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**A PATH FOR NEW TALENTS IN TEACHING: LEADERSHIP  
SUMMER ACADEMY**

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***Abstract***

The goal of this study is to put into emphasis the elements that bring value and quality into the educational services that are dedicated to underprivileged environments, where the Teach for Romania (TFR) teachers are running their activity. The lack of qualified teachers is a challenge that several European countries are facing. This research brings to surface aspects related to the training of trainees held in each Leadership Summer Academy by TFR, for all new talents that were recruited to be part of the educational system for a minimum 2 years period. Trainee-teachers are professionals who effectively achieve the desired results with their students. In our country, the educational system needs to allow professionals from various backgrounds to easily make the transition into teaching if demonstrating the necessary commitment and capacity to become high-quality teachers. The more variety exists in the teaching area, the more know-how will be present in schools and across the education system. At this time, Teach for Romania NGO is the only one which promotes and provides specialized trainings in order to sustain the reconversion process for the new entry teachers. Leadership Summer Academy (LSA) can generate together with the TFR's other approaches, an alternative pathway for the reconversion into the educational system, in order to develop a systemic change needed to realize the goal of an excellent and equitable education for all children.

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## 1. Introduction

Across all European countries, the main goal of education systems is to provide an equitable education to all students. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to bring all the stakeholders' effort together, due to the fact that it is quite difficult to find the best pathway for the teachers that are recruited, selected, trained, retained, and supported in every country (McKinsey, 2017).

In Romania, for the past five years, Teach for Romania is the only NGO that every summer best talents are selected and then, it provides a six weeks program in order to train a new generation of teachers.

### 1.1. The Leadership Summer Academy

The most powerful transformational experience for leadership and basic training in Romania, a program which develops leadership competences through an unique learning experience:

- about self-development
- about education/teaching,
- about the power of a community.

### 1.2. The trainee-teachers

The trainee-teachers have different backgrounds, including academic or professional areas other than the pedagogical field. They are recruited in order to bring added value in today's rapidly evolving social and technological environment and also to bring additional value to the labor market. Furthermore, the trainee-teachers come from all over the country, with different ages (Figure 01).



**Figure 01.** The third generation of trainee-teachers in their boot-camp – personal archive

## 2. Problem Statement

We often support instructors in creating teaching philosophy statements, and various resources exist to support their development (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). However, few resources are available to help in preparing educational leadership philosophy statements.

Leadership Summer Academy is a place full of resources for a transformational journey to the field of education and leadership. The main three objectives that TFR decided to implement for the trainee-teacher are:

- activate their leadership potential and make deliberate practicing on their personal strengths, working with personal saboteurs, self-reflection, integrating feedback, taking initiative;
- develop basic teaching abilities (planning, effective execution, assessment, classroom management);
- building the best way to learn and practice within TFR community.

Firstly, I will present the five skills that will be achieved by the end of the boot-camp training for every trainee.

- *Self-leadership:*

The ability to make transformations in yourself after an introspection and feedback process.

- *Resilience:*

The ability to adapt and recover from a difficult and/or long term situation.

- *Critical Thinking:*

The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication, all as a guide to belief and action (Scriven & Paul, 1987).

- *Social effectiveness:*

The ability to generate positive change and build partnerships with different people.

- *Strategic thinking:*

The manner in which people think about, view, and create the future for themselves and others (Bradford, 2018).

### **3. Research Questions**

From the TFR perspective of the training system the following main research question is how the team can put the objective and competence in the correlated activities, in order to have the best outcomes for all the trainees. For all three objectives we should find how can we lay the foundation of the reflection process and personal leadership development, how can we build a teaching and a working process with children from vulnerable communities and of course, how can we build the framework for direct involvement in transforming education in Romania.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to present Leadership Summer Academy's boot-camp, an instrument that belongs to Teach of Romania and that is active for 5 years already, as a positive example and effective method to attract and increase the number of new teachers, people with great professional experiences. In addition to that, the study's goal is also to present the range of activities and actions that help to build up that competences and achieve the professional objectives that the team of trainee teachers strikes for, generation by generation.

## 5. Research Methods

This study explores the research problem of the lack of the talents in education, being an exploratory fundamental research. In this study I used documents, facts or information already available and I analyzed subjects in order to make a critical evaluation of the instrument that TFR is using for the new talents in teaching. I had the opportunity to study all the documentation of the program, due to the fact that I'm already an alumni of it (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

## 6. Findings

The most important five competence were selected by the Training and Support Team in order to have a holistic vision implemented for all the participants. In the table below, there are are centealised the competence and the correlated action (Table 01).

**Table 01.** Leadership skills to be developed in the Leadership Summer Academy's boot-camp

Skills	Correlated competences
1. SELF LEADERSHIP	1.1. Self – awareness
	1.2. Self – reflection
	1.3. Self – improvement The ability to apply effective improvement strategies.
2. RESILIENCE	2.1. Determination The will to take action.
	2.2. Mindset and attitude in challenge The proactive approach of a situation.
	2.3. Action on challenge The ability to act in order to solve a problematic situation.
	2.4. Being resourceful The ability to effectively use the resources on hand.
3. CRITICAL THINKING	3.1 Analyzing and acquiring information The ability to understand an issue, including the cause-effect relationship.
	3.2 Giving and applying solutions The ability to find and apply solutions for the identified problems.
4. SOCIAL EFFECTIVENESS	4.1. Cognitive empathy How do you think about other people and/or connect with their situation/point of view
	4.2. Communication Two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings, but also create and share meaning.
	4.3. Collaboration The ability to work together with others towards shared goals, adapting to different working styles.
	4.4. Conflict management The ability to assertively get over a conflictual situation.
	4.5. Influence The ability to positively shape others' thinking and behavior.
5. STRATEGIC THINKING	5.1. Planning Anticipating the future, setting long term goals and ways to measure them, as well as strategies to accomplish goals, sequencing of activities and allocation of resources.
	5.2. Executing The ability to put into practice the planning instruments using the available resources to reach the set goals.
	5.3. Assessment The ability to monitor and evaluate the reaching of a set goal, in the beginning and at the end of an activity as well as ongoing activities.

## 7. Conclusion

Either if it is about the role of attracting new talents in teaching, or about developing teaching and leadership skills, Leadership Summer Academy is a boot-camp that offer a foundation for a mentality that is specific to future leaders in education: courage to face obstacles, desire to make a difference, resilience and self-analysis capacity, solution orientation.

### 7.1. Leadership Summer Academy as an instrument of attracting new talents in teaching

This year, the fifth edition of this program took place and the number of the participants is increasing, confirming the strategic objectives of the organization. Therefore, in 2018, LSA in numbers shows the following:

- 60 teachers,
- 400 students,
- 20 mentors (alumni, teachers)
- 6 tutors/trainers – TFR,
- 14 trainers - friends/partners

The efficiency of the program is given also by the very well-structured agenda of every day spent in the L.S.A. as it can be seen in the table 02 below:

**Table 02.** Agenda of a bootcamp day – session of 2018

Timetable	Activities
7.00 - 8.00	Breakfast
8.00 - 8.30	Mind up/sharpen the saw/senses
8.30 - 10.00	Session 1
10.00 - 10.30	Break
10.30 - 12.00	Session 2
12.00 - 12.30	Break
12.30 - 14.00	Session 3
14.00 - 15.00	Lunch
15.00 - 16.30	Session 4
16.30 - 17.00	Break
17.00 - 18.00	Session 5
18.00 - 19.00	Community/reflection circle
19.00 - 20.00	Dinner
20.00 - 22.00	Community building

### 7.2. Leadership Summer Academy as training for developing teaching and leadership skills

The evaluation process for the trainee-teacher that will remain in the educational system has 4 dimensions:

- Basic teaching
- Self - Reflection
- Integrating feedback for self-improvement
- Building relationships

Final decisions are made at the end of the assessment center with evaluators scoring individual exercises, then competencies, and then assessing the overall profile of each candidate and their potential to create impact. All selection activities are conducted by rigorously trained assessors, who have training related to building long term knowledge, self-guidance and observed practice. All programs also have quality control mechanisms, where difficult or questionable decisions can be reviewed by more experienced assessors. LSA is a transformational experience for all the participants and every year there are testimonials supporting this, appearing in online press (Figure 02).



**Figure 02.** Testimonials of two trainee-teachers in their boot-camp – personal archive

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