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4th International Scientific Conference SEC-IASR 2019,
Galati, Romania, 7th – 8th June, 2019

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https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc/sec-iasr2019/23

How to cite: Marin, S.M. (2020). General Trends and Evolutions in the Policies and Strategies Regarding the Training of Human Resources in Education. In S. Marin & P. Moisescu (vol. eds.), *Lumen Proceedings: Vol. 12. 4th International Scientific Conference SEC-IASR 2019* (pp. 220-226). Iasi, Romania: LUMEN Publishing House.
https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc/sec-iasr2019/23

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference

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General Trends and Evolutions in the Policies and Strategies Regarding the Training of Human Resources in Education

Simona Mioara MARIN[1]

Abstract

The training of human resources in education is a fundamental component of any education system and it is generally agreed to have a direct impact on the education reform process. Under the circumstances, an analysis of training models and strategies and of educational policies regarding didactic and professional standards and competencies, identification of good practices and procedural dysfunctions, doubled by a joint integrative research become essential for optimizing the process of quality assurance in education.

Keywords: *educational policies; human resources training strategies; educational strategies and good practices; European guidelines.*

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1. Introduction - argument of the paper

Human resources represent the fundamental component of any education system and their appropriate training is an aspect which directly influences the quality of the education process. Bearing these aspects in mind, the fact becomes obvious that special attention should be devoted to the training models and strategies and to the educational policies regarding didactic and professional standards and competencies, good practices and procedural dysfunctions with the aim of setting up a series of joint integrative research groups centered on quality assurance in education.

Educational changes require that scientific concern should be enlarged and diversified in order to address the specific training for developing a teaching career. To be more specific, it should directly concern the process of forming and developing competencies for a teaching career, competencies being regarded as an integrated set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which allow the people involved to carry out specific professional tasks appropriately. From this perspective, it is necessary to renounce to specific actions and to move to a priority strategic approach in the field of training human resources in education. This aspect has been highlighted by system analysts repeatedly in the annual reports [1] made by the relevant ministry and in landmark studies, which are concerned with the professional training of the teaching staff and with quality assurance in education, among the priorities.

From the perspective of the aspects approached and of the means of approaching them, the process of training human resources in education is a research area with exploratory-innovative potential and with new trends and evolutions generated by the necessity of correlating with the changes recommended at European level, which have the status of strategic priority. Any theoretical or practical approach may favour the creation of an appropriate setting for considering training in the teaching career, from a scientific point of view, thus stimulating the capitalization and development of the knowledge and experience accumulated in the field.

2. Theoretical Background

The socio-economic and political environment in our country has undergone many changes lately, manifesting a clear tendency towards change and innovation, and this tendency has been felt in the education system, as well. From this point of view, mention could be made of a series of legislative landmarks, i.e. the Education Law (1995) and the Statute of Teachers (1997), which implemented new policies in line with the reform of

the system. These policies had subsequent long term effects on the school curriculum, on the institutional management or on the training of human resources in education. The new requirements and orientations were originated largely in the European model and they implied that a view regarding the teaching career approach from the perspective of theoretical and practical professional training should be suggested at the levels of educational policies and of official bodies with the aim of further transforming it into a national strategy. As a natural consequence, the educational community became aware of the need to establish professional standards specific to the teaching career [2] and to rethink the process of training the teaching staff according to these standards.

The analyses carried out by specialists highlighted a series of discrepancies between the curriculum made official by order of the minister and the teachers' needs of initial and continuous training. Hence the constantly growing concern for elaborating a strategy aimed at developing the training system for teachers and the creation of a national forum for monitoring and accrediting the specific programs. These aspects were stipulated in a series of legislative documents, i.e. Law no. 128/1997, M.O. no. 4796/2001, Law no. 268/2003 which were meant to complete the initial version of the Education Law so as to ensure quality in education and equal opportunities in vocational education and training.

Major legislative changes have been made particularly with respect to the future teachers' training, the modular organization of the psycho-pedagogical programs being introduced both at the level of the initial and continuous training (see M.O. no. 4343/2005 and no. 4611/2005). The introduction of the transferable professional credit system and the establishment of minimum certification standards according to the level of didactic competences were also aspects of utmost importance in this respect.

2005 was also a landmark for the introduction of the specific requirements regarding quality assurance and evaluation in education. These changes had a major impact on the organization of the institutional structures and on the official recognition of the programs for psycho-pedagogical studies. The new provisions created the appropriate framework for optimizing the activity of the departments for teaching staff training, as structures specialized in the psycho-pedagogical and methodological training of human resources by triggering the evaluation and accreditation process according to the new criteria and standards of quality assurance in education [3].

The interval 2012 - 2018 was characterized by the issuing of ministerial orders according to the new format mentioned in the "Framework methodology for organizing the programs of psycho-

pedagogical training in order to acquire the competences for the didactic profession" [4], regulations which did not bring relevant changes to the model proposed in 2005, the initial training being preserved in the form of modules complementary to degree and master studies.

The "Methodology regarding the continuous training of the teaching staff in pre-university education" [5] (1998) was a landmark in the teachers' continuous training. This document which has had several versions in recent years, but without bringing major changes to the standard typologies of teaching activities, suggested a different approach to the teachers' training by means of teaching degrees. In the same field of continuous training, a series of regulations were adopted with a view to encourage the emergence of various lifelong learning programs and to enlarge the number and typologies of institutions which can issue accreditation and provide training programs [6]. All this resulted in a market of multiple possibilities for the teaching staff who could access especially those programs which supported their needs for professional development and implicitly improved their teaching-educating approach.

3. Arguments to support and argue the thesis

The Romanian vision regarding the training of human resources in education requires for a correlation with the results of the international studies and reports. The OECD study titled "Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS" (ISBN 978-92-64-05605-3) may prove useful in this respect. It is a comparative study which discusses a series of relevant statistical data regarding teacher training in European countries. The teachers involved in this investigation were asked about the impact of their training activities on their professional development. The results reflect the changes that teachers from all over the world are confronted with and illustrate the authors' intentions to capture the teachers' personal views regarding the impact of professional training and development on their activities:

"TALIS asked teachers to report the impact of their development activities on their development as a teacher. Since TALIS reports teachers' perceptions, these reports of perceived impact should be treated with some caution as indicators of the effectiveness of these activities. Nevertheless, if teachers feel that a development activity has had limited impact, this is likely to colour their decisions, and perhaps those of their colleagues, regarding future participation in that activity. ….. It is striking how positively teachers view the impact of these development activities and how consistent this is across all types of development activities. On average across participating

countries, teachers reported that the most effective forms of development were "Individual and collaborative research", "Informal dialogue to improve teaching" and "Qualification programmes", all with close to 90% of teachers reporting a moderate or large impact on their development as a teacher. The development activities that were reported to be relatively less effective were attendance at "Education conferences and seminars" and taking part in "Observation visits to other schools", though even for these activities around 75% of teachers reported a moderate or high impact [7].

Compared to other European countries, in 21st century Romania, the social system, the official bodies, as well as the people's mentality regarding the teachers –seen as a social actors who always respond to the students', parents', community and official bodies demands -favours some sort of indifference or social superficiality towards their opinions, needs, aspirations and requirements. The teachers' voice is hardly ever heard or taken into consideration, even if numerous political, economic and educational decisions involve them and directly or indirectly affect them.

A large proportion of the teaching staff is thus excluded from the consultative and decision-making act. Considering the results of several investigations [8] meant to identify the Romanian teachers' opinion regarding the training activities, it is necessary that the following actions should be taken in the system:

- capitalizing the teachers' positive perception regarding the role of continuous training and raising the awareness of the local official bodies, of the regional training centers and of the school organizations on the need to increase the number and typologies of such training activities;
- starting up projects/ competitive events meant to encourage the schools to train their human resources and providing "resource" people and / or support materials meant to meet the teacher's demands and needs;
- conducting regular official investigations and making reports on the teachers' educational demands in the field of continuous training so as to include them in the managerial plan of the institutions responsible for teacher training;
- allowing the continuous training programs to be open and flexible so as to be changed and/or adapted to the teachers' real needs and to their suggestions;
- allowing for authentic communication and cooperation between the regional centers for teacher training in order to avoid the conceptual and methodological overlaps and/ or divergences

(regular meetings, SWOT analyses carried out in partnership, continuous training activities designed and carried out in partnership, etc.);

- encouraging schools to become involved in various educational projects which favour internal and external cooperation and the creation of an organizational culture adaptable to education changes;
- providing consultancy and support materials for developing and implementing educational projects aimed at training human resources in education.

4. Conclusions

The brief presentation of the relevant legislation, of the aspects discussed in the domain-specific literature and of the educational practice regarding the formation of human resources in the Romanian education system illustrates some dynamism, and the manifestation of new orientations inspired, mostly, from European models. However, it is necessary that a systematic approach should be considered at the national level, as well, with developments at the fundamental theoretical and methodological-practical-applicative levels.

The fact remains that, in the process of transforming the education reform into an authentic reality in Romania, little attention has been paid to the policies regarding human resources formation and their involvement, participation and contribution to the decision-making act as compared to other implicit activities, such as specific entrance and promotion exams, didactic activities or membership to school organization(s). The policies regarding the reformation of the teaching staff and their being involved in the education process are referred to in the school documents and their recognition and appropriate transfer into clear and coherent legislative acts would be illustrative for an new, integrative vision regarding the teaching profession, a vision which needs to be supported by appropriate decisions and actions.

The data provided by specific studies, reports and national and European statistics may represent a point of reference in the activity of official bodies, politicians, of specialists in the field of teacher training, or of other factors interested in optimizing the teaching staff training. Such data may be exploited rather quickly, if put into practice in the process of initial and continuous training carried out in universities or in other training centers.

Moreover, they may contribute to the creation of a scientific background regarding the training of human resources in education by developing theoretical and practical models and strategies of didactic professionalization, by identifying possible means of implementation and by developing the quality management in the initial and continuous training programs according to the legal norms, irrespective the training program taken into account.

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