

CAREER PROFESSIONALIZATION, PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN AN ORGANIZATION

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Abstract: *Recruitment and integration at work are not enough if the organization "does not project a long-term development design for each of the employees", combining personal goals with those of the organization. Throughout his career, the employee undergoes several stages of development and professionalization. Starting from the professional development analysis in their own company, organizations face problems regarding the development and evolution of the employee's career. It is not wrong to make the statement that the responsibility is shared between the individual, as the main responsible person for their development, and the organization, which through individual careers' progress helps optimize organizational life, performance and sustainable development. The objective of the focus group research as investigation method was to outline the perception of the teaching staff in pre-university education in Dambovită on the "professionalization" model of the teaching career. The sample of the teaching staff in pre-university education, high school, on which the focus group research was conducted, was made up of 9 teachers with different expertise, seniority and qualification levels in education so as to ensure representativity and lead to pertinent conclusions with regards to skills which teachers in pre-university education should have in order to practice the teaching profession.*

Keywords: *competences, personality features, professionalization, professional standard, teaching career.*

Jel Classification: *M530, J24.*

1. Introduction

The teacher is a professional as he or she practices this occupation after having taken a speciality education which gives him or her right to teach. This refers to a set of specific competences which provide the teacher with the abilities needed to efficiently perform instructive and educative activities. Professionalization is therefore approached as a redefinition of the competences used in deploying quality educational practices (Onuț, 2011).

Most countries include in guidelines elaborated for initial training of teaching staff a list of competences which they have to acquire. Norwegian regulations on teaching staff training rely on the European Qualification Framework and stipulate what candidates must know, understand and be able to undertake under the form of "learning results". In Belgium (Flemish Community), there are two elements which detail the basic competences for debutant teachers and one element for experienced teachers. In Ireland, in addition to the guidelines for providers of initial training for teaching staff, there are also the professional conduct codes for teachers. In opposition, in Estonia, Latvia, Holland, Great Britain and Romania, the competence frameworks are elaborated as professional standards for teaching staff. In Romania there are different standards for each teaching position (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

In Europe, the persons who aspire to become teachers attend a licensed academic programme, with or without master's degree included, depending on the level: pre-elementary, lower secondary, upper secondary, post-secondary. The alternative routes to become a qualified teacher – such as short-term re-professionalization programmes for employed people who want to change their career - are not very popular in the European countries.

Throughout Europe admission to an initial training as a qualified teacher is regulated by general requirements regarding access to high or tertiary education and not by criteria or examinations specific to future career. Only a third of the European countries have in force specific selection methods such as skills tests or interviews on the motivation of the candidates to become teachers. Over the past years cooperation between universities has consolidated in terms of students' admission to initial training as qualified teacher so as to ensure more consistently the minimal requirements provided for admission to specific study programmes, as indicated in the Table no. 1 below.

Table no. 1. Selection methods/criteria for access to initial teacher education. Pre-primary, primary and general (lower and upper secondary) education, 2011/12

Certificate of final examination of upper secondary education			X	XX	X
Performance at upper secondary level	X		X	X	X
A general entrance examination to tertiary education			X	X	
Performance at bachelor level	X	X	X	X	
A (written or oral) examination specifically for admission to teacher education					X
An interview specifically for admission to teacher education					X
Literacy and numeracy tests					
	DK	PT	RO	SK	FI

Source: made by authors with data from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013.

X - Decided at institutional level

XX - Decided at the level of the education authority

Initial, pedagogical training in Romania had many forms of which we can mention: training teachers who work in pre-school and primary school, training specialist subject teachers, training of specialists in educational sciences. Obtaining a teaching position depends on completing a specialized degree (licence and master level) and pedagogical training which can be undergone in parallel or subsequently, prospective teachers being required to go through the stage of pedagogical training organized by the Departments of Teacher Training (DTT). Certification for the teaching profession can be achieved at two levels, namely: a) Level I: university graduates can apply for teaching positions at pre-university level provided they have previously accumulated a minimum of 30 transferable credits in a pedagogical studies program; b) Level II university graduates can apply for teaching positions at pre- and university level provided they have previously accumulated a minimum of 60 transferable credits in a pedagogical studies program, and they have obtained a master's degree in their specialty field.

The investigative process regarding the further professional development of the teaching career is based on the utilisation of the qualitative investigation methods.

1.1. Documentary analysis

Through this method the respective regulations, reports and studies referring to the professionalization of the teaching career have been studied (teaching profession's standards, teaching profession's competences, methodologies, occupational standards), as well as studies and analyses regarding the teaching profession in Europe, done by the European Commission/EACEA/Euridice, Teacher Professionalization and Teacher Commitment, A multilevel analysis, national center for education statistics, etc. All of these have led to the following conclusions:

- The competences of the teaching profession are not limited only to the basic teaching activity, which is based on new knowledge
- The ideal of teaching profession is made up of not only standardized, but also unstandardized competences
- The specialized competences do not limit only to knowledge gained during University development, they have to be extended during the professional and personal development.
- The occupational standard of the teaching profession requires modifications as far as introducing a new set of performance criteria is concerned, one adapted to novelty and change.

1.2. The objectives and the hypothesis

In order to identify options of teaching staff in pre-university education in relation to professionalization of the teaching career, especially for initial training, focus group research (Krueger and Casey, 2005) was used as an investigation method. Our investigative demarche materialized in one focus group with teachers from secondary school, from Economic High School from Târgoviște. The focus groups were constructed based on the following selection criteria: a - relevant experience in relation to the research topic; b – subjects' homogeneity: status, occupation, education level, etc., which allowed free expression and highlighted a range of different experiences in this occupational category.

The objectives focused on collecting data concerning experiences, beliefs, values and attitudes related to:

- Identification of the perception of persons interviewed on the “professionalization” of the teaching career.
- Statement on the role and the importance of the Professional Standard for the teaching career.
- Identification of the competences specific to teaching profession.

The qualitative research about the professionalization of the teaching career started from the following *hypotheses*:

- The professionalizing of teaching career involves activities based on rules and constraints.
- The professional Standard for the teaching career is a unitary model based on general skills.
- The professionalization of the teaching career outgrows the vocational stage, and is based on competences and knowledge gained during the Initial Formation – Continuous Formation path
- The performance of the teacher relies on self confidence and trust in the individual's professional competences, on solving problems, tensed or conflictual, and on the ability to manage typical or atypical situations

1.3. Selecting the Sample

In Dâmbovița county there are 30 technological, theoretical and vocational highschools. The number of teachers who teach at these schools is 1248 (<http://statistici.INSSE.ro>). Ion Ghica Economical College in Târgoviște is a prestigious school with 81 teachers, out of which more than half already have an expertise on various activity domains (perfecting teaching staff report). Their repartition on curricular areas is shown in the table below:

Table no. 2. The repartition of teachers on curricular areas

No.	Curricular area	Number of teachers
1.	Technological	37
2.	Language and communication	17
3.	Mathematics and Sciences	10
4.	Man and Society	17

Source: made by authors using data from the school statistics

The status of the continuous improvement, divided by subjects, for the 81 teachers is represented in the table below:

Table no. 3. Continuous improvement at Ion Ghica Economical College

No.	Subject	No grade	Final teaching exam	2nd Grade	1st Grade	PhD
1.	Romanian Language and Literature	1		3	1	2
2.	English			3	1	
3.	French		1	1	2	1
4.	German	1				
5.	Mathematics				6	
6.	Physics				2	
7.	Chemistry			1	1	
8.	History			1	1	
9.	Geography				3	
10.	Humanistic and Social Sciences	1	1	1	1	2
11.	Sport			1	1	
12.	Religion		1		2	
13.	Biology				1	
14.	Technological area	5	9	3	17	3

Source: made by authors using data from the school statistics

Based on the years of practice, the status of the 81 teachers is:

Table no.4. The teachers status based on the years of practice

Subject/years of practice	1-6	6-10	10-14	14-18	18-22	22-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	>40
Romanian Language and Literature	1		4					1		1
English		1	1	1	1					
French	1		2	1						1
German	1									
Mathematics				1	1		2			2
Physics					1		1			
Chemistry			1			1				
History				1	1					
Geography			1	1	1					
Humanistic and Social Sciences	2		2	1						1
Sport		1						1		
Religion				2			1			

Biology					1					
Technological area	8	4	5	5	2		4	1	7	1

Source: made by authors using data from the school statistics

The situation of the transferrable credits, obtained attending accredited perfecting programmes in 2016, at a college level, is presented in the table below:

Table no. 5. The transferrable credits' situation for 2016

Subject	Number of transferrable credits in 2016					
	0	5-30	30-55	55-80	80-100	>100
Romanian Language and Literature					1	
English					1	
French				1		1
German						
Mathematics		2				1
Physics						1
Chemistry						
History				2		
Geography						1
Humanistic and Social Sciences						1
Sport						
Religion						
Biology			1			
Technological area		7	1		2	8

Source: made by authors using data from the CCD statistics

The recruiting of participants to the focus group took place in two stages:

- interviews face to face, applied by the interview moderator
- over-the-phone interviews checking recruiting criteria and confirming the participation to the group sessions.

The sample of the teaching staff in pre-university education, high school, on which the focus group research was conducted, was made up of 9 teachers with different experience in education, as shown in the table 6 below.

Table no. 6. Teaching staff sample

No.	Specialisation	Seniority in education	Qualification Level	Position
1.	Economic, administrative, trade and services/Trade and services	36	PhD	Manager, CNDIPT inspector
2.	Foreign Languages	3	Permanent	Teacher
3.	Romanian Language and Literature	12	II	Teacher
4.	History	17	II	Teacher
5.	Economic, administrative, trade and services/Trade and services	17	I	QA Manager, curriculum author
6.	Economic, administrative, mail services	0	debutant	Teacher
7.	Philosophy	12	I	Deputy Manager in charge of projects and programmes

8.	Religion	27	Permanent	Teacher
9.	Chemistry	10	II	Teacher

Source: made by authors using data from the focus-group sample

In selection of the teaching staff account was taken of the curriculum, seniority in education and improvement level attained. Optimal combination of teaching experiences was therefore ensured. I took into consideration the weight of different curricular areas in the teaching staff's total, as well as the qualification level, the number of years spent in the teaching process and the perfecting grade achieved by each individual. I took into consideration the weight of curricular areas in the total number of teachers, the qualification level, the number of years of practice in the teaching process and the perfecting grade achieved by the individuals. Due to the chosen subject – Professionalization of the teaching career in the pre-university system – a homogeneous group has been formed, through the attendance of various teachers, as table 6 shows.

1.4. Built character

The entire social context, in which the data was collected, has been built as such: the space has been built and the time has been built.

1.5. Focused and structured character

The discussion has been strongly focused on the subject at hand, especially on several of its aspects such as: identifying the competences that are in relation to the professionalization of the teaching career; providing a sustainable ideal for the teaching career; stating certain measures aimed to improve the results and performance of the teaching staff in the pre-university system.

1.6. The leader/moderator

The discussion has been led by an impartial moderator, which stimulated the participants to communicate with one another, achieving a multidirectional dialogue.

1.7. The purpose was collecting data regarding the experiences, beliefs, attitudes etc. regarding the necessity of a professionalization ideal of the teaching career, an ideal which would ensure a performance growth in the pre-university system

2. Results

In the pre-sessions of the focus group, we insisted on convincing participants that we are interested in the diversity of their experiences and opinions, not in consensus, and that we want to prevent the manifestation of certain psychological phenomena that may affect validity, such as compliance and self-censorship.

Question 1. Define the teaching profession and state the competence areas of the teacher

The teachers interviewed consider the teaching profession as a “multitude of knowledge and competences presented and organized in a professional system”, more precisely a Professional Standard methodically acquired and organized by scientific principles (Gliga, 2002). According to the Occupational Standard (<http://www.anc.edu.ro/uploads/SO/Profesor%20gimnaziu%20-%20liceu.pdf>), they call it the occupation of lower secondary – upper secondary teacher, the teacher is the teaching person who addresses pupils falling under the 10 – 18 age group, which corresponds to the cycles development, observation and orientation, thoroughgoing study, specialization. The competence areas presented by respondents are shown in the Figure no. 1 below.

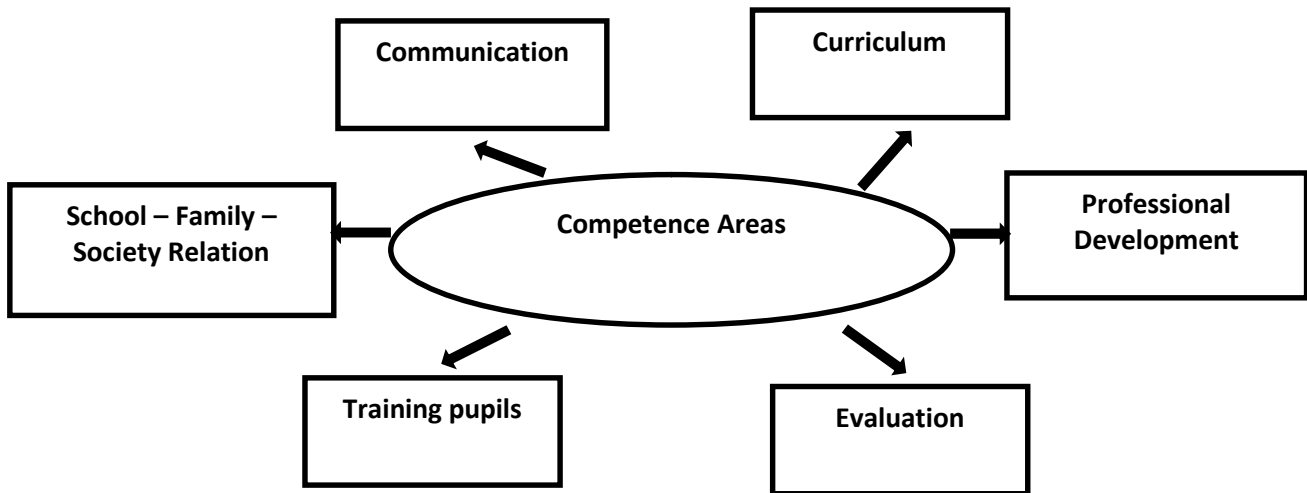


Figure no.1. The competence areas presented by respondents

Source: made by authors using data from the focus-group sample

According to the Occupational Standard, each competence area finds as correspondent a competence unit based on performance criteria, a range of variables and concise evaluation guidelines.

Question 2. State what you consider to be essential for the teaching career

For a long time the teaching activity has relied on the freedom of action, improvisation and creativity. Keeping the creative and the innovative element, it is of paramount important to go from the traditional teacher to the expert teacher, adapted to a continuously changing society. Another interviewed person considers vital for the teaching profession: “all aptitudes and values which compose career professionalism, more exactly the professional consciousness”. The teacher plays several parts at the same time, has the specialty expertise for at least two different domains. According to Romanian Occupation Classification COR 2016 “http://www.rubinian.com/cor_4_grupa_baza.php?id=233”, the teacher in the secondary education teaches one or several disciplines at secondary level, excluding the disciplines meant to prepare the pupils towards employment in various professional fields.

Question 3. What do you understand by teaching profession model?

Considering the specificity of the educational activity, all people interviewed consider difficult achieving a teaching profession model. The teaching activity relies on repetitive situations which develop rapidly and efficiently, starting from actual experiences, of the one hand, and on new didactical situations, not encountered on a regular basis, of the one hand, situations for which the teacher needs to think, investigate, research etc in order to find solutions. In respect of the Professional Standards, the unanimous opinion is that they have to be detailed, normatively exact, rigid, sometimes constrainable in performing activities in class. The heuristic and creative spirit is sometimes obstructed. One of the respondents suggests that this fact imposes development of the capacity of the teacher to adapt to new situations, to mobilise all knowledge and competences in order to adapt to particular contexts and to solve multiple issues. The expression “outside the box” is quite fitting here, it prescribes the limits of the teaching career (Illich, 1971).

Question 4. State 10 competences which are important to practice the teaching profession

In respect of the competences specific to the teaching profession, the respondents have identified, upon moderator’s request, 10 of the most important competence areas, as indicated in the Table no. 7 below.

Table no.7. Competence areas

Competences/Attribute Granted	Very important	Rather important	Neutral (Neither-Nor)	Not important
Projects teaching activity	9			
Carry out quality teaching activity	9			
Evaluates the results of learning	9			
Has an irreproachable professional conduct	9			
Creates a working environment which favours learning, a proper emotional teacher-pupil relationship	6	3		
Masters the speciality terminology (knows the area/discipline taught very well)	7	2		
Is updated on the latest news in the speciality domain	4	4	1	
Develops through experiences and continuous professional training	4	3	2	
Has cultural and social competences which are appropriate to current society	3	3	3	
Performs organizational and administrative duties	3	3	2	1

Source: made by authors with data from the focus-group sample

All respondents agree with the fact that the teaching profession means thoroughly selected persons and requires a long period of professional training in the personality area. The teaching staff's continuous training standards establish a list of competences specific to each category, synoptically presented in the Figure no. 2 below.

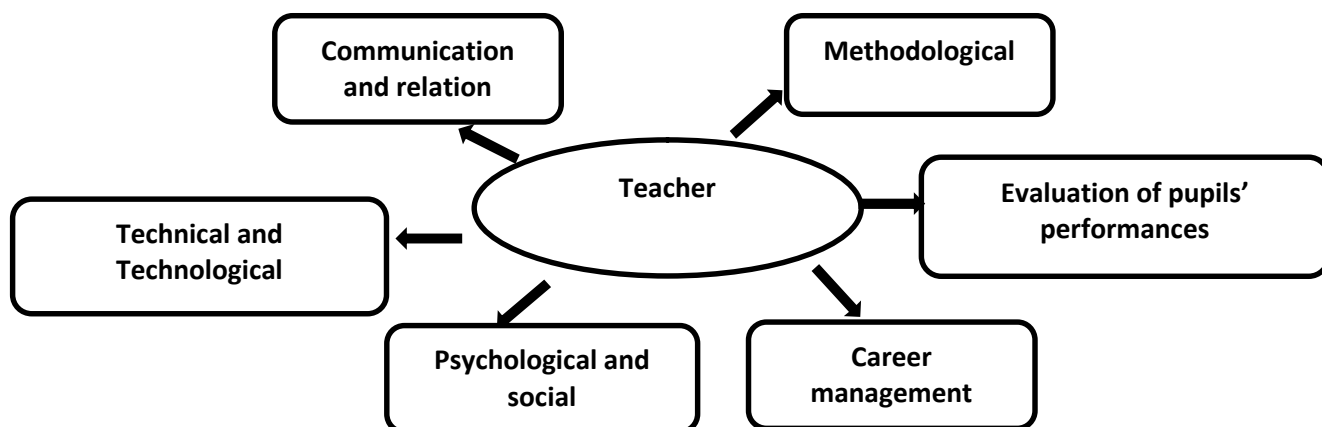


Figure no. 2. List of competences

Source: made by authors using data from the focus-group sample

Question 5. Make improvement suggestions which you consider to professionalize teaching career

With regards to professionalization of the teaching career, the respondents' answers were grouped as shown in the Table no. 8 below.

Table no.8. Suggestions on improvements

Suggestions on improvements	Number of respondents
Periodical revision of norms, methodologies and legislation in line with the dynamic of the society	4
Coherence and harmonization of the educational legislation	9
Greater development opportunities and continuous improvement	7
Allowing access to modern teaching resources	6
Motivating human resources, regaining the professional prestige and dignity of the teaching career	9
Evaluation of the teaching staff by relevant, objective and unanimously accepted criteria	5

Source: made by authors using data from the focus-group sample

3. Conclusions

Respecting the specificity of the educative activity, professionalization of the teaching career is vital. The professionalism of the teacher does not come down to a series of individual competences specific to a strict specialization. In addition to mastering a volume of knowledge which needs to be continuously updated, it is necessary to develop some abilities and personality features to enable capitalization of the pupil's potential. The initial and continuous training needs to ensure the teacher's compliance with all and any situations in the teaching endeavour. A good performance of the teacher relies on self-confidence and confidence in his or her professional competences, on solving difficult situations, tensed or conflictual ones, on the capacity to manage typical or atypical situations. The improvement programmes trigger newness both in specialty and in valid or possible solutions to new situations developed by the contemporary society and which influence the behaviour of the pupils. The activity of the teaching staff goes beyond the vocation stage and relies on competences and knowledge accumulated throughout the Initial Training – Continuous Professional Training path. A teaching profession model must include both standardized and non-standardized competences. The legitimization of the teaching profession among social activities and professions rely on the elaboration of a unitary teaching profession model and teaching profession standards. Competences and activity categories in the Teaching Position Standard require some improvements, especially outside the sphere of introducing a new set of performance criteria adapted to new and progress.

The participants have concluded that a professionalization ideal of the teaching career is important for this profession. Due to the fact that the answer was avoided on a personal matter, the fact that the interviewed teachers act as a result of their experience, accumulated in time, is deduced. They are aware of the terminology, competences that a teacher should own, but talking of a professional ideal, the conversation steers away from a strict answer. There is, however a perception overlap of the professionalization ideal with the teaching profession's standard.

The actual research proves that, although progress has been made as far as the perfecting of the teaching staff is concerned and notable results were obtained, which led to an increase in the teachers' performance, the professionalization of the teaching staff still stands at a theoretical level. During the initial and continuous formation, no actual competences are targeted, competences that should be in precise professional standards, and therefore applicable to the current status of the educational system.

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