

New approaches and educational policies in human resources training in education¹

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Abstract: *This article recommends the extension of the issue addressed in other papers devoted to a similar theme, this time focusing on a long-awaited and necessary implementation of a grantable credit system in the professional teaching development, as well as methods for approved recognition through certification and validation of skills acquired through various forms of training and conversion. The main objective of this paper is to illustrate the tenets according to which the methodology and axiological frame of the whole process is structured, as well as some actual forms and applications in educational practice.*

Key words: *teaching career, professional credit transfer system, the paradigm of the competences approach.*

The emergence of a new legislation in the Romanian education system has generated the reorganization of the institutional and operational structures, forms and practices devoted to training human resources in education. The challenge matches up the change, the immediate need felt within the reality of school requiring the formulation and adoption of methodologies, regulations and procedures specific to the legislative framework in education.

One of these changes concerns the in-service training of the teaching staff. This article recommends the extension of the issue addressed in other papers devoted to a similar theme, this time focusing on a long-awaited and necessary implementation of a grantable credit system in the professional teaching development, as well as methods for approved recognition through certification and validation of skills acquired through various forms of training and conversion. The main objective of this paper is to illustrate the tenets according to which the methodology and axiological frame of the whole process is structured, as well as some actual forms and applications in educational practice.

The entire concept is fixed in the new requirements regarding the teaching career: the correlation of the career progression with the accumulation of transferable professional credits, the conversion of general models of professional development to the teaching career and the establishment of relevant in-service training programs; the methodological innovation of professional skills certification and validation system, the adjustment to European developments and trends and their suitability to institutional and curricular contexts of lifelong learning process in Romania.

The success of the reforming process of the field is conditioned by a series of premises:

- a) The accidence of the teaching staff to new vision and regulations regarding the certification and validation by including in the methodological and procedural system a factual need investigated and identified in the train of an impact assessment;
- b) The management by motivation of the teaching staff and the involvement in the self-management of the in-service training curriculum by establishing procedures and institutional mechanisms in order to facilitate the prevailing assessment of aspects regarding teaching and syllabi with consistency and relevance for the categories of skills defined within the conceptual framework of lifelong learning;
- c) The systematization and coherence for the certification and validation of the professional skills;

- d) The assurance of the feasibility of the certification and validation methodology by outlining mechanisms for optimal use of resources in the assessment and certification of professional competence;
- e) The reconstruction of the professional development of the teaching staff in the pre-university education by aligning it to a set of principles of the European Credit Transfer System (European Credit Transfer and accumulation System - ECTS) for higher education and adapted to the in-service training.

Therein, a synthetic presentation regarding the international design of ECTS is a *fortiori*. The European Credit Transfer System² (ECTS) is a credit methodology that, *by virtue of the* adoption at the education system level of most convenanter countries of the Bologna Declaration, may facilitate the introduction of consistent methods of recognition of learning outcomes and activities undertaken during the curricula regarding education / training developed by institutions of higher education. In Romania, *according to active legislation, there is of necessity* to grant credits for each year of study, but there is no credit methodology for courses, seminars, laboratories, summer schools, training programs organized by institutions of higher education or other activities conducted within the educational framework. In the context of the “Bologna Process” *the* credit transfer system is interconnected with other fundamental elements of the scheme, such as the implementation of a national qualifications framework or the development and release of a “*diploma supplement*”, which should, according to recommendations agreed by the signatory of the Declaration of Bologna, include information about the competences and skills of the graduates.

The ECTS credit methodology granted to the in-service teacher training field represents an assessment and validation proceeding of the “workload” which a trainee should complete in order to achieve the objectives of a training program described as the skills and learning outcomes pursued throughout the program. A credit represents in fact the “work performed by the teacher” in the conduct of those activities necessary for the successful completion of a training program or other activity regulated and validated in the field. There should also be mentioned the fact that ECTS is not a parallel system of teaching performance rating. The credits are not equivalent grades derived from partial or final examination in a training program and which differentiates the graduates of the program depending on the level of performance achieved during the training process. On this line, credits represent a form of recognition of the results of the activities undertaken during a training program, both at the national level of higher education, as well as at the European one.

The methodology for the assignment of a certain number of credits for a specific in-service training activity is based on the principle of a realistic estimate of the time required to meet specific requirements and successful completions, credits not representing in any way a measure of the importance of that activity, the quality of people leading the activity or *a unit of time* in the training activities.

The ECTS system allows a comparable assessment among similar programs run by different institutions. Thus, as far as the evaluation of the in-service training curriculum is concerned, the form of credit of *specific activities may be an indicator of the way they are planned*, and in addition to this it could be also an indicator of the anticipated results of these programs (in terms of competences and learning outcomes) and also may indicate the correlation between the national (or even European) qualifications and specific objectives of such a course. The credit system is probably one of the few objective, comparable and transparent sources of information for the evaluation of the objectives and outcomes of the training program. Therefore, on the one hand the development and implementation of a methodology of credit compatible with ECTS, and on the other the acknowledgement of its own credit system that *is* adopted and used by various educational institutions, may represent

a fundamental dimension of the quality evaluation process in human resources training in education.

The flexibility and openness of the educational systems towards other forms of learning, beyond the official-formal framework created another problem in the reconfiguration of the training system that aims at the evaluation and recognition of professional skills acquired / improved in formal, non-formal and informal context. In this case, the terminological code is based on a series of key-concepts, which are prerequisites for a functional methodology: the paradigm of the competence approach; the cumulative development of teachers' level of competence; the European Qualifications Framework concepts regarding lifelong learning and the emphasis on learning outcomes; the management of the teaching career development; management and self – the management of the in-service training curriculum.

The paradigm of the competence approach represents a perspective of definition and recognition of the training outcomes in the spirit of postmodern pedagogy, where the competences direct and regulate the learning/training process and maintain interdependent relationships between all the curricular variables of the training programs. The references of the term competence, which we capitalize on here, are: “the knowledge, skills and individual's demonstrated, accomplished abilities that are accomplished at a standard determined level. The competences consist of a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform a major task or function in a given situation”³. From this defining perspective, the professional competences of the teaching profession are integrative ensembles of cognitive, intellectual abilities, functional schemes, skills and attitudes that facilitate expert activities professional in contexts and fields specific of the teaching profession and guarantee performant and professional ethic behavior.

The cumulative development of teachers' level of competence represents the systematic acquisition of new skills or their rational improvement by following specific lines in the development of the teaching career through teacher certification levels, curricula and activities in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, which ensures the accumulation of necessary transferable credits. The level of the professional skills development, achieved through curricula and formal, non-formal and informal activities, is assessed against professional standards and accordingly to teachers' metacognitive competences, for autonomous use of capacity, skills and abilities in the (self) process of in-service training, in order to cope with the changes in the educational policy, as well as with complex situations. The changes in the system relate to two categories of skills:

- On the one hand, there are the professional competences with which the European Qualifications Framework⁴ (EQF - European Qualifications Framework) operates and the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education⁵ (NQFHE), adapted to the specificities of the teaching career: professional competences expressing the unified and dynamic ensemble of knowledge and skills, hence the two dimensions: cognitive and functional - action, cross competences - role skills, personal and professional competences development.
- On the other hand, there were recently enacted by Annex 1 to OM 5660/2011 the professional competence types defined according to in-service training standards for professorship (for secondary school) which the training program providers and managers in charge of the professional skills certification and validation retrospect to:

C.1. Methodological skills.

C.2. Communication and relationship skills.

C.3. Students assessment skills.

C.4. Psycho – social skills.

C.5. Technical and technological skills.

C.6. Career management skills.

The concepts of the European Qualifications Framework regarding lifelong learning and the emphasis on learning outcomes support the methodological concept axis of the certification and validation process on the activities, curricula and records of professional training, relevant for the development of the teaching career. The implementation of the lifelong learning principle requires recognition and validation of the acquisitions acquired by teachers in the in-service training stages, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts through the recognition, transfer and accumulation of professional credits system. Formal training stages represent the expression of the teaching staff development policies, based on a rational and progressive development of professional skills, and consist of:

- Processes for obtaining teaching degrees;
- Bachelor's and / or master degree;
- Postgraduate studies for professional conversion;
- Activities and curricula developed by trainers and implemented by the assistance provided by educated trainers;

Bachelor's degree and master programs are acknowledged as completing and validating forms through transferable professional credits only if they meet the following conditions:

- Are accredited study programs or approved by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education;
- The specialization is reflected in the teaching plan, in the curricular area which includes the specialized discipline or is part of the Educational Science and Psychology license area;
- The skills to teach a new specialization are certified, by graduating the teacher training program (in the Teacher Training Departments or have a Master's degree according to the National Educational Law no.1/2011⁶), on the lines of psycho-pedagogical disciplines studied in the psycho-pedagogical module of the specialization and psycho-pedagogical certification for the Educational Sciences field.

Postgraduate studies for professional conversion are recognized as in-service training programs and validated through transferable professional credits only if they meet the following conditions:

- Are study programs of at least 90 transferable, accredited or approved credits by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education;
- Are part of the fundamental or license field provided by the university nomenclature and found in the teaching plan, in the field of the taught curriculum discipline;
- the pedagogical training program was completed (in the Teacher Training Departments or through the Master's degree according to the National Educational Law no.1/2011), on the lines of psycho-pedagogical disciplines studied in the psycho-pedagogical module of the specialization and psycho-pedagogical certification for the Educational Sciences field.

As far as the training stages within the formal context are concerned, the recognition and validation of professional competences are assured by the promotion of the programs and activities that are to be conducted within the educational framework. Another voted approach was undertaken in non-formal and informal contexts that represent the very expression of the professional competences development, apart from autonomous formal forms of education, or through learning activities carried out in collective or informal

groups. The main forms of learning in non-formal consist of methodological experience exchanges, practical-applied research activities, the performance of specific tasks within institutional or community committees, of some educational projects, participation in scientific, pedagogical and methodical conferences etc. In this case, the recognition and certification of professional competences are carried out by authorized bodies and structures.

Learning outcomes represent the evidence of the training programs and in-service training activities, of professional or personal nature that teachers demonstrate in their curriculum practice and other educational and social activities after the completion of the learning process. Learning outcomes represent the reference point according to which competences are validated and officially recognized. The design of the in-service training curriculum based on learning outcomes is directed by the focus of the training programs on the significant results through the determination of learning outcomes, focusing on maximum standards and the demonstration of the importance of learning.

The management of the teaching career development represents the assembly of the processes regarding the monitoring of the professional evolution, sequential evaluation of the professional competences development, psycho-pedagogical, methodical and specialized support and counseling for the optimization of the in-service training process and decision-making regarding self-improvement and career development. The management of the teaching career development is exercised on several levels, involving a number of responsible factors with relevant expertise in the field (policy makers, advisors, experts in education, inspectors and school managers, teachers responsible for improving the teaching staff): Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, County Boards of Education, Teaching-Staff Resource Center, County center for psycho-pedagogical assistance, school management.

The management of the in-service curriculum represents a paradigm influenced by the need of rationality and responsibility in the field of in-service training, whose significance is the result of a conceptual multidimensional analysis. From this defining perspective, the management of the teaching career development is:

- from the structural point of view, a set of principles, functions, strategies, methodological and procedural systems, designed and coordinated to facilitate the achievement of high standards performance objectives and working programs in order to improve the professional skills of teachers and ensure the assessment and recognition of their results, according to the criteria of relevance, consistency, usefulness and timeliness of the outline of the teaching staff;
- from the procedural point of view, a unified system of multidimensional curricular analysis processes (curriculum audit for in-service training, the analysis of the educational needs, the analysis of the necessary resources), design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of policies for the professional development of the teachers and curriculum projects /in-service training programs, involving management roles and responsibilities, on several levels: the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, County Boards of Education, Teaching-Staff Resource Center, County center for psycho-pedagogical assistance, school management.

The real success of such an in-service training system of human resources in education would have considered the implementation of the practices provided by the self - management of the in-service training curriculum as a system of teaching activities, of rational, professional and responsible implication in its very own process of professional development through: the diagnostic analysis of the professional competences development in relation to the specific requirements imposed by the teaching career evolution stages, personal

professional expectations and other factors (school managers, students, pedagogical and specialized literature); the establishment of project of professional development focused on defining strategic objectives and tactical objectives for (self) in-service training, the recommendation of in-service training programs and activities in order to acquire / improve desirable professional skills; the coordination of the implementation and personal monitoring of the formal, non-formal, informal in-service training, self-assessment and regulation in the spirit of the professional conduct of the project, for the achievement of results recognized and certified by accredited authorities.

Notes

- [1] This paper was made within The Knowledge Based Society Project supported by the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number POSDRU ID 56815
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- [6] National Education Law no. 1/2011

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