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Identification of the main directions in life-long training of the university teaching professionals who teach Didactics of Specialty

Laura Șerbănescu^{a*}*^aDepartment of Teacher Training, Polytechnic University of Bucharest, 313 Splaiul Independentei, Bucharest, 060042, Romania*

Abstract

This article submits for discussion the preliminary findings of a research conducted in 2011-2012 about the training of university teaching professionals who train teachers. As concerns the topic of this article, it refers to identification of the main directions in life-long learning of the university teaching professionals who teach Didactics of Specialty. The questionnaires designed and applied in this research have been particularly focused on identifying the key information about teachers' training system. Respondents are 200 university teaching professionals who teach Didactics of Specialty and/or coordinate the pedagogical practice activity of the students who will be future teachers. The sample group consisted of respondents selected from all the areas of the country. This research is also based on a desk review of the European education policies, as well as of the studies and analyses conducted in the past years in the field of teachers' training.

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Keywords: teachers trainers; training needs; training directions; competence areas.

1. Introduction

This article aims at presenting for discussion several findings of a quantitative research conducted during the period 2011-2012 within POSDRU/87/1.3/S/63709 project "Quality, innovation, communication in life-long training of the didactics teaching professionals from higher education" concerning the training of university teaching professionals who train teachers in Romania.

As concerns the topic of this article, it refers to identification of the main directions in the life-long learning of the university teaching professionals who teach Didactics of Specialty.

This research is also based on a desk review of the studies and analyses in the field of teachers' training conducted during the past years in Romania.

It is to be outlined that such research related to the training of university teaching professionals within far-reaching training programmes with a high number of participants is seldom found in specialized literature or as a

* Corresponding author. Tel +4 021 402 9242; fax: +4 021 402 9507.

E-mail address: lauraeserbanescue@yahoo.com

concern of researchers. The university teaching professionals are usually trained through an individual system by choosing themselves their participation in different scientific events or deepen the knowledge in certain scientific fields, based on an individual career development plan. Thus, the research presented hereafter is important by its novelty element and provides information that is applicable in educational practice. This research may also lay the ground for further theoretic research.

2. Research methodology

The research conducted within the above-mentioned project aimed at identifying the most effective strategies for the initial training of the teaching professionals provided as part of the educational offer of the departments for teachers' training from higher education, while this article aims at presenting only the topic of identification of the main directions in life-long training of the university teaching professionals who teach Didactics of Speciality subject.

From a methodological perspective, as survey technique, it was used the questionnaire-based survey of the subjects in the sample groups.

The sample group of university teaching professionals included 200 respondents selected from 20 universities with accredited departments for teachers' training (DTT).

3. Findings

3.1. *The main training needs of teachers' trainers as identified by educational policies, studies or specialized literature*

The first objective of the Education and Training 2010 Programme – improving the education and training of teachers and trainers – highlights both the importance of attracting to the teaching profession and retaining in the system well-qualified and motivated people and identifying the skills that teachers require to meet the changing needs of society and providing conditions to support teachers through initial and life-long in-service training.

Those responsible for training teachers – and for training teacher educators - should themselves have attained a high academic standard and possess solid practical experience of teaching, as well as the competences that a quality teaching process requires (European Council, 2009).

It is also considered that training of teaching professionals and in-service training should play a crucial role in creating a perspective regarding education in the spirit of sustainable development and in ascertaining the correct way for its introduction in schools, VET and higher education institutions (European Council, 2010).

According to the findings of a study on life-long learning (Jigău, 2008) conducted by the Educational Sciences Institute, in the opinion of the teaching professionals surveyed, trainers' quality is a determinant aspect of the training offer quality. They appreciated the role of the trainer as the most important success factor of a training course. According to respondents' opinions, trainers should have competences, such as: a good specialist (specialized competences), a good pedagogue and didactics teaching professional (psycho-pedagogical competences), a good evaluator (competences in evaluation and monitoring) or a good communicator (communication competences). Trainer's drawbacks identified by respondents refer to formalism in teaching or to a less effective communication, as well as to the methods to evaluate participants in the course.

Emil Păun specifies that for the adult didactics teaching professional, as well as for any other adult who learns (either it is about initial learning, life-long learning, guided and controlled learning or self-learning), the reflexive transformation capacity of the pedagogical practice and experience, respectively teaching experience, is important, not its replication (Șerbănescu, 2013).

Ioan Neacșu also highlights a series of successful practices in organizing adult education, such as: adult's co-responsibility in decision making through specific, flexible methods (modular training schedules, financial support diversification, special leave, institutional certification, distance training courses, institutional resources mobilization, acquiring transversal competencies); integrating the new information and communication technologies (ICT); facilitating transparency and transition between schooling cycle and employment, between initial and life-long training; promotion and development of cooperation, interactive partnerships between employers, trade unions,

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