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Some Aspects Regarding Personality of Teachers who Attend Different Non-formal Continues Training Programs

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Abstract: *Being an effective teacher today in Romania is one of the most noble but, at the same time, more complex professions. The beauty of teaching is given by helping children and young people acquire the knowledge they will need in life and to develop a harmonious and creative personality that will enable them to successfully integrate into the world in which they live. Therefore, attending different programs of continuous professional training is not only an obligation, but also a duty of a self-respecting professor, he respects his profession, but also his students. Forms of training and continuing vocational training providers are numerous, so that the teachers concerned have a variety of choices. That why, in the present paper, we will planning to analyze some of the opportunities Romanian teachers have to improve in their specialty and also a possible socio-professional profile of those interested in the field.*

Keywords: *continues professional training; non-formal education; personal development; socio-professional profile; teacher's personality.*

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1. Introduction

The teaching activity is one of the most beautiful and noble professions, because the way how teacher does his job depends on the future of the whole society. In this sense, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk said: "A good teacher is like a candle - he devours himself to light the way of others" (Guţu & Vicol, 2014) This could mean that a professor of vocation dedicated to his profession is willing to invest time, intellectual and emotional resources, or energy to train his students and enable them to take their destiny in their own hands. These are just a few arguments for which the teaching profession should be based on the pedagogical vocation - that optimal combination of talent and didactic creativity, which will give to teacher the premises for the successful accomplishment of his noble mission. However, the pedagogical vocation is not sufficient for the success in the teaching career, which must be doubled by a thorough initial and continuous training of the teacher in the specialty, psycho-pedagogy and methodical. Therefore, in order to better understand the depth of the phenomenon questioned, in the following paragraphs we will try to analyze some aspects regarding the initial and continuous training of teachers in the European Union and Romania (Pânişoară, 2017).

Thus, each European Union country has freedom to adapt its own national system of initial and continuous training of the teaching staff, according to the social, economic, political etc. For instance, in England and Wales, five days a year teachers do not work with students, from which three days are reserved for continuing training. In Scotland, besides the five days of continuous training there are also 50 hours of "plan activities" per year, with the same goal of improving the didactic skills. Similar situations are also in Iceland, where teachers take two weeks in two years for continues training and in Sweden, where each school organizes compulsory courses, averaging 104 hours per year, for teacher training. In other countries, such as France, Belgium (the French Community) and Germany, teachers can opt for some continuous training courses, but at the suggestion and advice of the director or specialist inspector. In Belgium, the Teacher Training System is organized of the regions, but respecting the same European principles. In Germany, the stages necessary for initiating the teaching career are similar to those described in other European countries: graduating from a faculty provides a specialization recognized by a bachelor's degree, a system of psycho-pedagogical training courses, a practice course under the guidance of a mentor teacher and the completion as a teacher (Marinescu, 2009)

In our country, starting with the 2012/2013 academic year, the Departments with a psycho-pedagogical profile from the Romanian universities operate according to OMECTS 5745 of 13.09.2012, according to which the teaching staff training is carried out on two levels. For the first level - conducted in parallel with the undergraduate studies - the psycho-pedagogical training program means the passing of a set of disciplines in which the student can acquire 30 ECTS that will allow them to teach the specialty discipline in the lower secondary education. Among the psycho-pedagogical disciplines to be studied in the initial teacher education program can be mentioned Educational Psychology, Introduction in Pedagogy / Theory and Methodology of Education and Curriculum, Theory and Methodology of Instruction and Evaluation, Applied Didactics Pedagogical Practice, Management of Class, Introduction in ICT, respectively the final evaluation. Level II - run parallel to Masters studies - allows the learner to accumulate another 30 ECTS that will enable them to teach at all levels of education. Among the obligatory psycho-pedagogical disciplines studied at this level can be mentioned: Didactics of Domain, Computer assisted training, Pedagogical Practice and final exam (Bradea, 2014).

On the other hand, the teaching profession - more than any other one - requires a dynamic and open approach, where initial training must be followed by placement, internship, continuous training, research into psycho pedagogy and so on (Sas, 2014, p. 320). Therefore, continuous training plays a very important role in the personal and professional development of the teaching staff, giving them the opportunity to acquire novelties in specialty, psycho-pedagogy and methodology, but also to build a complex and creative personality. The main ways in which this continuous training could be achieved would be:

- *obtaining the completed didactic degree in the education system* - is done after 1-2 years of internship and has the role of certifying the qualification of the person on the teaching position he / she occupies in school;
- *obtaining the 2nd didactic degree in the education system* - it can be done 3-4 years after the person has completed the educational process and has the role to consolidate the psycho-pedagogical and methodical skills acquired up to that level;
- *obtaining the 1st didactic degree in the educational system* - it can be accomplished for another 3-4 years from the promotion of the previous didactic degree and represents the highest form of training of the teaching staff in the Romanian pre-university education;
- *accredited programs of continuous training and professional development* - can be done on different topics of specialty, psycho-pedagogy and

methodology, which, within a maximum of 5 years, must give the individual a total of 90 transferable professional credits

Along with these, there are many other forms of continuing vocational training (such as masters, doctorates etc.) that can give the individual a higher level of training for the teaching career. Regardless of the chosen form, it is very important for a teacher to always improve, thus having the opportunity to develop his didactic and specialty skills and to avoid routine in his everyday work (Popa, 2010). From the presented data we can draw the conclusion of a close interdependence between the initial and continues teacher education system practiced in Romania and the other countries from European Union. Therefore, in the present paper we are planning to analyze a case study that we hope is representing a goor practice model for Romania in continues teacher training.

2. „Topformalis friends club" – A case study from Bihor, Romania

Since the training of teaching staff in Romania is an extremely important and sensitive subject, many specialists give it ample space in their areas of interest. Thus, if initial training remains exclusively in the responsibility of universities, continuous training (throughout the teaching career) has become a subject of more and more providers, each of whom is trying to adapt its educational offer to the requirements of the market. In this sense, there are numerous providers of continuous professional training (universities, Teaching Staff Houses, NGOs, profile companies etc.) who can adapt their educational offer according to the needs of the market. One of the most important such providers of continuing vocational training by non-formal educational strategies is the Association for Education and Training "TopFormalis" Oradea, Bihor county, Romania. Its mission is to increase the quality of educational process and of the services offered by this domain (Blândul, 2015).

According with this, non-formal education - as an integral part of education as a whole - plays a very important role in the professional training and personal development of all people, regardless of the age or stage of life they are going through. To meet this need, the Association for Education and Training "TopFormalis" Oradea proposed to organize a monthly series of extracurricular activities addressed to pupils, students and teachers, who would allow them to complete their psycho-pedagogical and specialized training, for achieving success in life and didactic career. Specifically, we organized some workshops, debates, round tables, games and contests, book launches, exhibitions, showings, meetings with personalities from different fields of interests etc. These activities were

grouped in the Project called "TopFormalis Friends Club". The philosophy of these activities was to make a useful exchange of experience among professors teaching different school subjects and students, so the specialists with outstanding scientific results in their areas of competence have the opportunity to make themselves known to other colleagues or students concerned about their research theme.

Therefore, the aim of this project was to develop / increase the professional level of teachers involved in these extracurricular activities, leading them to know the national and international scientific and cultural values. The main activities of "TopFormalis Friends Club" Project during the school year 2018/2019 were the following:

- Workshop 1 - Lateral Thinking in Education;
- Workshop 2 - Automation and Health Education;
- Workshop 3 - Man as an Open Book. Non-formal Sources of Knowledge;
- Workshop 4 - Non-formal Strategies Used in Teaching;
- Workshop 5 – All about Parenting;
- Workshop 6 - On-line Tools Used in Didactic Activities;
- Workshop 7 - Inclusion Strategies for Disadvantaged School Groups;
- Workshop 8 - Financial Education and Contemporary World Issues.

As we can see, the subjects of those 8 activities of the Continuing Vocational Development Program covered a very generous theme in the non-formal education spectrum, including elements in the field of health, social and emotional, financial education, new dimensions in modern didactics, the importance of new technologies in the training process, school and social inclusion of people in need etc. We believe it is very important for a teacher to overcome the limits imposed by his specialty and to give pupils an integrative perspective on reality, supporting them to successfully meet the challenges of the contemporary world and to effective integrate into the community to which they belong.

The success of this program was also given by the large number of participants in its 8 activities - 437 people, with a statistical average of 54.8 persons per activity. In the following paragraph, we propose to build a possible socio-professional profile of teachers interested in improving their personal and professional competences by non-formal education, taking into account several indicators such as: gender, background, school cycle, and curricular area where they teach, the chronological age, the obtained didactic degree and the motivation to participate in such activities. The obtained

results from the statistical processing of the data collected in the subscription forms to the activities shown in the following picture and table:

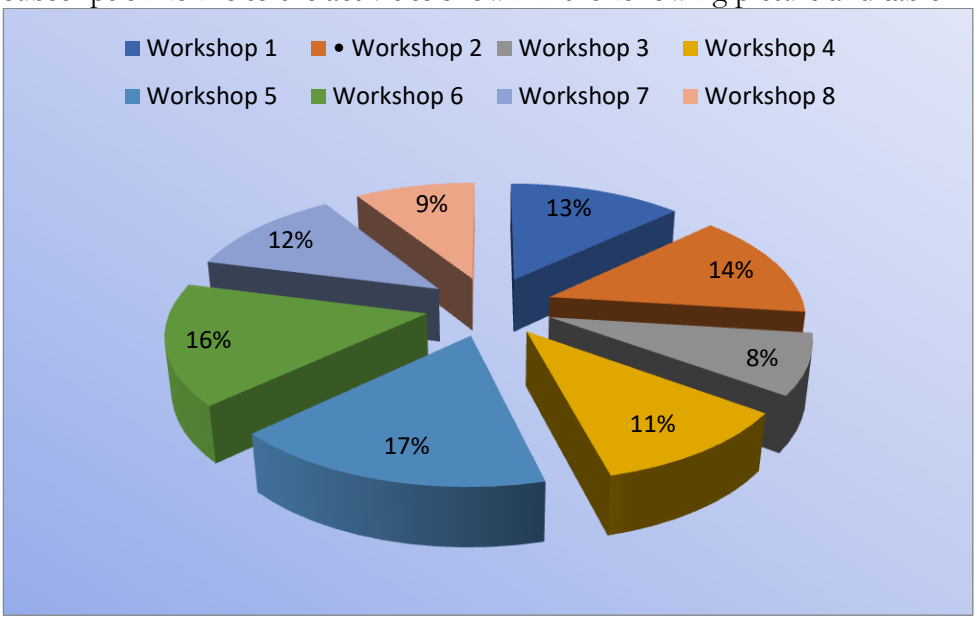


Fig. 1. Proportion of teachers participating in continuing vocational training and development
Source: Authors own contribution

Analyzing the Figure 1, we can see some extremely interesting results. A first such finding is that most teachers have opted for Workshop 5 – All about Parenting, Workshop 6 - On-line Tools used in Didactic Activity, respectively Workshop 2 - Automation and Health Education. This proves that most teachers encounter difficulties in effectively communicating with parents of their pupils and that they feel acutely the need to find optimal solutions to make more effective the relationship with these educational partners - more and more involved in school life. Then, there is an increased interest among teachers in the use of modern didactic tools (especially ICT) in teaching / learning / evaluation. Finally, teachers' preferences also include aspects of their personal development - maintaining health, providing first aid in the event of medical emergencies, therapies to be followed in the illness and others. In turn, the other topics proposed within the activities included in the program gave rise to a real interest from all participating teachers.

Table 1. Statistical Information about Socio-Professional Structure of he Professors Participats at the Project Activities

Workshop	WS 1 (N = 55)	WS 2 (N = 64)	WS 3 (N = 35)	WS 4 (N = 51)	WS 5 (N = 75)	WS 6 (N = 70)	WS 7 (N = 53)	WS 8 (N = 70)
Gender								
Female	87%	89%	76%	94%	94%	93%	87%	94%
Male	13%	11%	24%	6%	6%	7%	13%	6%
Enviroment								
Urban	89%	98%	88%	91%	84%	95%	96%	88%
Rural	11%	2%	12%	9%	16%	5%	4%	12%
Level of Teaching								
Pre-school	6%	7%	3%	5%	11%	-	4%	12%
Primary School	17%	16%	17%	13%	33%	17%	25%	6%
Secondary School	29%	27%	35%	47%	28%	40%	47%	38%
Upper Secondary Education	48%	47%	42%	32%	25%	40%	23%	44%
High-School	-	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	-
Academic	-			-		-	-	-
Didactic Degree								
Debutant	4%	1%	9%	8%	14%	7%	4%	-
Definitive	11%	13%	17%	18%	14%	12%	19%	20%
2nd Didactic Degree	16%	16%	17%	21%	18%	15%	17%	18%
1st Didactic Degree	69%	70%	53%	48%	54%	66%	60%	59%
PhD	-	-	4%	5%	-	-		3%

Topic which Professors are Teaching								
Language	28%	25%	20%	21%	19%	33%	23%	26%
Mathematics and Sciences	18%	17%	17%	16%	5%	9%	6%	9%
Humanistic	9%	5%	9%	11%	5%	7%	2%	3%
Arts	8%	8%	-	7%	2%	4%	6%	3%
Sports	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	2%	6%	-
Technology	8%	8%	-	-	7%	10%	11%	21%
Counselling	6%	5%	12%	14%	5%	18%	4%	2%
Pre-school Topics	11%	7%	3%	5%	11%	-	4%	12%
Primary School Topics	8%	10%	12%	13%	33%	17%	24%	6%
Others	-	12%	23%	9%	9%		14%	18%
Chronological Ages								
< 25 years old	2%	1%	-	8%	3%	-	-	-
26-35 years old	12%	14%	23%	19%	29%	22%	25%	21%
36-45 years old	51%	46%	46%	52%	33%	52%	45%	41%
46-55 years old	27%	23%	26%	16%	28%	24%	26%	30%
>56 years old	18%	16%	5%	5%	7%	2%	4%	8%

Source: Authors own contribution

On the other hand, the analysis of Table 1 provides some interesting information on the socio-professional structure of the beneficiaries of this project. First of all, it can be seen that most of the participants in the continuous training activities were females, which correlates with the significantly higher percentage of women teaching in the Romanian education system. The majority of teachers came from urban, aspect explained by the fact that all project activities were held in Oradea (city) during the week (Tuesday afternoon), which has not allowed many colleagues from villages to be present. Most professors teach in upper secondary and lower secondary education. There is also a situation (WS 5) where most professors teach in primary education and this can be justified by the fact that the subject discussed – all about parenting - is more

interesting and closer to their daily needs. More than half of participants has chronological age between 36 and 45 years old and obtained 1st Didactic Degree in Romanian education system, which demonstrates that they have sufficient didactic experience. Most of the teachers participating in project activities teach school subjects included in the Curricular Area "Language and Communicatio " and "Mathematics and Science" and obviously subject to preschool or primary education. Finally, participants' motivation is extremely diverse and include: need professional training and personal development, passion theme, timeliness and relevance grounds, wishes to share ideas and values with colleagues, need to get a certificate of participation in a continues training activity, pleased to participate in such activities organized in a non-formal context, etc. All of this builds the personality profile of a teacher intrinsically motivated to the teaching career and creates the premises for the increase of the quality in education.

3. Discussions

A first aspect that could be questioned refers to the relationship established between the socio-professional profile of the participants in the project activities and the educational curriculum proposed within them. Summarizing those commented in the previous paragraph, it can be appreciated that the mentioned teachers have a great experience in working with classroom students and that they have a higher social and professional status compared to their younger colleagues. In this way, it may be explained why they are more interested in topics related to their personal development (such as health education, social and emotional education, education for new technology and progress, financial education, inclusive education, cooperative learning, strategies for developing critical thinking etc.). By addressing topics within their sphere of specialization but closely related to the educational phenomenon, teachers have the opportunity to broaden their knowledge horizon, to bring new information from areas of interest to them or to deepen the ones already known, to expand the social network to which they belong and so on It will be possible to create a really "Virtuous Circle" where teachers motivated for the teaching career will be better trained, will have better trained students, thus increasing the quality in the education system, and the cycle can be restarted.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be appreciated that non-formal education plays a very important role in the development of pupils' personality, as well as of the teachers participating in the training activities organized by such didactic

strategies. This kind of opportunities for personal and professional development help teachers form not only the specialized, psycho-pedagogical and methodical skills, but also the transversal competences, which will allow them to better adapt to the exigencies of the didactic function. Motivated teachers will constantly want to improve such skills to be better prepared and share with their pupils the passion for knowledge (Pânoşoară, 2017). Unfortunately, in real life things are more complicated, due to the intervention of factors that rather inhibit the motivation of pupils and teachers for school than to stimulate it. However, the teaching profession has a special status among the other professions and those who practice it - the teachers - are special people dedicated to their vocation and who, by remarkable personal efforts, want to contribute to the development of the whole today and tomorrow's society.

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