

The Continuing Training of Beginning Teachers of Mathematics

by Ioan Ioja

Reviewed by Muşata Bocoş

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At the present time, an increasing emphasis is placed in Europe on further understanding the relationship between teachers' professional training and the students' performance. In this respect, researchers point out the paramount role played by efficient initial teacher education as well as by continuing professional development. Because pre-service and in-service training are regarded as processes that are found in a continuous and interdependent relationship, this contributes to adapting teachers' training to the dynamics of the educational processes and systems. Consequently, the quality of teachers' professional preparation represents one of, if not the most important factor which determines the quality of students' academic achievement and education. Thus, teachers' effectiveness has as common denominator both the period of initial teacher training and the continuing professional development.

The book entitled *The Continuing Training of Beginning Teachers of Mathematics* written by Ioan Ioja, PhD, focuses on the novice mathematics teachers' continuing educational programmes as a starting point towards improving the quality of the Romanian educational system by making use of a framework that provides teachers with teaching approaches that are assessed, improved and adapted to the requirements imposed by the socio-cultural context. This framework consists of a structured training programme (which envisages direct, collaborative in-service training, professional dialogues, class monitoring, deliberate practice to implement in class what they have learnt while being guided by a mentor), in order to improve both teachers' and students' performance. Therefore, this book approaches a highly relevant and complex topic, of

current interest, both from a theoretical and a fundamental perspective as well as from the point of view of practice and implementation.

The design of the book is well defined, illustrative, with a general-to-specific order of presenting data and written from an actional viewpoint. Moreover, its structure is balanced in what concerns the content and the relation between the theoretical underpinnings and the experimental research. The book presents data in a logical manner and it illustrates and supports the main ideas intended for analysis.

The section based on theoretical and conceptual substantiation of the actions that have been taken is well articulated and documented (with contributions brought in the curriculum, the educational and the legislative policy). The author demonstrated ability to manage a wide array of bibliographic resources and engage in critical reflection, analysis and synthesis. In addition, the author managed to explore the two analytical perspectives (synchronic and diachronic) and he undertook dynamic retrospective and prospective analyses, through an analytical and critical practice that emphasized his own didactic and management experience.

The next section includes a description of the planned research implementation and describes a research situation that comprises two components:

- The observational research that intended to provide an analysis of the training needs of beginning teachers who have to consider, as anticipated, the possibilities for continuing their professional development. The results obtained at the exam for

permanent teacher certification (definitivat exam) and the recertification test of the prospective teachers of mathematics in Bistrita-Năsăud County between 2012-2015 have been considered for this analysis. The conclusions of the analysis, pointing to the specific training needs of beginning teachers, offered the author the possibility to indicate some objectives for the structured continuing training programme that he proposed, experimented and later validated as a mechanism to improve the academic performance of teachers of mathematics and of their students.

- An action research meant to improve the continuing training programme for beginning teachers of mathematics in Bistrița-Năsăud and Maramureș counties, where the proposed programme has been implemented. The added value of the book is mainly assured by the contribution of the author to the continuing training programme that has been experimented: the efforts to substantiate the programme according to a system that complies with the curriculum and educational policy principles, the detailed presentation of the continuing training programme, the didactic and the organisational perspectives; the clarity and correctness for the establishment and standardizing of the structural components of the programme as well as the emphasis on their interrelationships within the system; the validation of the programme as a consequence of the methodological system which has been integrated and combined with the appropriate research methods, the validated research instruments found in the literature as well as the author's own ideas.

The case studies carried out are relevant and illustrative, delivering important research data, and also pointing out the author's professional and personal qualities such as his passion for the academic work he performs and his self-responsibility.

The theoretical and practical value of this book resides firstly in the fact that it presents a robust and valuable curricular construct, i.e. a continuing training strategy that is viable inside the Romanian educational system. Therefore, it offers to teachers, managers, students, parents, and to decision-making factors in education many opportunities for reflection. Its potential resides in providing methodological support, guidelines for the development of the curriculum and directions for educational and legislative policies. Thus, it offers to readers high standards of reflexivity, action and educational added value.

In conclusion, through its contributions to theory, illustration, methodology, practice and implementation as well as educational research, the book *The Continuing Training of Beginning Teachers of Mathematics* written by Ioan Ioja, PhD, has a real epistemic value and succeeds in offering educational and didactic considerations, educational, methodological, curriculum and didactic analyses as well as in proposing scientifically based and pertinent legislative and educational solutions, opening new horizons towards reflection, action and scientific research.

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