



TO ASSESS THE EFFICIENCY OF THE WAY IN WHICH THE PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL STUDIES PROGRAMME IS ORGANISED IN UNIVERSITIES, FROM A CURRICULAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE POINT OF VIEW IN ROMANIA

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Abstract. We present in this article the results pertaining to a section of a much wider research, having as main object the Romanian teaching professional's initial training process by means of study programs organized within universities. We have chosen the section referring to factors involved in the initial training system on how to organize a programmed of psycho-pedagogical studies at universities in terms of curriculum and administrative organization. Research objectives: to assess the efficiency of the way in which the psycho-pedagogical studies programmed is organized in universities, from a curricular and administrative point of view; to assess the influence of teaching practice on streamlining the teaching career training programmed; to assess the contribution of the students' mobility to creating the set of professional competences. The research has an observational – improvement character. Through the questionnaire-based assessment we aimed at investigating the opinions of all the factors involved in the initial training system. The results emphasize both the opinions of the trainers as well as the opinions of the beneficiaries of the training system, the following components: the qualitative assessment of the training programmed; assessing the training programmed structure; the students' and teaching staff mobility. Research results have shown that the presence of initiation elements of students in educational research is likely to increase their concern for the development of professional skills and expanding student's mobility contribute to professional competence standards for the teaching profession provided.

Keywords: initial training; teaching career; curriculum and administrative organization.

1. Introduction/Problem Statement

We have considered useful to present in this article the results pertaining to a section of a much wider research, having as main object the Romanian teaching professionals initial training process by means of study programs organized within universities. We have chosen the section referring to factors involved in the initial training system on how to organize a programme of psycho-pedagogical studies at universities in terms of curriculum and administrative organisation based on the idea that human resources development is the first condition of education in the development of quality higher education.

2. Purpose of Study

2.1. Research objectives

- To assess the efficiency of the way in which the psycho-pedagogical studies programme is organised in universities, from a curricular and administrative point of view.
- To assess the influence of teaching practice on streamlining the teaching career training programmes.
- To assess the contribution of the students' mobility to creating the set of professional competences.

2.2. Research hypotheses

- We assume that the teaching practice of the future teaching staff is insufficiently used in the process of creating professional competences.
- The expansion of students' mobility contributes to creating the set of professional competences.

3. Methods

3.1. Research methodology

The research, performed in the interval 2010-2011, has an ascertained-improvement character. We performed this research taking the following main directions: investigating the trainers' opinions, on the one hand, and those of these training programmes beneficiaries, on the other hand.

As for the trainers, they represent the teaching staff in the departments responsible for training the future teachers within the specialised universities. As for the beneficiaries, in the research they target both the students – as future beneficiaries of psycho-pedagogical training, and the practitioners in education – novice teaching staff.

From a methodological perspective, as survey technique, we used the questionnaire-based survey of the subjects in the four target groups: academic teaching staff, students and novice teachers.

Through the questionnaire-based assessment we aimed at investigating the opinions of all the factors involved in the initial training system. We designed the survey tools taking into account the identification of problems and solutions related to the curricular and administrative organisation of the psycho-pedagogical studies programme.

We elaborated tools for each of the three categories of factors involved. From a methodological point of view, in designing the questionnaire we tried, as much as possible, in the case of common objectives, to formulate common means of surveying (common questions) the categories of subjects they address. A first advantage of this endeavour is the possibility to compare the opinions of the categories of subjects involved.

Using the three tools, we aimed at retrieving information specific to the represented target group, as follows: Through the questionnaire administered to the novice teaching staff in pre-university education we aimed at: the opinion of the teaching staff on the initial training system in Romania, with reference to the organisation of theoretical and practical training (aimed at the teaching practice), as well as on the obstacles affecting the training quality. The questions aim at opinions on the number of hours allocated and the way in which the teaching practices is performed in the initial training programme; Through the questionnaire administered to students and academic teaching staff we asked for opinions on: the efficiency of the organisation of the psycho-pedagogical studies programme in universities for the teaching profession certification, in terms of the means of enrolling/informing the students, the possibility to participate in all the activities proposed within the studies programme, the performance of the teaching practice activities, etc.

3.2. Surveyed population

We administered the survey tools to representative samples of the three target populations. Thus, the research was performed along the following three samples: the sample of novice teachers in pre-university education, comprising 492 subjects; the sample of students, comprising 569 subjects; the sample of academic teaching staff within TTD, comprising 196 subjects.

3.3. Sample validation

Consequently, all the 3 samples are representative of the target population: TTD students, academic teaching staff within TTD and novice teaching staff in the pre-university education.

The diversity of structures resulting from the analysis of the target population features allows us to state that the results (information/opinions) obtained on the basis of the questionnaire reflects the opinions of the diversity of situations/ conditions/ socio-educational environments/training levels etc.,

which characterise the education system. The results emphasise both the trainers' opinions and those of the training system beneficiaries.

4. Findings

4.1. The qualitative assessment of the training programme

From the documentary analysis, it resulted that there is a correct distribution of the choice for subject matters studied within the TTD, which fill the need for creating the set of competences that the teaching staff requires at the beginning of a career.

Most of the surveyed subjects considered the teaching staff initial training programmes to be modern and efficient. The qualitative assessment, which pointed to the imminence of their harmonisation with the European tendencies, was made by one fifth of the subjects.

Table 1. The teaching staff's initial training programmes

1	They are modern, qualitative and adequate to social needs;	30.6%
2	They do not need radical changes, but they need to be improved permanently;	33.7%
3	They are improved continuously and yield good results, but it is necessary for them to be comparable and compatible with the European/international tendencies;	36.7%
4	Our training programmes proved to be efficient and qualitative; yet, it is time to elaborate an ample but gradual reform which will contribute to modernizing the national education system and to harmonising it with the European/international tendencies;	20.4%
5	They are old and there is an urgent need for a curricular reform.	1.0%

As for the opinion on the distribution of the subject matters to be studied during the training interval, it was requested in the students' questionnaire. The analysis of the answers indicates highly favourable opinions, supporting once again the information emphasised by the documentary analysis. Seven out of ten students consider that the distribution of subject matters along the study programme is balanced. Other 20% consider the distribution in the first part of the modules to be balanced, whereas the schedule is overloaded in the final year.

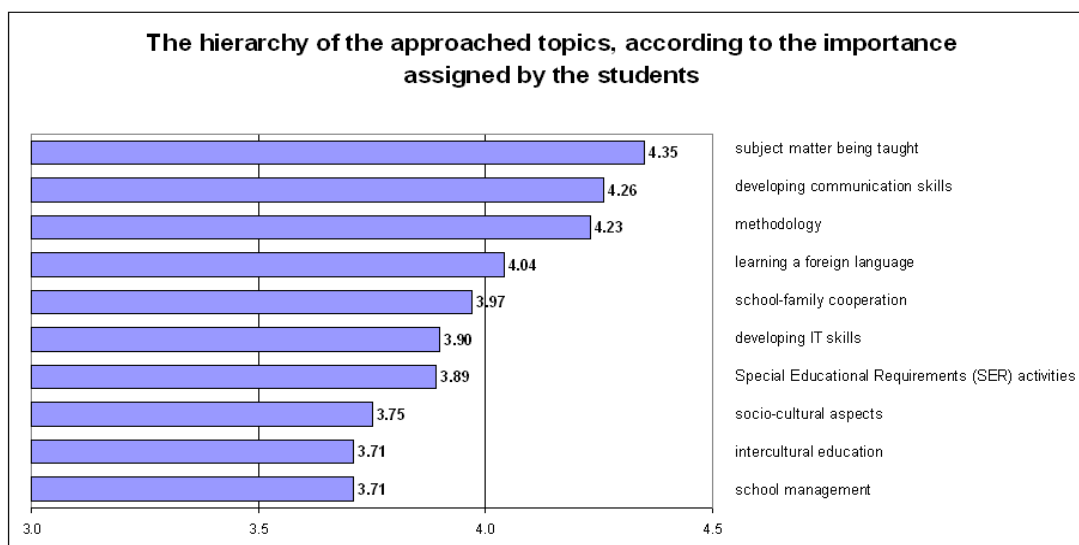


Figure 1. The hierarchy of the approached topics, according to the importance assigned by the students

The qualitative assessment of the training system was completed by the presentation of the deficiencies or obstacles in operation.

In the teaching staff opinion, the students' lack of motivation is the most important obstacle, followed by the lack of financial resources. Aspects related to the human resources fill the last position in terms of the problems facing the training system, this problem being considered easy to overcome.

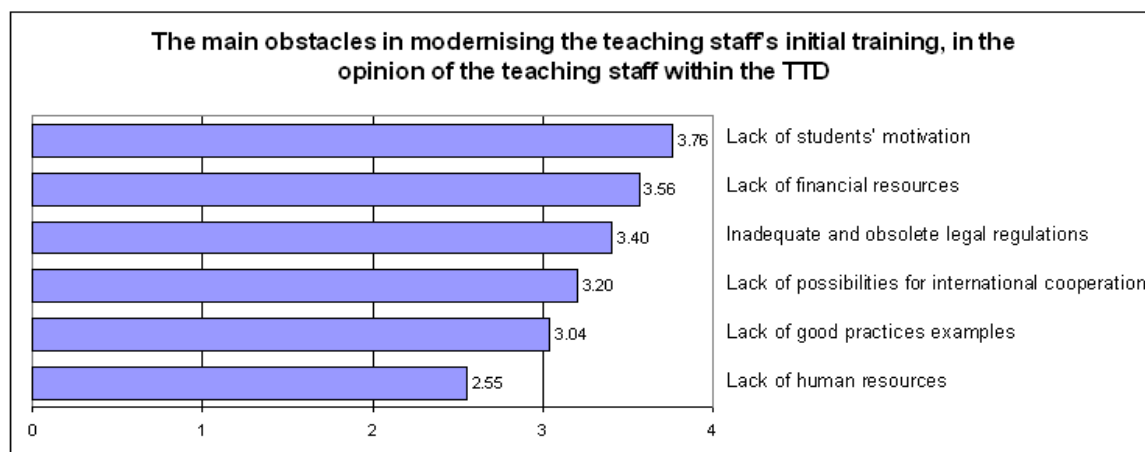


Figure 2. The main obstacles in the modernising the teaching staff's initial training, in the opinion of the teaching staff within the TTD

Similar to the opinion expressed in direct connection with assessing the teaching practice within the initial training programme, doing the teaching practice seems to be the most significant deficiency of the training programme. Adding the answers of those who indicated one of the last three choices, we obtain almost three quarters of the subjects who complain about the insufficiency of teaching practice.

An important percentage in identifying the obstacles within the initial training programme is allocated to the traditional and mainly theoretical approach.

Analysing the answers to the last two items brought into discussion and considering the information provided by the documentary analysis, we notice that, in the teaching career initial training programme, there are no deficiencies in choosing and distributing the subject matters to be studied, but in the manner in which they are done in practice. Thus, complaints are rather made about the teaching practice classes that are either not done or done poorly and, to a less but worrying extent, about the traditional and mainly theoretical approach to providing the training.

4.2. Assessing the training programme structure

The assessment of the ratio allocated to practical training was required simultaneously from current and future teachers. They were asked to assess the distribution of the training classes in terms of the ratio of theoretical training provided by the university to the practical training.

As for the teaching practice, most students said they were satisfied with the number of allocated hours. Over half of the students consider the number of hours to be sufficient, and in addition to them 22% of the surveyed subjects consider the number of hours stipulated in the curriculum to be sufficient, but complain about the possibility to cover them entirely. Yet, two out of ten students are dissatisfied with the ratio of teaching practice in the curriculum.

The opinion of the teaching staff at the beginning of their teaching career shows that the teaching practice in the training interval was insufficient. Only a third of the subjects consider the number of allocated hours to be sufficient, but more than half consider that the number of hours was insufficiently planned, and that deficiencies in the actual performance were added.

The difference between the students' opinions and those of the teaching staff regarding the number of hours allocated to the teaching practice may have at least two explanations: the lack of experience on the part of the students who are not aware of how important practice is in performing teaching activities as compared to the teaching staff who must face the classroom reality or the change made to the curriculum in 2008, materialised, as it results from the documentary analysis, in doubling the number of teaching practice hours as compared to the previous interval. Here we take into account the fact that most novice teachers who were surveyed were trained within the TTD before 2008.

As for the teaching practice performance, information was requested about the practice programme structure.

The fact that the percentages associated with the students' answers are higher than those associated with the novice teachers' answers in three out of four items may also be associated with an increase in quality within the teaching staff initial training system. Yet, it is worrying that the percentage associated with the students' answers is lower than the one associated with the novice teachers' answers in the item regarding the performance of certain teaching activities under the coordination of the practice coordinator. This result may be interpreted, in a pessimistic scenario, as a tendency to move the teaching practice towards formalism.

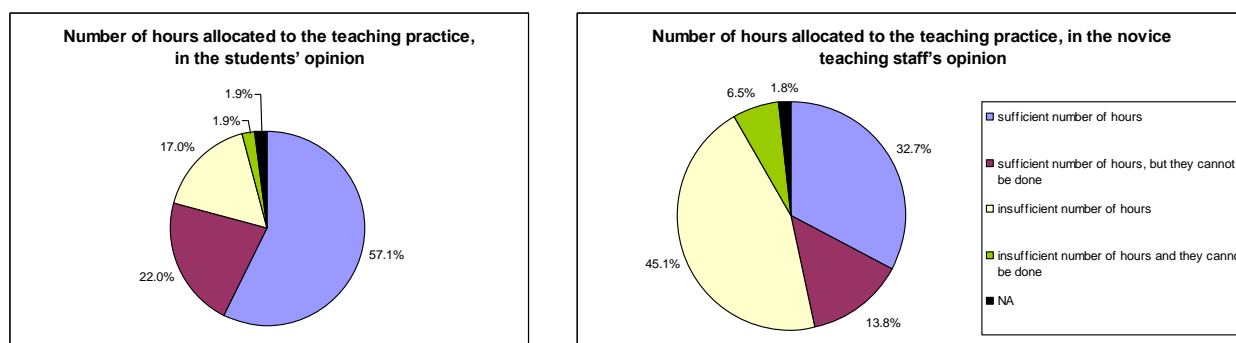


Figure 3. Number of hours allocated to the teaching practice, in the student's and novice teaching staff's opinion

A practical aspect of the training module, without specifically being included in the teaching practice programme, is the students' involvement in initial training quality assessment actions. According to the answers provided by the academic teaching staff, in many education institutions there are internal mechanisms monitoring the teaching career initial training quality, developed for one or several components.

4.3. The students' and teaching staff mobility

Contributions to the teaching career training are also made by the students' or teaching staff participations to training modules in the country or abroad.

As it results from the documentary analysis, the National Education Law No. 1/2011 stipulates that the practical training within the teaching master programme may also take the form of an internship abroad within a European Union programme – component dedicated to the teachers' initial training – certified through the Euro pass Mobility document.

The academic teaching staff and the students were asked about the importance of mobility. Among them, the students are the potential beneficiaries of training scholarships in other countries.

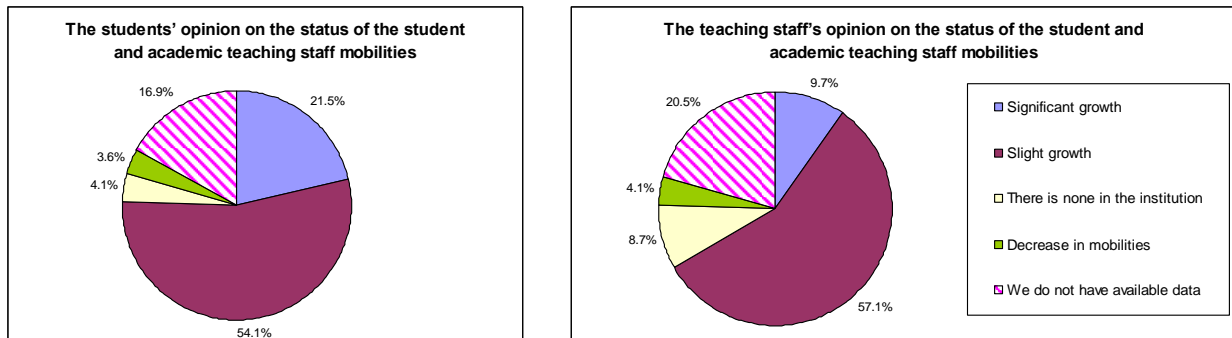


Figure 4. The students' and teaching staff's opinion on the status of the student and academic teaching staff mobility's

In fact, according to the answers, we notice a significant growth in student and academic staff mobility's, more numerous appreciations coming from the students.

The novice teaching staff's questionnaire also requests information about the possibility to get equivalencies for courses/modules etc., previously completed by the ones requiring the training course.

Although from the documentary analysis it results that equivalency is regulated by MO 4316/2008, modified and completed in 2010 and that they are operational in the case of the academic studies graduates in the bachelor/master field Education Sciences and of those who have psycho-pedagogical studies programme graduation certificates and who are going to or have graduated from academic studies also in domains other than those for which they have the teaching certificate, and observing the specific regulations, the answers to the questionnaires do not entirely confirm this fact.

Yet, at the sample level, only 3.6% of the subjects did not confirm the possibility for equivalence, and 3 subjects (1.5%) overtly excluded the possibilities for equivalence at institution level.

It may be stated that the research hypotheses were confirmed, as follows: the pedagogical practice of the future teaching staff is insufficiently used in the process of creating professional competences, expanding the students' mobility contribution to the overall creation of professional competences stipulated by the standards for the teaching profession.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Research results have shown that the presence of initiation elements of students in educational research is likely to increase their concern for the development of professional skills and expanding student's mobility contribute to professional competence standards for the teaching profession provided.

Thus, we believe that our research, both by problems treated, and the results reached may contribute to the modernization of higher education, promoting scientific research in Europe. Teacher training in higher education institution, to include master level should play a key role in the modernization of university policies.

Scientific research in the field of teacher education should also represent a priority of national and international educational policies.

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