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ON THE ROLE OF TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES WITHIN THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

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Abstract

The management of an educational institution, be it a kindergarten, a primary or secondary school, a high school or a university, in order to ensure a high-quality education process within it, is also a great responsibility, and a challenge for the manager of this institution. In our paper are presented the main responsibilities of the manager of an educational institution that are connecting with those competences which must correspond to the management of the institution so that this has to complain all the needs of the society, for a shorter or longer time, regarding education of the students which are belong to a certain community. From this perspective, the paper presents an analysis of some of the continuous training programs for teachers who want to become managers of educational institutions. These continuing education programs are subject to the accreditation of the Ministry of National Education, and therefore have to respect a certain "philosophy" that inevitably induces the implicit existence of weaknesses in these programs. Also, some proposals and ideas are presented for improvement the curriculum of these continuous training programs regarding the development of soft skills which are to be acquired for the position of educational manager in the national educational system, from the level of the kindergarten to the university level. Transversal competences can be very useful in the complex situations which can appear in the real situations for any manager who wish to control, to leading and to optimize his activities.

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1. Introduction

The quality of the management of an educational institution depends on many factors, among which it must mention the managerial training of the holder of such a post (Macarie, Nicolescu, & Petrescu, 2015). By the other hand, as shown in the literature, the key word that synthesizes the activity of a school manager should be the responsibility of his/her activities concerning all what is meaning students' educational process for the society. The responsibility of the educational manager is ensured through a multiple training, given by a very good professional training, but also by a specific quality training in the educational management. The responsibility of the educational institution manager must manifest itself in all its activities and actions, which are carried out inside or outside it. Let's not forget that in Romania, any manager of a school unit has the basic training of a teacher in a certain discipline (physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, sports, music, etc.).

Thus, the responsibility of the educational manager can be analysed in at least two directions, namely material responsibility and moral responsibility. While the material responsibility can be quantified and measured by the way in which the educational manager complies his activities conforming with the national education legislation and by the way he adheres to the regulations approved by the Board of Directors, regarding the good performance of all his activities in the educational unit, for his moral responsibility there are no mechanisms so that it can be accurately observable and so quantified its. Although moral responsibility is a rather diffused notion, it plays a very important role and it can decisively define the manager's work. The ethics in the educational establishment must be known and recognized in all activities. Without morality, can we talk about effective quality of the didactical activities? Obviously, the answer is negative. We all appreciate and respect the moral character of a didactical activity, because it gives confidence and respect for all the students' future professions, whatever this will be.

2. Problem Statement

Given the fact that a school unit manager aims is to be effective in everything he does inside and outside the unit, it is desirable that he / she should act with minimal effort and achieve maximum results. Such manager's behaviour can be obtained only from a quality training in the field of educational management. It is well known that the manager of the school unit needs a thorough training in management, in general, and in the educational management, especially, assuming also that he/she has a solid professional experience accumulated in years of professional activity and, in addition, he / she has some experience gained by engaging in solving the specific managerial problems for the school in which he/she has worked. Furthermore, in order to lead the education unit in a responsibly and efficiently way, its manager must enjoy a professional recognition and a thorough knowledge of human and material resources management, institutional and marketing development project management, organization protection management, and at the same time he /she has to be able to use of new educational methods and interpersonal and organizational communication. Such thorough training in these areas of managerial activities so different is absolutely necessary for the teacher who assumes the position of educational unit manager.

In general, the participation at the contests of occupation of the position of educational unit manager requires a necessary condition that imposes that the teacher which participating at such contests has already graduated a training for educational management. That is why within the pre-university education system

there are the continuous training programs which ensure and allow for the participated teacher to obtain specific competences for the educational management. Considering that the current legislation for educational management training is foreseen only for pre-university education, i.e. the managers of the educational establishments must also have managerial training, then there have been multiple possibilities for acquiring specific competences by participating those interested in continuous training programs organized by different accredited institutions such as: Teaching Staff Houses, Adult Training Centres, various NGOs, etc.

3. Research Questions

The concept of “soft skills” or “transversal competences” is increasingly used in adult vocational training programs, because it provides them with specific (non-technical) competences other than professional ones. Transversal competencies, also called “generic competences”, are increasingly required by jobseekers or those seeking to advance professionally. The great advantage of acquiring transversal competences is that once acquired and certified, it helps to use them in any field of activity, either at work or in family life, or in other areas where a person is involved. Transversal competencies not only contain an individual's own resources (knowing, knowing how to do, knowing how to be, attitudes), but also considering the social and organizational context in which it operates.

„The transversal competences are increasingly essential in everyday life and in the labour market. They fall into two categories:

- specific competences, which are related to knowledge or knowledge required to perform a specific task;
- generic competences, which are linked to know-how and know-how acquired by experience.” In general, transversal competences refer to the notions of organization and participation in a particular type of activity so that each individual “is able to contribute constructively to the arrangement of his working position and his professional environment, to know how organize and decide on their own and be willing to assume responsibilities”. (Gallagher & Clément, 2013).

For more than 30 years Professor Henri Boudreault, from the Montreal University, Quebec, has defined a list of transversal competences to be mastered according to a person's field of activity. For each transversal competence there are specialized questionnaires or video games whereby an adult can be assessed on his / her level of knowledge of that competence (Boudreault, 2018). It is interesting to know and retain all 27 transversal competences on which Professor Boudreault's studies are focused, given in Table 01.

Table 01. Boudreault's transversal competences

No	Soft Skill	No	Soft Skill	No	Soft Skill
1	Abiding by the rules	10	Diligence	19	Reliability
2	Ability to adapt	11	Efficiency	20	Spirit of analysis
3	Acceptance of criticism	12	Initiative	21	Team spirit
4	Assertiveness	13	Innovation	22	Sense of ethics
5	Attention	14	Intellectual curiosity	23	Sense of organisation
6	Autonomy	15	Motivation	24	Self-control
7	Care	16	Perseverance	25	Sense of responsibility
8	Communication	17	Personal hygiene	26	Tidiness
9	Decision-making ability	18	Presentation	27	Tolerance

Analysing the transversal competences of Table 01 it is easy to see that for a manager of an educational unit it would be desirable to know them and to use them in his / her daily activity. Is it easy to acquire such skills? Is it necessary to know very well all these 27 transversal skills? Obviously, for the both questions the realistic answer is one negative. No, it is not easy to acquire and it is not necessary to use all 27 transversal skills within the day-to-day activities of the education unit manager. In the practice of commercial companies, it is more and more common to require to know, in general, a maximum 6 from the 27 transversal skills, which are chosen at the employer's demand. The choice of these 6 skills varies according to the specifics of the workplace, and their appropriation and use leads to a better use of existing resources, to increasing efficiency and labour efficiency, to improving working relationships, without significant investments. The current training programs for the education unit managers start to contain only incipient elements of this vast conceptual field concerning transversal skills.

In adult education, new information technologies are being used to help the trainees to acquire new competences, even transversal competences. Thus, it has been shown that by means of well-designed educational games, the percentage of acquisition of a certain cross-sectional competence by the trainee in the game can be determined and this is quite high. (Centre d'analyse stratégique, 2011).

4. Purpose of the Study

We recall in this regarding the interpersonal and organizational communication, the teamwork and team spirit, which are found in several adult education programs and even in some university specializations, at the initial university education level. It's good? Is too little? The obvious answer to these questions is positive. Yes, it is good, but it is too little bit. What to do?

Whether and only if we analyse the acquisition of communication skills, we will find that each person has to be able to communicate as effectively as possible with unknown people in different social contexts, i.e. at work, in public, family, or social settings. If, we should only analyse the acquisition of communication skills, we will find that each person should be able to communicate as effectively as possible with unknown people in different social contexts, such as at the work, in public, within family, or within occasionally social settings. On the other hand, starting from the hypothesis that every person knows how to communicate, both verbal and nonverbal, learning this even from the early education time, then some questions naturally rise: Why we do not know how to communicate as best we can in any situation we would be? Why do we not find the correct adaptation to the context and the real situation we would be in? For example, there is an "infinite" number of ways to say "Hello", to shake the hand of another person, to smile for someone, to offer a flower, to ask for a service from a colleague, to say "thank you!" etc. Interpersonal communication has a lot of dimensions, many of which are related to "education of the common sense", to the care and the respect for the one with whom "we have a brief discussion". The more currently have to be asked the previous question in the case of an educational unit manager, since this "person", whether he/she likes it or not he/she will, has to communicate effectively all the time, with all those who he/she comes into the contact by the nature of his /her function, such as the college teachers, the students and their parents, etc. Of course, there are many people who have very good natively communication skills and these can be improved substantially through a proper education both in the family and at the school. But are these communication skills sufficient such they can overcome all the problems of

social relations which are possible to meet? Is it necessary to supplement the communication skills with other additional competencies in communication to achieve a more effective social communication? Accepting such ideas, it would lead to introducing in the curricula, for any initial university specialization, some proper courses on the communication, on the teamwork etc. For example, why do we need to know the particularities of the teamwork? Just because no one works alone. We all work in a bigger or smaller team, and we are more or less efficiently within it, day after day, year after year. We were wondering, how many of us have we been or are being educated to work in a team?

Well, such questions and the like are also put in the case of the training of a manager of an education unit. The different forms of current education in the specialty of educational management must necessarily be complemented with transversal competency training modules that bring their added effectiveness into the desired behaviour to be exemplary for any educational unit manager. Is it hard to act on this? The current answer is that it is not easy to overcome certain resistances that occur at any change in the pedagogical design of training programs, which must begin and by accepting participation in this design activity by a mixt team of management specialists, of psychologists, of pedagogues, etc. This is the only right way to approach the design of training programs for the managers of the educational units such that will be ensured the professional competences at the quality and the level of the expectations and needs of the employers from the society for the graduates.

5. Research Methods

An important part of our paper is based on some results and findings of the project “Step 4-SFC”: *Compétences transversales: un pas de plus pour l'intégration en formation des Savoir-Faire Comportementaux en situation professionnelle»* ([www. www.opc-sfc.eu](http://www.opc-sfc.eu)), a Strategic Partnership project (ref. no. 2016-1-BE01-KA202-016271) financially supported by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme (Project “Step 4-SFC”, 2018). So, implicitly by the fact that the second author of our paper was a member of this project’s team, we have received some confirmations of this project related to the subject of soft skills.

6. Findings

It is normal to ask ourselves whether our study is topical today and, therefore, whether it has relevance in the conceptual field of education, especially university education. Of course, at the first part of our question, the competent and professional answer is found easy through some significant reviews of current literature. One of these reviews of literature is found in Cinque’s paper (2016), where we find other important issues related to this theme. Among these issues we highlight establishing a clear and common system of names and definitions for the concepts of hard skills (professional competence) and soft skills (transversal competences), classification and a taxonomy for the soft skills, a holistic approach for these, etc. All these issues are very important for the university education (European Commission, 2013), especial that at this educational level we have using already in the syllabus (the bachelor, master and doctoral education programs) implementation of the skills, in our one “philosophy” about the soft skills (Langa, 2015). It is true that the world of work is changing profoundly, at a time when the global economy is not creating a sufficient number of jobs (Cinque, 2016), but where are the educational specialists which may

change this? Well, through the project “Step 4-SFC”, we intended to take a “small step” in order to build a better democratic society.

7. Conclusion

More and more people are convinced about the benefits of the knowledge and the use of soft skills in the real life, and in some countries of the European Union, important steps have been taken in recent years to build up both the training programs and use these and the evaluation tools for one or more soft skills, which are specific to each job. But, in most EU countries, the legislation concerning soft competences is lagging behind on the recognition of them and their assessment methods. However, we cannot conclude without showing that through the national and European development programs the foundations are laid on pedagogical methods and means of training and assessment of the transversal competencies, also referred to as “non-technical”, along with the technical competences proposed. Considering the complexity of problems faced by an educational unit manager in his work, we strongly believe that he/she will be added with the knowledge of cross-cutting skills, then it leads to the efficiency of his / her regular activity and to the increase of the prestige of the educational unit in the community. In addition, it should be noted that once acquired transversal skills are useful in any other workplace by any individual. Moreover, new key words such as “life together”, “civism”, “morality”, “autonomy”, etc. have emerged from the current context of globalization and freedom of movement, and there are important questions related to them of the necessary skills, which are still very confusing. The whole history of citizenship education programs testifies to the oscillations of purpose and its meaning accompanies these terms (Becquet & Étienne, 2016). We believe that the subject of the importance and implications of transversal competences in almost all areas of social activity, starting with family, school, institutions, corporations, etc., and ending with the nation, the unions of nations etc., is just beginning. It's normal to be so! “The world” has the dynamics of change corresponding to its actual stage of knowledge and to its new technologies related to this. We all have to know how is better to live together in the new "technological" framework, and still within the same “Universe”.

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