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**EDUCATION FOR CHANGE THROUGH PROFESSIONALISM  
AND MOTIVATION FOR TEACHING CAREER**

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**Abstract**

The phenomenon of educational change has experienced a trajectory with ups and downs, taking place accumulations and strategic, methodological, attitudinal and behavioural revisions, which has led to the resizing and connection of education to the axiological frame of reference of modern society. The perspective of modern social demands challenges the Romanian school to an effort of developing and reconciling performance criteria with European educational requirements, the Romanian education system adheres to quality school, where the satisfaction of direct and indirect beneficiaries is the main objective. The analysis of educational change allows us to outline the belief that change in education is related to the basic links of this approach, namely the attitude, motivation, training, professionalism and involvement in generating change for both education officials and human resources at school and in the community. Knowing and being aware of the importance of all the aspects presented in this study could be, in our view, a diagnosis of the school reality and a way to streamline the practices of implementation and promotion of the new

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## 1. Introduction

Due to the dynamics of social development, the educational system becomes complex, and education must ensure, at a fast pace, directly but also indirectly, the progress of the entire society. Contemporary education has a prospective character and is the main tool to facilitate access to information, to transmit the products of human thought, with the status of knowledge that a community has accumulated. In the contemporary social context, when information and knowledge are the main factors of development, it is expected that the education system will make a prospective development effort and assign to the school the role of knowledge and responsibility for the normal development of society (Zoller & Bacskai, 2020).

It is very important how to organize knowledge and learning, the quality of educational activity and how to distribute education in society, therefore, in contemporary developed societies, school, as an institution of knowledge, has a fundamental position (Ciolan et al., 2021).

Training in the society of knowledge has the role of adapting learning to the requirements of society, to focus on the needs of the individual and his training, so that he can adapt and anticipate the course of society so that the future is not a surprise.

I believe that in modern society, school must be put in a position to re-signify reality and to have a real capacity for change. In the last three decades, the Romanian education systems have been subjected to a succession of divergent reform proposals, going through a process of significant restructuring. It manifested itself as one of the most dynamic social sectors, the staff of the pre-university education system clearly expressing their intention and will for change and for radical reform (Constantinescu, 2017). The reform process manifested today at the level of educational institutions aims at restructuring and conceptualization in medium- and long-term strategies, all these changes materialize at the school level, and are transposed into the educational reality. Under these circumstances, efficiency and competence become key issues, the education system must be in line with European standards of efficiency, competence and quality (European Commission, 2018; European Commission, 2019; European Commission, 2020). In order to achieve this goal, a systematic and objective assessment of the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of activities in relation to their objectives is needed (Kitchen et al., 2017); (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019).

## 2. Problem Statement

Valuing educational change can only be achieved if the change involved the creation of new values. This axiological aspect emphasizes the need for the existence of the deliberate action of transformation and formation of both individuals and the school organization. At the level of individuals, it is proposed to consolidate the pre-existing values and to create new values that will satisfy the efficiency criteria imposed by the educational act (Enceanu, 2019). After Cucuș (1996), “the axiological frame of reference is built in time, as a result of the assimilation of some value landmarks” and must be a flexible structure that allows the accumulation of new values or the restoration of others (p. 186). So, the fundamental feature of educational change must be related to the value criterion. It results that

educational change must be consistent with value and quality, it must start both inside and outside the school.

The educational reform makes available to the human resource in the education system the contents of the change offering the support, the resources, the strategies of change for the achievement of the objectives (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [CEDEFOP], 2019). The attempt to respond favourably to change requires, on the part of human resources but also of the school, openness to the demands of the context.

Teacher development strategies must be in line with organizational and individual development requirements. In this respect, there is a tendency to promote school-centred training programs based on staff development policies. Analysing this aspect at the educational level, we are talking here about the professionalization of the teaching career through continuous development and self-management, which implies the transition from the efforts of the institution to the assumption of professional development at the individual level. We can say that the process of continuous training is constantly changing, being in line with the policy of education development, with the national strategy for the development of the system of continual training of teachers.

There is a need for a permanent review of the teacher training model, a review that should be a priority both for the school and for the individual level, for each teacher. The development strategies within the continual training programs must respond equally to the requirements of the school but also to the individual training requirements. Thus, we can speak about the presence of two meanings, both staff development and professional development.

The perspectives of analysing the professionalization of teachers are multiple, because this process is a complex phenomenon, with multiple determinations and influences.

### **3. Research Questions**

Following the comparative analysis of the national reports on continual training, there is an increase in the participation of teachers in the training offer, which has determined that this objective should be a priority in educational policies. This implies the need to diversify the offer of continual development and the flexibility of the training programs, as well as the continuous maintenance of the close relationship between the training needs, the access, the valorisation, the impact of the training courses and the training offer (Council of the European Union [EUCO], 2019).

We can emphasize that, for the implementation and a good functioning of the educational change, we always need an x-ray of all the efficient and less efficient aspects at the level of professional training, aspects such as: the way teachers relate to professional training, identification of new needs, the motivation to participate in vocational training, the opinion of teachers about the quality of training programs, about their level of training from this point of view or the identification of difficulties encountered, etc.

Starting with Bogathy's (2002) observation, that organizations do not change for the sake of change, but because they are part of a larger development process and must react to new changes, requirements, opportunities that arise at the field level, in the process of adapting to the educational change, teachers must improve their competence degree, change their attitudes towards the organization

of the instructive-educational act. We emphasize once again the observation made by Golu (2004), that in general, "there can be no real change without a change of attitude (p. 160)".

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

This research is part of a much more complex study and highlights the fact that in the field of education the most effective changes are the participatory ones, when teachers are informed about the changes that are being prepared and a much more important aspect, which they emphasize in this study refers to determining teachers to participate in the analysis, decision and implementation of the necessary changes.

A first step involved analysing the availability, attitude, and value that teachers attribute to change, and we allowed ourselves to make predictions about involvement in promoting change. The basic condition of motivational strategies for involvement in promoting the educational reform was the extent to which teachers perceived change as a potential for personal and professional growth.

In the present research we have analysed to what extent the change and acceptance of the change in the education reform is significantly favoured by the active-participatory involvement of the teaching staff in activities of debate, analysis, and implementation of reforms.

#### **5. Research Methods**

In our study, subsequent analyses were performed, in a comparative pre-test and post-test relationship, as well as various inferences and meta-analyses, combining the quantitative paradigm with the qualitative one of the research, in relation to the purpose and hypotheses of the research.

We opted for the activity of debating and analysing the educational reform in order to develop to the teachers, participants in this training program, the capacity to perceive the complexity of the phenomenon of change, determining them to perceive, to form their own representations related to the phenomenon of change, as well as assessing the effects of educational reform. This strategy was the support to make the leap to a possible active behaviour towards the educational changes in the pre-university education system. Then, through the survey based on a questionnaire, which was made on the sample of teachers, we set out to capture of several aspects: the degree of participation in the professionalization of the teaching career, the characteristics of professional training.

The questionnaire was designed specifically for these studies. In the primary analysis of the questionnaire form, we analysed the items of each questionnaire in the group of experts (10 specialists in research methodology) to check to what extent the formulated items target or not the size or factors of the questionnaire and whether they are sufficient to refer to all its significant aspects ("content validity"). Analysing the degree of concordance among researchers, the items placed in different categories by different experts and the items with a high degree of dispersion were eliminated.

In the intermediate analysis stage we applied the questionnaire, resulting from the evaluation within the expert groups, on a group of subjects (300 students at teaching faculties) and we verified it by statistical analysis, standard deviation, internal consistency of the items, choosing for the final questionnaires only the items that meet the criteria of a normal distribution and obtained a good internal

consistency coefficient (Alpha Cronbach coefficient) after that, establishing the final form of the questionnaire that measures motivations of the attitude towards educational change.

Using the descriptive analysis of the data obtained from the sample of teachers, we captured several aspects regarding the degree of participation in the professionalization of teaching career, the characteristics of vocational training, the main fields of training, which are programmes providers, duration, acquired skills, needs for training, the factors that prevented teachers from participating in training, the strengths and weaknesses of professional conversion programs.

We applied a focus-group method in order to qualitatively analyse and deepen the information, to know the diversity of experiences and opinions on teachers' perceptions of the teaching profession and attitudes towards initial, continual education and motivation for professionalizing the teaching career. In order to carry out the activity as efficiently as possible, working groups with a medium degree of homogeneity were set up. The groups consisted of 5 teachers: 4 teachers - students in the program Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education or Master of Educational Management in the first year, 1 teacher - mentor of pedagogical practice, all being directly involved and interested in the issue of initial and continuing training. The moderator - the researcher, being trained in content issues and on managing the dynamics of the group, ensures the ethical requirements.

The topic of discussion was the main educational reforms in the pre-university education system, as well as relevant issues in the system.

General questions, funnel questions, objective questions, open-ended questions were used to generate debate and valuable judgments. Only 6 issues (questions) were discussed in a single focus group meeting.

It was set up a schedule for the meetings, they were organized within the pedagogical practice activity, at school or in the applications kindergarten. The recording of the results by audio recording was done by another coordinating teacher of pedagogical practice.

The research studies respect the ethical principles of the research as well as aspects of confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in the investigative study. The methods and procedures were used constructively, without inducing frustrating situations for the respondents, the interpretation of the results being made so as not to stigmatize or discriminate against the teachers participating in this study.

## **6. Findings**

The success of this study is due to the awareness of the need for training and motivation to accept the change of professional routines and the development of new skills.

The results highlight the following:

- i. There are no statistically significant differences in the  $p > 0.05$  threshold depending on the age variable in terms of professional training satisfaction [ $t(598) = 1.701$ ,  $p = 0.089$ ]. The absence of a difference, depending on the age of the teachers, in terms of satisfaction with vocational training illustrates that teachers participate to a large extent in the professionalization of the teaching career in the pre-university education system.

- ii. There are no statistically significant differences in the  $p > 0.05$  threshold depending on the age variable in terms of motivation for training [ $t(598) = 0.156, p = 0.876$ ]. The absence of a significant difference, depending on the age of the respondents and the comparison of the averages for this variable illustrate the presence of motivation for the training and professionalization of the teaching career.

From the descriptive analysis of the respondents' answers to the items related to vocational training courses the first finding, which emerged from the data analysis, gives us an overview on the degree of teachers' participation in continual education programs (participation rate 80.8% - participation at least once in the last 3 years).

The interest in continual vocational training, as well as the high frequency of participation in such programs were mentioned by the teachers participating in this study and in the group interview. The results illustrate that teachers assume in the highest degree the professionalization of the teaching career. The possible explanation of these results is that the respondents took responsibility for their own training and development, they were aware that the efficiency of the school as an organization is ensured by the professionalism of teachers.

Analysing the wide range of courses, which were attended by teachers and corroborating with the information obtained (training arguments) through the qualitative methods used, we could emphasize that the offer of vocational training is diverse and mainly develops skills and abilities. An aspect that derives from the types of programs that the respondents followed illustrates the fact that the training programs respect the changes promoted by the reform and manage, in the opinion of the teachers, to cover most of the personal and professional development needs of the teachers. Respondents reported that they felt, each time, the tendency of trainers to develop an intrinsic motivation towards training, even to the point of cultivating a desire to professionalize teachers.

Out of the category for continual education programs, the highest share was in the training programs held once every 5 years with the type of training average program (40.7%), followed by modular programs carried out through non-disciplinary internships (23, 5%). These courses are part of the category of compulsory training programs, to which credits are allocated.

The intense orientation towards the category of professional training programs held once every 5 years is due to the diverse offer but also to the scores (credits) valid for 5 years. Most respondents argued the options (in the interview) stating that they preferred to participate mainly in compulsory training courses, in order to draw up the score, and then in the optional ones from which they chose at least two.

It is also noted that teachers know their rights and obligations in relation to continual education, they have the correct information about the categories of programs in which they can obtain credits.

We got significant correlations between satisfaction with continuing education, satisfaction with quality in education, and as well as their size.

The obtained results highlight the fact that the active-participatory involvement of the teaching staff in activities of debate, analysis, implementation of reforms leads to a significant increase of the satisfaction with the professional training and, in the case of the teachers, of the motivation for the professional training.

It is found that the teaching staff, who were aware of the importance of continual education, attaches great importance to the professionalization of the teaching career both through continual education programs and through professional conversion programs. For these teachers, every opportunity is important, they take responsibility for their own training and development, being interested in the development strategies of the school organization. We could conclude that at the level of these teachers there is a positive and intrinsic motivation for professionalization.

We also analysed whether participating in the “education reform” analysis will lead to increased motivation in line with educational change or not. The results showed that most of the respondents participated in the professional training courses and have this motivation and desire for continuous improvement. One of the possible explanations for the degree of participation could be the fact that teachers are conditioned by obtaining a number of 90 credits, to which we could add the interest for the topic of certain continuing education courses.

There was also an increase in motivation on the components of power motivation, achievement motivation, affiliation motivation, organizational development motivation. The possible explanation for the intensification of these types of motivation may revolve around the idea that the activity of debating and analysing the dimensions of educational reform has made teachers to review their individual qualities, intensifying and / or strengthening their charisma, strength, persuasion, the capacities of efficient communication and collaboration, the capacities of development and professionalization, the aspirations to reach the standards of excellence both from a personal point of view and from the point of view of the school organization.

## **7. Conclusions**

Through the plurality of analysis perspectives, the present research reconfirmed the fact that the continuous training, through professionalization programs of the teaching staff from the pre-university education system is a very complex phenomenon. The most important conclusions of the survey on in-service teacher training are set out below:

We could say that the acquisition of certain skills in the past does not exclude the desire to develop them in the future. Teachers recognize the need to deepen the acquired skills, from where we can deduce the permanence in the formation and development of certain skills (information and communication technologies, conflict management, skills for working with children with special needs, counselling skills, etc.). This aspect allows us to make the statement that the degree of receptivity of teachers regarding lifelong learning is increased, teachers being open to the new, to implement effective change.

In other words, it is found that the teaching staff, participating in the training program, attaches to great importance to the professionalization of the teaching career, the access to continuous training programs represents for the respondents an opportunity for both personal and professional development.

We have been able to demonstrate that the value of educational change must be achieved after a high-quality change has been registered in terms of attitudes, behaviours and educational practices.

The professionalization of the teaching career must remain a concern of both the school organization and its members, so that the trained human resources must be able to cope with the requirements of the position, the status they hold.

It was found that at the educational level, the principle of change by action has proven to be the most effective for real change, because it capitalizes on the motivational factor, the attitude factor develops skills for planning and designing change, which require creativity and innovation. Promoting change from the inside out was meant to ensure real change that achieves the imperative “change through and for action”, which influenced educational self-development and at the same time directed towards self-knowledge and self-assessment, developing one's own skills, individual career planning (Bratanu, 2021).

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