

WORLDWIDE EXPERIENCES ON TRAINING THE “REFLEXIVE TEACHER”. METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

The paper is a projection of older concerns of the authors on initial and long life training of teachers in secondary education. The application of the new law on education (2011) implies major changes for initial and long life training of the teaching staff. In this context, the paper is a summary of significant experiences related to teacher training (France, Switzerland, Canada, USA, UK, Belgium, Luxembourg), focusing on the training paradigm of a "reflective teacher". Reflexivity is approached from different perspectives: as experience process in practical context (Donald Schön, 1983); as a problem solving process (Capeland, Birmingham, La Cruz, Lewin, 1993, Cruckshand, 1987); as a metacognitive process of action controlling (Saussez, Paquay, 1996, McAlpine, Weston, Beauchamp, Wiseman, 1999); as a process of learning (Schön, 1987, Karthagen, 1993, Saussez, Allal). The reflective teacher is essentially an analyst of educational situations seen in their singularity and a reflective decision-maker. We can mention the development of *professional intelligence* to teachers (L. Paquay & al., 1998), aiming at their professional training. Thus, we circumscribe to the effort to develop metacognitive competence not only at students but also at teachers. Reflecting on these international experiences in conclusions we make methodological suggestions on initial and long life training of teachers in Romania.

Key words: the initial and continuous training programs; reflexivity; worldwide experiences; theory-practice connection

Professor Stephen Bârsănescu emphasized that **missionarism** is "the metaphysic base of the profession of teacher." Being a teacher is equivalent, in his view, "with being in the service of an eternal necessity", "teacher's function is an original function of all human societies." (Bârsănescu St., 1939).

The education Law no. 1 / 2011 brings important changes in terms of initial and continuous training of teachers. The initial training will be accomplished through a two-year didactic master, followed by one-year stage under the guidance of a mentor. It has in view the attempt to professionalize the training of the future teacher. The Romanian experience in the field (the pedagogical high schools) has shown that the initial training should begin at an early age, to develop for the young the love and attachment for a noble profession. Moreover, the undergraduates will lack the minimum humanist training, that people need more than ever in these times of crisis. The law also does not allow the young people to attend a scientific and didactic master at the same time. Unfortunately, we believe that few young people will attend the didactic master after three years of License courses and other two of science master. It requires a change in the law in this

respect. Also, at the date of publication of this scientific paper, MECTS did not publish the methodology for law enforcement related to the initial training of teachers. Therefore, in 2011-2012 academic year, we will not be able to organize initial training courses as didactic master. Also, the new law abolished DPPD as a structure responsible for initial and continuous training of teachers and did not put anything in place. The experience of pedagogic seminar is cancelled de facto!

MATERIAL AND METHOD

World-wide experience on training teachers

Francophone Belgium

The state – as centralizing power – had to share the power with various decentralized structure ("networking"). Gradually it established itself as an institutional composite framework, articulating various forms of coordination of different actors (Maroy et Dupriez, 2000), as cited in Cahier de recherche du GIRSEF - n ° 12 - December 2001, p. 5]. In a 1997 law there were explicitly pointed out the general objectives of the educational system, the continuation of reforms started in advance (focusing on skills training curriculum, promotion of institutional project and development of a participative logic).

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Table 1

European experiences on training teachers

Belgium	The teachers in lower secondary education can, with a special dispensation to teach in upper secondary education. Training can be done either at the same time with university studies or after them
Czech Republic	Training may take from 4 to 6 years.
Germany	At the university level, the training, which lasts at least 9 semesters, is followed by two years of preparatory stages (<i>Vorbereitungsdienst</i>).
Estonia	After 2003/2004, the diplomas must successfully complete with a final phase of qualifying practice (<i>kutseaaasta</i>) with a duration of one year.
Greece	Organization of professional training depends on the institution and education disciplines which future teachers will want to specialize in.
Spain	Formation may take five or six years. A new pedagogical certificate shall apply from 2004/2005. It comprises a total of 485 hours of basic training, three months of pedagogical practice, including 12 hours of theoretical training.
France	<i>Agrégés</i> teachers can conduct their activities in higher secondary education. Their training lasts six years as teachers. The training is done through a period of one year.
Latvia	The consecutive pattern lasts for five years.
Lithuania	Training may take between three and five years, depending on the institution and the model.
Luxemburg	Vocational training is carried out during the final phase of qualifying with an internship of at least two years.
Austria	Training lasts four and a half years and is followed by a final phase of qualifying with a one year internship. Institutions have a large margin of manoeuvre in terms of hourly volume of training.
Portugal	The training may take four or five years and is followed by a final phase of qualifying with a one year of internship.
Slovenia	Training lasts four years and a half. The final phase of qualification by the one-year internship is compulsory and entirely devoted to professional training, but it is part of initial teacher training.
Finland	The consecutive model lasts longer than the simultaneous model, but the training does not differ substantially in the two models.
United Kingdom	The information refers to the consecutive model. The simultaneous model is also available but less prevalent. The training has a reduced, flexible schedule, where stages are also possible. The way of initial vocational training of teachers is defined by reference to competences achieved, rather than in terms of duration. All interns must achieve a minimum of one year in a school.
Norway	Depending on the material chosen, the teacher training can last between four and seven years. The training ranges from 25% for a four-year course and 14.3% for a seven-year course.

Source: Eurydice, Eurostat, 2005

Canada

As in other countries, Canada has continued the effort of synchronising the educational system with the demands of a society undergoing a highly complex process of transformations. In this respect, the report, *Préparer les jeunes au 21^e siècle* (1994), is circumscribed which highlighted the major trends that will have to be taken: internationalization, globalization, the explosion of knowledge, accelerated development of technologies and the complexity of life in society. The report attempted to define the primary and secondary general education.

A state commission has prepared a report on reform of Canadian curriculum, *Réaffirmer L'Ecole* (1997), who founded, in turn, an document on education policy entitled *L'école, tout un programme. Énoncé de politique éducative* (1997). The aims of educational system circumscribe the following coordinates: success for all without lowering the level of requirement, training focused on essential elements, a diversification of school routes (especially the secondary education), a more flexible school organization in accordance with the peculiarities of psychological development students, respecting institutional autonomy of schools and teachers.

Programme de formation de l'école québécoise (2001) is the ministerial document that reflected this new education policy reform of pre-school and primary education in Canada. School's mission is articulated around three axes:

- To train, with a reaffirmed willingness.* Even though school is not the only place where learning occurs, it plays an irreplaceable role in the development of the spirit of each student;
- to socialize, to learn better to live together with others.* School should prepare young people as future responsible citizens, reducing risks of social exclusion;
- to obtain a qualification, following different paths.* School is also designed to ensure the success of all students and their social and professional integration. To this end the Ministry of Education has developed a national basic curriculum, which provides schools with a wide margin of freedom in the design of differentiated and individualized educational paths.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Paradigms of training the professional educator

The specialists of the domain have identified six paradigms of educator-professional training (L. Paquay, Wagner, M.C., Paquay, L. & al., 1998, pp.155-163]) a "trained teacher", a "technician", a "practitioner-craftsman" a "reflective practitioner," a "social actor"; a "person". The authors cited consider that each of these paradigms develops a certain facet of the profession and that it is not about contradictory approaches but rather complementary ones (*ib.*, p. 162).

Paradigm of "reflective practitioner"

Reflexivity is addressed in a general register as: the process of experimentation in the practical context (Donald Schön, 1983) as a process of problem solving (Capeland, Birmingham, La Cruz, Lewin, 1993, Cruckshand, 1987) as a metacognitive process of action control (Saussez, Paquay, 1996, McAlpine, Weston, Beauchamp, Wiseman, 1999), as a learning process (Schön, 1987, Karthagen, 1993, Saussez, Allal). The reflexive teacher is essentially an analyst of the education situations regarded in their singularity and a reflective decision maker. We can speak about the development of professional intelligence to teachers (L. Paquay & al., 1998), aiming to professionalize their formation.

Initial training and reflective practitioner model

Francophone Belgium

The specialized literature from Francophone Belgium has identified three central dimensions of reflective practitioner model [Maroy C., Cahier de recherche du GIRSEF - n ° 12 - December 2001, p. 7-8]:

a) A reflexive practice, that would build the capacity of self-reflection in practical contexts.

b) A learning specialist, to design student-centred teaching approaches in terms of valorising the various theories of learning in specific contexts.

c) An interactive teacher, an interactive teacher, capable to initiate, manage the group of students and act as an actor on the scene of social life.

A Decree (2000, pp. 1-2) established 13 fundamental skills on which to focus the initial training process: (1) to valorise the knowledge in socio-human domains and to interpret different situations, (2) to develop effective partnerships between school, peers, and with parents, (3) to fulfil the roles that must be met within the school,

according to the legal texts of reference, (4) having a good knowledge on disciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects that can justify the pedagogical action, (5) to master the didactics of discipline, (6) to have a general horizon for opening students to the cultural world, (7) to develop relational skills circumscribed to the profession, (8) to evaluate the ethical challenges of the profession, (9) to work in teams, (10) to design teaching devices, test them, evaluate them and adjust them, (11) to relate critically and autonomously to the past and future scientific culture, (12) to plan, manage and evaluate learning situations, (13) to relate to reflective teaching practice and to organize trainings.

Luxemburg

The initial training of the teachers has the following distinguishing features: a unique training, aimed at developing professional skills, a training structured around five modules (to evaluate and adjust their knowledge and teaching - learning skills, to develop the learner's autonomy and responsibility; develop communicative competence and be aware of the cultural and social education; to construct the initial and continuous professional project of the teacher), is guided by clear principles (Alternate interveners, theory-practice coherence, teamwork, learning by doing, active participation in its formation, differentiation and activity in the project) training modules piloted by the coordinators; present a portfolio of final evaluation, a training stage that combines classroom assistance (in the morning) with the training activity (at the university in the afternoon) (Saussez F., N. Ewen, J. Girard, 2001, pp. 77-78).

Canada

The professionalization of teacher education is accordance with the changes taking place in socio-economic and cultural life. The professionalization refers to two interrelated processes: professionalism (internal order) and professionist (external order) (Quebec, 2001, p. 17) Professionalism expresses the idea of training certain professional skills necessary for practicing a profession. From this perspective, the document set out 12 basic skills for the profession of teacher (pp.61-134): 1. To critically valorise and interpret various cultural objects. 2. To communicate clearly and correctly in different contexts related to profession. 3. To design teaching-learning situations, depending on the specific content and skills taught these subjects. 4. to guide teaching-learning situations, according to the specific content and skills taught by these subjects 5. To evaluate the degree of progress in learning and skills training students for teaching specific content. 6. To plan, organize and supervise the

operation of group-class learning and socialization to promote students. 7. To adapt its interventions to the needs and characteristics of students who have learning difficulties or disability adjustment.

8. Integrate ICT to the purposes of training and piloting the teaching –learning activities, learning management system and professional development. 9. To cooperate with school staff, parents and pupils in order to reach the school's educational objectives. 10. To synchronize with team members teaching in the accomplishment of permanent tasks of development and evaluation of skills from the training programme and depending on the peculiarities of the students. 11. to engage in an individual and collective approach of professional development. 12. to act in an ethical and responsible way in performing its functions.

The second (external) dimension refers to the recognition of the social status of the teacher.

CONCLUSIONS

It is a must to valorise the international and Romanian experience on the initial teacher training. We suggest carry on with the existence of institutional structures responsible at university level. Also, we ought to capitalize the positive experience of normal schools on the development of teaching practice.

The MECTS should establish a set of key skills on teacher training, and, on this basis, the rethinking of their training programme.

There should be resumed the research on initial training of teachers and, in the new law context, the establishment of an operational model of teacher training.

The development of reflective paradigm of training Romanian teachers, adapted to reality, under conditions of the increasing the social prestige of the person teaching.

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