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THE IMPACT OF TRAINING PROGRAMS IN PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS- ASCERTANING STUDY

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Abstract

The need for professional development is evident from the beginning of the teaching career, because the teachers have to face the continuous professional challenges they encounter. In this respect, the didactic career goes through multiple transformations, being determined by changes in the educational, political, social, economic and axiological paradigms. In order to take into account the idea that the quality of the educational process is influenced by the construction of the teacher's professional identity and by the way he/she self-perceives his/her own responsibilities, we consider that continuous training is one of the best ways for professional development. In order to find out the importance of the teachers' training programs, we initiated an ascertaining study with practical implications. The objective of the present research is to identify the pre-school teachers' perception of the impact of continuous training programs on professional and personal development. In order to validate the hypothesis that there is a significant positive correlation between the degree of attractiveness towards the continuous training of the teachers and the impact of the continuous training programs on their personal life a sample of 102 teachers from pre-school education was used both in the urban environment, as well as in rural areas.

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1. Introduction

Living in a knowledge-based society, the development of the quality of education is ensured by the continuous training of teaching staff and their adaptation to the challenges of contemporary pedagogy. Quality education implies continuous training to cope with the changes in society and school. These changes require the adaptation of educational systems to the new economic, social, scientific and cultural realities, as well as the formation, within these systems, of the ability to regulate continuously and self-sustaining adaptability.

Continuous teacher training becomes a vital strategy to ensure the development of the quality of education, its role being obvious. Continuous training programs leave their mark on the format, so that the educator, continually trained, can raise the quality of education, because he has the power to anticipate and promote change by ensuring the effectiveness of education.

Starting from the premise that the educator or the teacher constantly perfects and evaluates the process of training and completing the qualities necessary for the man of tomorrow, he has to self-assess and improve incessantly.

2. Problem Statement

Continuous training and professional development programs, initiated and carried out by universities or various associations and organizations, are a real benefit in professional development.

In the educational system in Romania, continuous training is achieved through the acquisition of didactic degrees, but also through participation in various programs of continuous training. As regards continuous training, the Law of National Education in Romania (LNE, 2011) states that it includes professional development and career development and is based on progress in the field of education and training. As a consequence, the management of each educational unit designates a person responsible for the continuous training of teachers, who will manage the following coordinates: information, organization, counseling - advice, training, monitoring and evaluation.

Teachers' role is nowadays reshaped by the emphasis on the need to professionalize the teaching career, which involves assuming responsibilities for their own professional development in the perspective of lifelong learning. The implementation of changes in education systems in line with European documents defining competency as a result of learning represent new challenges for the teaching career by requesting new attributions and new skills in the design and development of didactic activities (Șerbănescu, Novak, & Constantin, 2013).

A coherent system of continuous training responds to teachers' needs by capitalizing on formal, non-formal and informal lifelong learning experiences through greater horizontal mobility in the teaching career by placing the teaching career in the European context of lifelong learning and supporting mobility both at initial and continuous training level.

The most impact-intensive training programs are carried out at national level and are in line with the ministry's policy strategy on EU policies in the field of teacher education and development.

The monitoring indicators applied to these programs aim at regulating the system for achieving the general objectives in the field of training and continuous development, namely:

- ensuring the training resources by didactic degrees for all teachers who meet the legal conditions for enrollment;
- providing resources to support teaching staff in the accumulation, within a five-years period, of the number of transferable credits;
- professional development of teachers by participating in the continuous training programs provided by authorized suppliers (Șerbănescu et al., 2013).

Analyzing the organization of the training programs for the didactic profession Șerbănescu (2011) considers that the analysis and adaptation to the legislative provisions does not automatically ensure a superior quality level regarding the finality of the initial teacher training programs and that a series of critical aspects of organizing the study program.

Even if there are concerns about lifelong learning at European level and many studies have been developed, it is difficult to identify their pragmatic effects. In some situations, the professionalism of the teaching profession is reformed in a disparate way in the sense that either reforming the initial training or the component of the continuous professional development, or the period of the professional traineeship, results in a lack of continuity and coordination between the three parts of the professionalization (Catalano, 2018).

In terms of lifelong learning programs, Hattie (2014), a researcher in the field of visible learning, believes that they "need to deal less with the promotion of a variety of teaching strategies and more on how beginner teachers can assess the impact that their teaching has on pupils" (p. 179).

The quality of the educational process is influenced by the construction of the professional identity of the future teacher, by the way he perceives and realizes his / her responsibilities in the teaching career.

3. Research Questions

What impact have the continuous training programs on teachers' professional and personal development? What are the most effective types of training programs that teachers would like to attend to?

4. Purpose of the Study

The objective of the research is to identify the pre-school education teachers' perception of the impact of continuous training programs on professional and personal development. At the same time, we proceed from the premise that the existence of a significant positive correlation between the continuous training of the teachers and those training programs that correspond to the expectations of the teachers, ensures the efficiency in the teaching career and contributes to the acquisition of competences leading to their professional and personal success.

5. Research Methods

In the present study, the questionnaire survey method was applied to a sample of 102 pre-school teachers. The data processing was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program. The collected data was the basis for descriptive and correlational analyzes.

The questionnaire was built and structured by formulating 11 items in line with the research theme. To measure as accurately as possible the teachers' attitudes towards continuous training we used the Likert Scale with five values.

The participating teachers were informed about our investigations, ensuring that their identity is not made public, their answers are confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

6. Findings

In the course of this study, 102 teachers from pre-school education were surveyed, 34.3% of respondents working in rural areas and 65.7% in urban areas.

Regarding the need for continuous training programs, 97.1% of the interviewed teachers are of the opinion that the continuous training activity is important for the teaching career and 2.9% do not agree with the necessity to participate in the continuous training. However, the present study highlighted that 100% of the surveyed teachers participated in at least one continuous training program over the last 3 years.

Reviewing the forms of training that correspond to the expectations of the teachers, we learned that 85.3% of the questioned teachers participated in methodical-scientific and psycho-pedagogical activities, probably the most accessible form of continuous training performed at the level of the educational unit, methodical committees, pedagogical circles, 59.8% of them participated in methodical-scientific sessions of communications, symposia, experience exchanges and educational partnerships, 15.7% participated in periodical specialized scientific information sessions in the field of education sciences, 18.6% attended courses organized by scientific societies and other professional organizations of the teaching staff, 59.8% attended specialized training courses, methodical and psycho-pedagogical courses, 30.4% have attended training courses to acquire new skills and qualities / functions, according to the specific training standards, 35.3% attended training courses for obtaining the didactic degrees, 5.9% participated in training and refresher courses for the management, guidance staff and control, according to specific programs.

From the results obtained it is found that many of the questioned teachers were involved in several types of continuous training. Thus, 1% of the questioned teachers participated in 13 categories of continuous training programs, 1% underwent 8 categories of continuous training programs, 1% underwent 7 categories of continuous training programs, 4.9% were involved in 6 categories of continuous training programs, 14.7% participated in 5 categories of continuous training programs, 20.6% participated in 4 categories of continuous training programs, 24.5% followed 3 categories of continuous training programs, 21.6% went through 2 categories of continuous training programs and 10.8% participated in a single category of continuous training program.

From the perspective of the efficiency of the skills acquired through the programs of continuous training in didactic activity, 36.5% of the teachers consider that they are very efficient, 52.9% consider that they are efficient and 10.9% consider that these skills are quite efficient.

The skills acquired by the teachers questioned through the continuous training programs are different, so 79.4% of the teachers have acquired methodological skills, 73.5% have acquired communication and interpersonal skills, 51% have acquired appraisal and self-appraisal skills, 35.3% have acquired psychosocial competences, 12.7% have acquired technical and technological skills and 25.5%

have acquired career management skills. And here we can see that, either through the same form or through different forms of training, the questioned teachers have acquired at least one type of skill.

As a result, 12.7% of the teachers acquired 5 categories of skills, 14.7% acquired 4 categories of skills, 25.5% acquired 3 categories of skills, 24.5% obtained 2 categories of skills, 21.6% acquired a single category of skills.

One item targeted expressing a position on the correlation between skills acquired through continuous training programs and their impact on personal life. Interpretation of the results shows that 31.4% of teachers agree with this, 61.8% agree and 6.9% did not even agree or disagree on such a correlation.

Through this study, we wanted to compare the way in which rural teachers and the urban environment relate to the need for continuous training. Thus, we took into account the following variables: number of types of courses, acquired skills, efficiency of training courses.

To see if there are differences in the variables we considered, we compared the two environments using the t test on independent samples. The results are presented in the Table 01. Comparison of the environments related to the need of training below in terms of: average-M, standard deviation-AS, N-participant number, t-comparison, significance-p.

Table 01. Comparison of the environments related to the need of training

| Variable | Environment | N | Average | AS | Comparisons |
|------------|-------------|----|---------|-------|-------------|
| Clasees | Rural | 35 | 2.60 | 1.241 | t=3.384 |
| | Urban | 67 | 3.82 | 1.866 | p<0.05 |
| Skills | Rural | 35 | 2.23 | 1.215 | t=2.633 |
| | Urban | 67 | 2.94 | 1.336 | p<0.05 |
| Efficiency | Rural | 35 | 4.23 | .690 | t=0.299 |
| | Urban | 67 | 4.27 | .617 | p>0.05 |

The average for the number of classes of urban educators ($m = 3.82$, $AS = 1.866$) is significantly higher ($t = -3.484$, $p < 0.05$) than the average for the number of urban educators in rural areas ($m = 2.60$, $AS = 1.241$). The average of the municipality ($m = 2.93$, $AS = 1.336$) is significantly higher ($t = 2.633$, $p < 0.05$) than the average for the number of types of skills of urban educators in rural areas ($m = 2.23$, $AS = 1.215$).

The average for the level of efficiency of the training courses for urban educators ($m = 4,27$, $AS = 0,617$) does not differ significantly ($t = 0,299$, $p > 0,05$) from the level of the efficiency of the training courses of rural educators ($m = 4.23$, $AS = 0,690$).

The results of the correlation study are described in Table 02. Results of the correlation study, so there is a significant positive correlation between the number of types of training courses (.488 **) and the number of types of skills acquired.

There is a significant positive correlation between the number of types of training courses (.421 **) and the level of impact on personal life.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 02. Results of the correlation study

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Classes | Pearson correlation | Classes 1 | Skills .488*** | Personal life .421*** |
| | SIG (2 tailed) | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 102 | 102 | 102 |
| Skills | Pearson correlation | .488*** | 1 | .320*** |
| | SIG (2 tailed) | .000 | | .0001 |
| | N | 102 | 102 | 102 |
| Personal life | Pearson correlation | .421*** | .320*** | 1 |
| | SIG (2 tailed) | .000 | .001 | |
| | N | 102 | 102 | 102 |

7. Conclusion

Following the interpretation of the data it was found that the continuous education of the pre-school teachers is considered as a necessity and a priority approach in the teaching career. As a result, the research results highlight the fact that the respondents consider the acquisition of skills, both professionally and personally, as a condition for continuous professional development.

Also, following the study, we can state that the background environment influences the participation of teachers in different training programs. Teachers in the urban area participate in a larger number of training programs for rural teachers and the average of their types of competencies is significantly higher than the teachers in rural areas.

The results of the research were satisfactory, as it shows us the desire of teachers to build and strengthen their teaching career with continuous quality training.

For the honesty of our approach, we must point out that due to the limited number of questioned teachers, research results cannot be generalized, and there is also the possibility for subjects to provide illusory information in relation to the subject of research.

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