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- teacher and parent

In answer to your initiative of submitting to public discussion the *Document of the committee* SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY I have tried to identify answers to question number 7: “**How can the school personnel be trained and supported in order to deal with the challenges it faces?**”. I have to mention that I will be referring to teachers only. As well as this, it must be said that I have analyzed and based my assumptions on the actual situation in Romania. As a consequence, some of the aspects discussed may not be similar to those encountered in other European schools. The examples given are meant to signal realities of the Romanian education system and not to deny its performances.

The school of the 21st century suggests major and rapid changes which require not only the adjustment of the educational system to the new political, economical, cultural and scientific realities but also the forming of the ability to adapt within the system. A starting point of this process consists in the training of the school personnel in order to be able to deal with the challenges it faces.

The following aspects appear to be essential in what concerns the training of the teaching staff:

- developing coherent and realistic training politics/strategies;
- ensuring the infrastructure for professional development;
- the development of the training programmes on managerial principles;
- promoting an efficient methodology for their implementation;
- extending the competencies of the teaching staff by forming new abilities and competences.

**1. The development of coherent and realistic training politics/strategies** implies first an analysis of present state of the quality in education and especially its results on short as well as long term.

As well as this, it aims at an analysis of all possible resources (existent or potential) may these be material, human, financial or time resources. After finalizing the analysis it can be preceded with the elaboration and the implementation of strategies and politics of training the teaching staff. These politics must necessarily be related to the conditions imposed by the development of the society and the realities the society faces presently and in the future.

**2. Ensuring the infrastructure for professional development** first implies the constitution of a group of specialized teacher trainers. In order to do this the process of selection and training of the trainers is essential necessitating the development of programmes for training the trainers with many models/versions (from those who already have a relevant experience and practice with training the adults, specialists in the science of education, graduates of specific education forms etc.).

Once this problem is overcome there will be elaborated specific programmes for the training of the teaching staff. We need to make a terminological delimitation:

- **the training** represents the process of integration of the personality according to a model which aims at the gaining of the adaptability of the person;
- **the professionalization** represents the forming of professional competences which are imperatives of any professional field.

The training only is not sufficient for the activity of the teachers. What is needed is a professionalisation of the role they have at the social level and this aspect is relevant manly for the continuous dimension of their instruction.

At the same level of continuous instruction there is the need of using standards for forming the educational staff (teachers and not only), standards which should follow the roles/functions of the teaching staff as well as the stages of professional development, the particularities of the subject they teach, the evolution of the science of education and the research in the field.

Another important aspect in ensuring the infrastructure implied other suppliers of training, aside from those depending on the Ministry of Education, the legalizing of the training providers, the insurance of a real correspondence between the personnel needed and the number of places in a course/program or training cycle, a reconsideration of the role of important provider of „trainer of trainers” of the pedagogy/ educational science field.

**3. The development of the training programmes on managerial principles** implies a strategic planning of the whole training programme, its organization and administration, a continuous monitoring and a rhythmical evaluation in order to identify the possible disfunctionalities and to act immediately to remediate them on the spot; I personally consider as being not only tardy but also disastrous to identify problems and disfunctionalities at the end of a programme. (A negative example: the continuous reform of the Romanian educational system which experiments yearly without creating a continuity in its measures.)

**4. Promoting an efficient methodology of implementing the training programmes** needs to have as a major the overcoming of the reticence in approaching novelty. More exactly, it has to aim at the forming of an open attitude towards methodological novelty.

The development of the methodologies specific to interactive learning must be taken into account. Among these, we mention teamwork activities, group discussion, interactive didactic materials and methods etc. Moreover, we should go beyond the didactic level by using projects, involving children./ pupils/ students in additional activities with impact on their development as person and citizen.

**5. The extension of the competences of the teaching staff** aims at forming and developing extra didactical competences. The profile of the teacher has to cover three levels:

- a) psihopedagogical and specific competences;
- b) managerial competences;
- c) social/participative competences.

In this way, the teacher of the 21st century will be better anchored in the life of the school as well as in the life of the community fact which will trigger a necessary redefining process of the socio-professional status of the teacher.

Moreover, the motivation for the teaching profession will be enriched with intrinsic and not only circumstantial connotations..

An important role is made up by the reconsideration of the psihopedagogical disciplines as compared with the other subjects. Considering this, a restructuring of the curriculum for those who are preparing for the teaching profession appears as necessary. As well as this, the initial, continuous and final evaluation together with the evaluations following the graduation of any training need to aim more at the psihopedagogical aptitudes, the managerial competences and interpersonal relationships compared to the knowledge specific to the discipline to be taught.

The psihopedagogic module being insufficient and lacking a real motivation for the training of the future teacher there is a clear need of didactic professionalization. As an example, today a student of chemistry will be insufficiently prepared as a teacher as long as the college prepares him mainly to become a chemistry expert. The same is the case with all the other colleges including the humanistic ones.

It would be more efficient if after the first 2-3 years of common curriculum, those who want to follow a teaching career studied thoroughly, for the next 1-2 years the methodic of the discipline and other competencies specific to the teacher. The professionalization of the teacher

implies a larger share of socio-psiho-pedagogical disciplines as compared to the specialized ones (math, physics, geography, art etc.)

There needs to be a clear delimitation from the profesionalization point of view between the levels or cycles of education. This is necessary because it is very important for the teacher to be trained at the informative and formative level according to the age particularities of the child.

Considering the fact that the financial retribution is a quite strong motivation no matter the professional category or state, the criteria according to which the payment of the teacher is done should be revised. This being said, I consider that the amount of work and the professional performances should constitute more important criteria than the number of years of service. As well as this, even the criteria of the courses graduated is sometimes discriminative being omitted the fact that the younger the pupil, the larger the amount of work and the involvement of the teacher.

Last but not least, I consider as being very important the admission method to a college specialized in training teachers. The initial evaluation should be done using specific tests and eliminating admission based on a simple diploma received at the school leaving examination (baccalaureate).

To conclude with, I foreshadow the following structure for the initial training:

Level	Didactic function	Training form	Initial evaluation	Duration of studies	Professional certification
I.	Kindergarten teacher	Pedagogic Institute	- interview - practical test - written test	3 years	Degree of kindergarten teacher
II.	Primary school teacher	Pedagogic Institute	- interview - practical test - written test	3 years	Degree of primary school teacher
III.	Upper primary school teacher	College	- interview - written tests	4 years	Degree of upper primary school teacher
IV.	High school teacher	College	- interview - written tests	5-6 years	Degree of high school teacher
V.	Professor	College master, courses, specialization in the field, PhD.	- interview - practical test	5-7 years	Degree of ....

As in what concerns the **continuous training** consider that the present system from Romania (of didactical degrees) is irrelevant as it motivates the teacher only to change his appointment on the post and accordingly, his remuneration. This is **sometimes** the expression of a need to reconsider his socio-professional status and **rarely** if ever, a real professional growth or development.

The continuous training has to be more than something compulsory. There should be developed mechanisms which could encourage the teachers to objectively self evaluate and to identify their own training needs. As well as that, the school needs to pay a closer attention to the training necessities of the didactic personnel. The Training programmes have to have a coherent structure and certain cyclicity.

**The transferable credits** will constitute the most efficient method of continuous training which is the most objective and pertinent basis for the evolution in the teaching carrier including for the corresponding remuneration. As well, for the newly qualified teachers, the mentorship constitutes the most efficient method of continuous training.

The continuous training will aim at a close qualitative monitorisation of the professional development of the teacher and at professional support (courses, mentorship) offered by qualified institutions – the national/regional centre for training, associations, professional organizations (not syndicates), trainers of trainers, methodologists etc. In the continuous training the role of the trainer should consist in prefiguring the context, the frame in which the trainee is self training.

Considering the quality standards of education, the present system is illogical if we are to think for example at the newly qualified teachers. These are allowed to teach until they pass their definitive test (Definitivat) without any real, constant monitorisation. The mentorship is the only method which could offer answers to questions such as:

- *What is the fault of a certain class for not having a well trained teacher considering that, according to the present norms system is based on didactical degrees only and no other certifications (such as post university courses, master, seminars, symposiums etc.) are admitted?*
- *What is the fault of the teacher who starts his didactic activity without being properly prepared?*
- *Whose fault is it that the pupils have missed two years until their teacher will have been fully trained to teach? (this is the present context in which it is considered that only after the definitive exam the teacher is really competent).*

Another method of optimization of the continuous training will be the validation of the non-formal and informal teaching as forms of professionalization. There already exists a set of common European principles approved since may 2004 by the Council of Europe.

Considering that a teacher is trained on one hand in order to fulfill his role in school and on the other hand to deal with the challenges of the school I consider that a quote of **Philippe Meirieu** („*Eurydice U.E.*”, 1997) is eloquent in order to synthesize the fact that the road that needs to be taken in training the future teachers needs to be related with the school on the whole:

*„Today, the school can no longer be seen as an ivory tower and the growing heterogeneity of the school population requires that the educators should replace in their professional practice the logic determined by teaching with the logic of learning based on the intellectual activity of the pupil”.*