectual capacities, attitudes and social competences.

Students and parents also have an active role in this process. They must be adequately informed about the institution's offer of elective subjects, including their content, duration, curricular area and the resources available for their implementation. The choice of elective subjects must be made according to the interests and preferences of students, but also in relation to the institution's real possibilities to ensure quality implementation. Once the option for a particular elective subject is expressed, it becomes mandatory for the period for which it was designed.

In the context of implementing the curriculum at school's decision, ***teachers fulfill multiple professional roles:***

- *curriculum creators,* designing learning situations and developing the intended curriculum according to the peculiarities of educational context;
- *educational counselors,* supporting students in developing individual learning styles and guiding them in the process of self-knowledge and choosing a professional path;
- *moderators of educational relations,* facilitating communication and cooperation between students and promoting appropriate civic behaviors;
- *partners of students in the learning process,* collaborating with them in carrying out teaching activities and in building knowledge;
- *educational models,* contributing to the development of fundamental attitudes and values among students [10, p. 39].

In summary, ***the school-decided curriculum*** is ***an essential component of the modernization of educational system,*** as it facilitates the adaptation of instructional-educational process to the peculiarities of school environment, stimulates the democratic participation of educational actors and contributes to the development of relevant learning experiences for the integral formation of students.

Conclusions

In the context of contemporary transformations of educational systems, the school-decided curriculum and the optional curriculum are asserting themselves as essential tools for the modernization and flexibility of instructional-educational process. These curricular components offer educational institutions the opportunity to adapt the educational approach to the specifics of school community, to the interests and abilities of students, as well as to the requirements of knowledge-based society.

The integration of optional subjects into the curriculum structure contributes to the diversification of educational offer, allowing the expansion and deepening of areas of interest that are not sufficiently exploited within the core curriculum. In this sense, the optional curriculum favors the development of more flexible educational paths, in which students can opt for learning activities that correspond to their interests, motivations and intellectual and creative potential. Through this approach, the educational process becomes more relevant and closer to the real needs of the beneficiaries of education.

The school-decided curriculum also strengthens the institutional autonomy and pedagogical responsibility of teachers, giving them the opportunity to design and implement innovative curricular activities. Teachers can more effectively capitalize on local resources, the cultural specificity of the community and the peculiarities of students' community, thus contributing to the creation of authentic and meaningful educational experiences.

Therefore, the introduction and development of optional subjects transforms the school into an open, dynamic and creative educational space, oriented towards the integral formation of the student's personality. This curricular approach stimulates autonomy in learning, critical thinking and the ability to make responsible choices, essential elements for the development of competences necessary for active integration in contemporary society. In this way, the optional curriculum and the school-decided curriculum contribute to the consolidation of a student-centered educational model, capable of responding to the challenges and demands of a society in a continuous process of change.

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