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**THE BIG FOUR LEVELS OF THE ROMANIAN TEACHERS
TRAINING SYSTEM**

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Abstract

The literature in the field, including some stipulations of the official papers, even Law of national education, refers to only two teachers training levels: initial and continuing teachers training and, as well, give different meanings to the concept of „initial teachers training”. This is the reason the issue of teacher training levels became a source of controversy, misunderstanding, wrong or ambiguous formulations in legislative documents, and in some written or public statements. In order to provide a new look on teachers training, the authors demonstrate that the Romanian Teachers Training System (RTTS model) is built on four levels of training: the initial teacher training, obtained during the first cycle of the university studies, the in-depth teacher training, realized during the second cycle of the university studies (by professional and educational master), the advanced/doctoral training and the continuing teachers training. Each of them highlights the teachers competence development and the increase in the professional qualification level. Each level has a relative autonomy, being conditioned by prior attainments. That framework (RTTS) help us analyze and better understand the actual debates on teachers training; as well, it can hopefully serve as a conceptual tool for decision-makers, teachers and other people and organizations interested in teachers training process to more quickly understand and utilize the key concepts involved.

Romania has a modern and complex structure of the teachers training system, but it is necessary to transform it into a scientific and methodological working system to improve the teachers professional and pedagogical competences.

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Keywords: Teachers training ; university studies; teachers professional development.



1. Introduction

In the last 5 years, there were more than 5 legal documents, a lot of national debates, publications and public depositions on teachers training. It seems to us that, nowadays, teachers training becomes a complex, noisy, and a jumbled environment.

Trying to discern what is really crucial about it, to see what patterns are emerging and what the underlying cause and effect relationships are, we found that, in the period 2011-2016, **a lot of decision-makers and educational managers thought and behaved mostly as functional tacticians than as a good strategists**. As Watkins said, "Good strategists see the big picture; they see important patterns in complex environments, and are able to crystallize and communicate the strategic implications to others. Tacticians, on the other hand, must focus on the details of how best to implement an overall strategy. These implementation decisions are often the responsibility of functional leaders. Both strategy and tactics are important" (Watkins, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

The literature in the field, including some stipulations of the official papers and of Law of national education (no.1/2011, actualized at 2.10.2015), refers to only two teachers training levels: initial and continuing teachers training and, as well, give different meanings to the concept of „initial teacher training". This is the reason the issue of teacher training level became a source of controversy, misunderstanding, wrong or ambiguous formulations in legislative documents and in some written or public statements (National debate "Romania-Educated", 21.04.2016).

3. Purpose of the Study

The study presents new ways of considering existing information about the teachers training.

In order to provide a new look on teachers training in Romania, the authors try to identify:

- A. The levels of Romanian Teachers Training System (RTTS) the Law of national education, no.1/2011 refers to;
- B. Some implications of applying RTTS model on the political and educational decisions and discourses on teachers training;

4. Research Methods

The study is based on the following research activities:

- Content analysis of the Law of national education no.1/2011 (actualized at 2.11.2015) and of other legislative documents on teacher training; besides, the authors have experienced, in over 40 years of university teaching - researching activities, all situations arising from legislative changes that have occurred in connection with teachers training;

- Processing and interpretation of 133 public testimonies/depositions presented at national debate "Romania - Educated" organized on 21.04.2016, (available on the Debate sites, 2016);
- Interviews with 30 teachers, on their professional training and portfolios (June, 2016).

5. Findings

5.1. The levels of Romanian Teachers Training System (RTTS) the Law of national education 1/2011 refers to. Between official documents and reality.

A1. In our view, **Romania has a modern and reasonable teachers training system**; its components can be described as "The Big Four Levels".

These Big Four Levels of the Romanian Teachers Training System are: the initial, the in-depth, the advanced and the continuing teachers training (Fig.1):

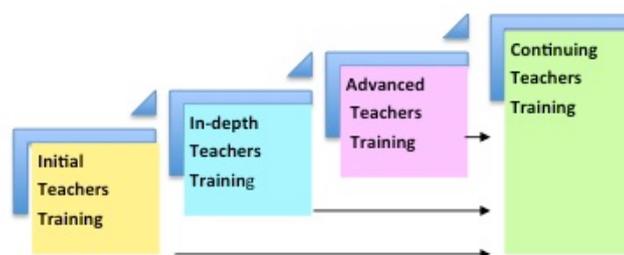


Fig. 1. The Big Four Levels of the Romanian Teachers Training System (RTTS model)

Surprisingly, this idea is not stipulated in the Law of national education, no.1/2011(actualized, 2015) when refer to teachers training. Our framework emerged out as a necessity to better clarify *how* and *why* those key concepts on teachers training relate to each other. It help us analyse and better understand the actual debates on teachers training; as well, it can hopefully serve as a conceptual tool for decision-makers, teachers and other people and organizations interested in teachers training process to more quickly understand and utilise the key concepts involved. It is both self-explanatory and transparent so that even the bachelor student can readily make sense of it.(Fig.2).

Initial teachers training (Initial TT) refers to the first cycle of university studies. Bachelor studies assure the initial teachers training and, according to the Law of education, no.1/2011, gives the right to become teacher in preschool, primary and secondary education in the following two situations:

a) *Bachelor graduate of one of the following 6 degree Bachelor programs (Bachelor T):* Primary education and preschool Pedagogy, Pedagogy, Music Pedagogy, Teaching Theology, Pedagogy and decorative arts. (Law of education, art.238 (7, 13) and art.248 (d, e);

b) *Bachelor graduate and certified Level 1 Pedagogical training (Bachelor + P1)* (Law of education, art. 248 (f, g).

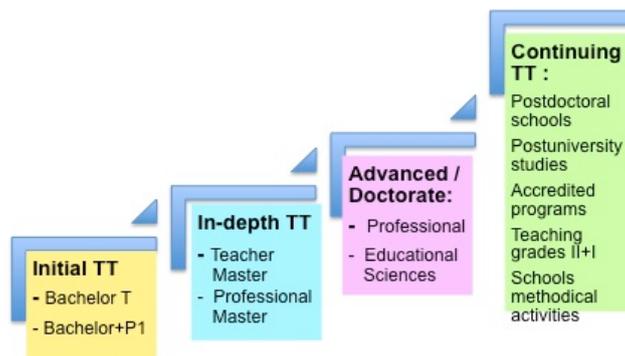


Fig. 2. Teachers training programs offered by Romanian Teachers Training System

In-depth teachers training (In-depth TT) is realized during the second cycle of university studies, through the teaching master and professional master programs, the ISCED level 7. "Entry into ISCED level 7 programmes, preparing for a second or further degree, normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 6 or 7 programme". (UNESCO-UIS, 2012; EU/EACEA, 2015).

The level **advanced teachers training** refers to doctoral studies on Sciences of Education and to professional or speciality doctorate, some European universities being already engaged in an EU Project on *European Doctorate in Teacher Education* which intends to promote standards, procedures and unifying principles for the design, organization and development of an European doctoral study programmes in teacher education. (Iucu & Schratz, 2013; EDiTE, 2016). As a rigorous form of advanced academic apprenticeship and learning, doctoral education "continues to evolve from an elite activity, focused mainly on acting as a pipeline for future research professors structured around strict disciplinary boundaries, towards more interdisciplinary programmes that prepare students for a variety of positions in and out of academia". (Blessinger, 2016).

The alumni of each of those three levels of RTTS can continue their professional and individual development attending different types of programmes offered by an institutionalized postgraduate study level, **continuing teachers training**.

It must be observed that:

- each level of teachers training has its autonomy, indicates distinct targets and specialized training processes, as well as specific assessment processes and accreditation standards (ARACIS, 2015);
- each of the four levels of teachers training is, as a matter of fact, a strategic target for professional development, both in terms of teacher and school organization. Moreover, they are even considered by regular national assessment of the quality of education provided by primary and secondary schools (ARACIP), as well as in the professional evaluation of each teacher, the evidences being components of professional portfolio.

A.2. The RTTS model is in compliance with the national and European policies on university studies cycles and on qualifications description:

- the structural component, in line with the Bologna process, focuses on three of the eight levels of qualification, namely: Bachelor university studies, corresponding to EQF level 6, Master's

university studies, corresponding to EQF level 7 and doctoral university studies, corresponding to EQF level 8;

- it is based on the analysis of relevant theories and research outcomes in the fields of education sciences, psychology of learning, psychology of labor, with special reference to standards, curriculum design models, competence development and assessment systems and procedures;
- it also takes into account the social and group context of practicing the teaching profession, as well as the awareness of the continuing teachers training need.

Romania has a modern and complex teachers training system, but it is necessary to transform it into a scientific and methodological working system to improve the professional and pedagogical competences of the teachers.

5.2. Implications of applying the RTTS model

B.1. There are differences in assigning importance to four specific academic areas of teachers training process.

Unfortunately, **considering the Law of education, there are references (Fig. 3) to only two of the four levels identified: to the initial and to the continuing teachers training** (e.g.: the Law 1/2011, art.232 (2): *"Teaching Staff Statute governs initial and continuing training"*; the title of the Second section is: *"Initial and continuing training"*); as well, *"Development of human resources in schools education aims: initial teacher training, continuing training of teaching staff"* (see www.edu.ro).

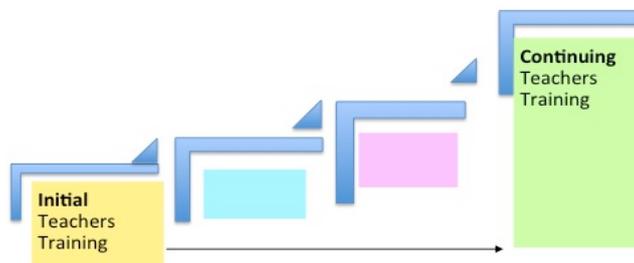


Fig.3. "Teaching Staff Statute governs initial and continuing training" - Law no. 1/2011, art.232 (2)

B.2. The concept of "initial teachers training" swallows on the "in - depth teachers training".

The literature in the field, including some stipulations of the official papers, gives different meanings to the concept of „initial training”. When refer to psycho-pedagogical training, the Law (1/2011, actualized 2015, art. 236) stipulates: *"Initial training for teaching positions in secondary education includes: completing the master teacher with 2-year or Psycho-pedagogical training programs in Level I and II..."* which is delivered during the bachelor studies. As well, the art. 238 (1): *"Students and university graduates who opt for teaching profession are required to graduate from a master teacher with 2-year or psycho-pedagogical training programs Level I or II "... "psycho-pedagogical preparation is completed by obtaining a master's degree or teaching certificate of completion Psycho-pedagogical training programs".* (Fig.4).

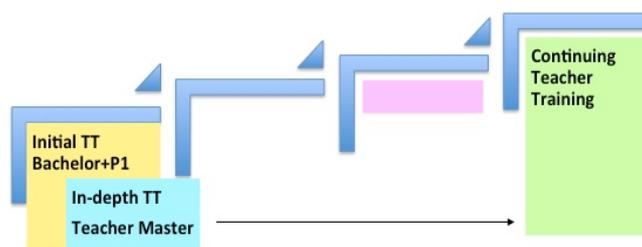


Fig. 4. "Initial teachers training" swallows on the "in - depth teachers training".

In such a conditions, it is of high probability that educational politics differs significantly on how they understand and use the main concepts utilized: teacher training system, levels of teachers professional competences, especially "initial training" and "in-depth training" (master).

As an exemplification of this, let us to present the opinions made public at a national debate, organized quite recently (National Debate "Romania-Educated", 21.04.2016).

After processing the data provided by 133 depositions (27 - audio / video and 106 - affidavits, available on the websites: www.coalitiaedu.ro and www.privesc.eu/Arhiva/66726/Audiere-Publica-Formarea-initiala-a-profesorilor) stated the following sharing options (Table 1):

Table 01. Depositions at the National Debate "Romania-Educated" (21.04.2016)

| Options | Number | Teachers training | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | | Ped.I - during Bachelor studies | | Ped.I - during Bachelor + Teacher Master (Integrated model) | | Only Teacher Master studies | | Other solutions | |
| | | no | % | no | % | no | % | no | % |
| Depositions affidavits | 106 (100%) | 25 | 23% | 25 | 23 % | 44 | 41 % | 12 | 11,3 % |
| Depositions audio-video | 27 (100%) | 4 | 14,8% | 16 | 59,2 % | 5 | 18,5 % | 2 | 7,4% |
| TOTAL | 133 (100%) | 29 | 21,8 % | 41 | 30,8 % | 49 | 36,8% | 14 | 10,5% |

- 52,6% (70 of 133 depositions) refer to the initial teachers training during the first cycle of university studies, Bachelor + pedagogical Level 1(P1). To be observed, 58,5% (41/70) of deposits have proposed a **new model for professionalization of teaching staff**, a model (Toma, Potolea, 2014) that *integrates* initial training during Bachelor + P1(Mode 1), and *in-depth studies*, namely, *teaching master*.

But,

- **36,8%** (43 individuals and 6 organizations) consider that only **the teacher in-depth training/master programme assures the initial teachers training!** It is the same mistake the art.236, paragraph 1 of the Law no.1/2011 done by integrating GEO no.49/ 2014, which states that the initial training provided by Law to article 238, paragraph 1, shall be made **either** through skills development program for the teaching career ", **either** through the master teacher. (GEO no 49/2014).

Those depictions, as well the title of the National Debate, **“Teacher Master or psycho-pedagogical mode (1+2)? What kind of initial training will increase the quality in the education system in Romania?”**, Bucharest, 21.04.2016, consider the initial teachers training as equivalent with the teacher master (in-depth teachers training). Teacher Master is again, all correlated only with the initial training. A parallel drawn between the two initial routes to professionalize teaching showed that they may not be considered equivalent (Toma, Potolea, 2014). Our choice is based on the following arguments:

- The idea to place the Teacher Master in relation to the initial pedagogical training is inconsistent with the idea promoted by the "Bologna Process" and the Law no. 2004 on the organization of university that stipulates: "Master studies provide **deepening** (our underline) in undergraduate studies or in a area near capacity for scientific research and is a compulsory basis for doctoral studies "(Law no.288/2004, art. 9, paragraph 2).
- As well, it is known that the first principle of logic - the principle of identity - asks that, in the same speech, it is compulsory to use terms with similar meaning. Serious breaches of this principle creates confusion and harms speech clarity. In our case, the concept of master once defined by european documents and national legislature as "Second or further degree, following successful completion of a Bachelor's or equivalent programme" (UNESCO-UIS, 2012; EU/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015)) that mean must be observed throughout the text of the law and documents elaborated later under them: ordinances, methodologies, etc. Add to this, someone can observe the violation of the noncontradiction principle: term master is used to mean both initial training as well as in-depth training.
- Finally, if we want things well done, it is very important that all documents that regulate an area have to be clearly formulated and articulated coherent, otherwise the actors will move confusing and messy.

6. Conclusions

a) In line with the Bologna Process, Romanian Teachers Training System was established under Law no.288/2004. In the following pieces of legislation / regulations, systemic approach has remained somewhat implicit, in the foreground are removing a component or another, mainly initial and continuing training. Even top-level forms (master) has been subsumed initial training.

This is the reason the issue of teacher training levels becamed a source of controversy, misunderstanding, wrong or ambiguous formulations in legislative documents and in some written or public statements (educational managers, universities, school inspectorates, educational institutions, NGOs etc.).

We found that the Romanian Teachers Training System (RTTS) exists but references to it are not unitary. The various components are unevenly considered, some even neglected from year to year, prioritizing others. The decision-makers have developed tactics (orders, regulations, methodologies, guidelines etc.) on topical issues, strategies drawn out, missing the big picture. In terms of frequently changing leadership, measures could only be tactical and largely inconsistent. It was enough in 2016 to raise the issue in exactly the terms before 2004 (Bologna Process)! So, it is desirable for decision-makers to realize the existence and the potential of this model with the more so as many foreign experts have

recognized that, in some respects, Romanian Teachers Training System can inspire other education systems. "Every EU country that wants to develop a TCPD (teacher continuing professional development) regulated by framing should consider the Romanian experience"(Janecke & Mykytyn, 2007).

b) The Romanian Teachers Training System levels must to be clearly stipulated by the Law of national education.

The framework identified (RTTS) is a conceptual model of professional teachers development and, as well, a multi-process dynamic model that allows each teacher to develop an individualized plan of teaching career.

The "big four levels" of the Romanian Teachers Training System represent the specific points of teacher's professional and personal development. Training and professional development of teaching staff and the management, guidance and control is in Romania, a professional field, distinct and crystallized from a conceptual perspective, but it requires a political document that defines unequivocally system components and their relationships (defined methodologies and functions).

c) The initial training for a teaching career must be carried out during the first cycle of the university studies. Master Teacher training, as in-depth pedagogical training, should enable teachers to further university teaching career. The programs provided by each of those levels has distinct finality, number of credits, curriculum, different types of certification and different standards of accreditation (ARACIS, 2015). Obtaining a teacher master has to signify the access to teaching grade I, according to the status, roles and competencies associated with the teaching profession.

d) Romania has a modern and complex teachers training system, but it is necessary to transform it into a scientific and methodological working system to improve the professional and pedagogical competences of the teachers.

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