

STEPS IN ELABORATING THE E.B.C. TEST

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The issue of developing and evaluating professional competences of beginning teachers is of present interest within Bologna Process. Our study is based on present theories and paradigms regarding initial and continuous training of teachers and it puts a good use of the psycho-pedagogical experience among authors and of our own researches undertaken within the field. The specialty literature doesn't include operational models regarding the development of professional competences by referring to professional standards and to their correlation to the strategies of training. Also, there are no standardized tests to evaluate the competences. This is why our model starts with a redefinition of the general concept of professional competence and specific competences: methodological, communication, career management, technological, evaluation. The model develops and grounds the taxonomy of competences for beginning teachers by referring to their professional standards and roles.

The evaluation test of professional competences among beginning teachers (E.B.C.) is centred upon categories of specific competences and the items evaluate the level of their development among beginning teachers. The elements of novelty and originality for this evaluation test are:

- *it has an innovator and integrative character because articulates all categories of specific competences for teachers;*
- *it has an operational character because it offers different types of items in order to measure each specific competence;*
- *it has a normative character since it refers to professional standards for didactical career and it allows the evaluation of assimilated competences.*

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The process of elaborating a test of evaluation for beginning teachers competences is grounded on theories and paradigms regarding initial and continuous training of teachers and it puts a good use of the psycho-pedagogical experience among authors and of our own researches undertaken within the field.

First of all, the reform of the educational systems innovation on a global level has determined the view's change regarding the educator's mission, his functions

and roles, which correspond to social expectations. There are talks about the necessity of an authentic professionalization of the training systems for didactical career. Paradigms/models have been elaborated and they have been based on studies and experimental researches, on contributions of the cognitive psychology and on Schön's papers on „the reflexive practitioner”. Occupational standards for educators have been created, also standards for professional training. Other important coordinates of this process of professionalization for didactical career are focused on redefining the finalities, the curriculum's reorganization, the concentration upon identification of professional competences, upon their nature, genesis, development and evaluation.

Second of all, the educational practice and the studies undertaken at global level point out many difficulties which beginning teachers encounter at the working place. Shifting from the status of future teacher to beginning teacher represents a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, with an enriched impact upon the professional development of educators and of the pupils training quality.

Some difficulties that beginning teachers encounter are generated by the absence of their professional training, by inadequacy of initial training programs to the realities from schools and classrooms. Other difficulties are determined by the lack of efficient strategies, implemented in order to facilitate the adaptation of beginning teachers to the new environment. There is no consensus concerning the main categories of professional competences of a beginning teacher, there are no accepted tests for measuring the level of specific competences development that will gradually integrate within the structure of teacher's general competences.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In the literature of specialty there isn't a consensus regarding the definition of the concepts of competence, professional competences, methodological competences, communicational competences etc. The same diversity of opinions appears when one wants to make a classification of the competences in general and of the professional ones in particular.

Competence designates a special category of individual characteristics, that are tightly connected with the values and the knowledge accumulated, the strategies acquired and the cultural universe that is formed. Competence is tied to a profession, to a trade, to a status, to a professional or social situation that is the reference. In the cognitive vision, a competence implies in the same time declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and attitudes. For the beginning teachers, these three dimensions take the form of some hesitant juxtaposition of an insecure behavior, while they merge at a successful level in the case of experienced teachers, of the experts.

The operational model we have elaborated starts from the re-definition of the general concept of professional competence, as well as of the specific competences that are identified and operationalised.

The professional competences (of the teacher) represent an integrated and functional ensemble of knowledge, skills, professional capacities and attitudes that are used in an efficient manner for the successful realization of the professional roles.

The professional competence is proven by the capacity to select, to combine and to use in an adequate manner the knowledge, the abilities and other acquisitions

(values and attitudes) to solve a problem/ learning task in an optimum manner and for the professional/ personal development in conditions of efficiency and efficacy.

Regarding the taxonomy of the teacher's competences, some authors make distinctions between *transversal competences and disciplinary competences*, between *the integration competences and specific competences* (Perrenoud, 1997), between *product – components or final components and process-components or methodological ones, instrumental, strategic* (Wolfs, 1998).

In the context of the European Frame of Certifications, competence is described through a perspective of *responsibility and autonomy*. There are described two categories of competences, respectively *the professional competences* (general and specific) and the *transversal competences* (capacities that transcend a certain field and, in the same time, a program of studies, having a trans-disciplinary nature) (La Méthodologie du Cadre Nationale des Certifications de l'Enseignement Supérieur – ACPART).

The exaggerated multiplication of the typologies generates difficulties in the field of organizing and making a hierarchy of the competences, given the diverse nature of the derivation sources of the pedagogical competences, as well as the different configuration of the professional roles.

The chart of competences that are associated to the professional standards of the didactic function of teacher that we propose includes the following general competences of the teacher, that are based on the psycho-cognitive model of intelligence (CNFPIP, 2002, Dumitriu, C, 2003; Dumitriu, Gh., 2004). Considering the theoretical premises mentioned above, we wanted to measure the main categories and subcategories of competences that beginning teachers encounter by referring to professional standards and roles, and also to elaborate and validate a test regarding the categories of professional competences.

The ECD test is structured on 6 dimensions and 30 indicators, each item having open response. The six dimension of the ECD test are: methodological competences (dimension 1), communication and relationship competences (dimension 2), career management competences (dimension 3), technical and technological competences (dimension 4), psycho-social competences (dimension 5), of pupils evaluation competences (dimension 6).

Categories of competences	Subcategories
Methodological competences	The implementation of the concepts and theories from this field (2)
	The training of the analysis and argumentation of information capacity (7)
	Using the information transfer (17)
	The manifestation of an innovative behavior on a professional level (22)
	Selecting and methodical organizing of the relevant information (28)

The methodological competences represent in our opinion the *instrumental procedural, operational component of each type of general competence*. It becomes concrete in the capacity to implement the concepts and the theories, to argue, to make accessible and to convey the knowledge (didactical transposition), to plan and to organize the teaching – learning situations, to reflect, to self-learn, to practice, to plan the didactic-learning contents, to use the teaching methods and strategies that are adequate to the individual and group characteristics, to manifest an innovative methodological behavior on the professional level etc.

As functional structure of the teacher's personality, the methodological competence is the mobilization of knowledge, skills, capabilities, schemes and solving

strategies, aptitudes and attitudes. In order to solve in an operative manner some tasks/ categories of practical situations from the learning process.

Communicative competences	The manifestation of an empathic and assertive behavior (1)
	Showing an efficient communication of prevention and solving school conflicts (6)
	Implementing the verbal, nonverbal and para-verbal communication techniques (13)
	Showing a receptive attitude of inter and intra-group communication (19)
	The communication with the adults (teachers, parents, the community) (25)

The communicative competences are an ensemble of capabilities, aptitudes, attitudes and abilities of efficient verbal, nonverbal and para-verbal communication, intra and intergroup, of manifesting an empathic and assertive behavior, of implementing some effective techniques of listening and intercommunication, of prevention and solving conflicts.

Meta-cognitive and career management competences	The adoption of effective behaviors for the overcoming of the "crisis situations" (3)
	The manifestation of the meta-cognitive capacities and of the receptivity for the professional development (9)
	The assimilation of the knowledge of the organizational type (14)
	The constant improvement of the professional skills (21)
	Learning the deontological professional principles (27)

The meta-cognitive and career management competences mean the teacher proving a behavior based on the *knowing of the capacity and of one's mechanisms of cognitive control*, of adjusting the learning and the cognitive functioning in order to solve problems, the implementation of the deontological professional principles.

Technical and technological competences	Using the computer in the teaching-learning process (4)
	Designing and using didactical means (10)
	Getting and perfecting practical skills (TIC) (15)
	Designing activities of technical type (20)
	Using in an efficient manner auxiliary didactical materials (26)

Technical and technological competences mean the showing from the part of the teacher of the capacities to use the computer and the TIC in the designing and the making of the teaching-learning activities, in the planning and the using of the didactical means, using in an efficient manner the auxiliary didactical..

Psycho-social competences	The formation of the socio-professional behavior (5)
	The valuing of the methods and techniques of cognition of the students and of the group (11)
	The formation of the capacity to adapt quickly to the social changes (16)
	The individualized counseling regarding the school progress (24)
	Forming the psycho-moral behavior (29)

The psycho-social competences come into shape in the adequate relationship of the teacher with the students, fellow teachers, parents; showing the pro-social behavior and interest for the making of an authentic, efficient partnership with other educational factors, with the local community; the putting into practice of the knowledge, methods and techniques of knowing the groups in the classroom management and in the individualized counseling of the students.

Evaluation competences	Using the adequate strategies of individual and group evaluation (8)
	Knowing the new trends from the evaluation reform (12)
	Creating and implementing the evaluation instruments (18)
	The appreciation and the evaluation of the scholar results (23)
	The diversification of the evaluation techniques (30)

The evaluation competences are an ensemble of skills, capabilities, attitudes that are incarnated in the quality of the planning and realizing the evaluation process: the abilities to use the traditional and alternative evaluation methods and techniques, individual and group, the elaboration and the competent implementation of the evaluation procedures and instruments, the valorization of the evaluation's results in the adoption of pertinent decisions for the improvement of the learning process; the optimum integration of the different evaluation forms in the teaching – learning process; the diversification of the evaluation techniques for the rising of its objectivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the whole, the research was unrolling during school year 2008 – 2009, on a sample of 110 teachers, with an experience of 1 to 3 years of teaching. The structure of the sample we involved for validating the ECD test is: 56 work in schools from cities and 54 in the rural environment; 35 are in their first year of teaching activity, 36 are in their second year, and 39 in the third year of teaching experience.

Validating the *ECD test* involved a statistical study of the scales corresponding to the 6 dimensions we investigated. We calculated the correlations between items on these scales (SPSS, Cronbach's Alpha) and the internal consistency coefficient on the whole scale (*table 1*).

Table 1

The value of the internal consistency coefficient for each dimension

Dimensions of the ECD test	The value of the internal consistency coefficient
Dimension 1	0,72
Dimension 2	0,76
Dimension 3	0,81
Dimension 4	0,69
Dimension 5	0,75
Dimension 6	0,68

The internal consistency coefficient recorded the value of 0,73 (*table 2*).

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,730	0,751	30

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation test of professional competences among beginning teachers (E.B.C.) is centred upon categories of specific competences and the items evaluate the level of their development among beginning teachers.

The correlations between items obtained during the validation of E.B.C. are satisfying and they constitute an argument in order to sustain the consistency of items in measuring the investigated aspects.

The elements of novelty and originality for this evaluation test are:

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- it has a normative character since it refers to professional standards for didactical career and it allows the evaluation of assimilated competences.

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