

Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide

by Laura Șerbănescu, Mușata-Dacia Bocoș, Ioan Ioja

Reviewed by Constantin Cucuș, Romiță Iucu

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The paper "**Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide**" (280 pages, ISBN: 978-973-46-8245-4), published in 2020 at the Polirom Publishing House in Iași, Romania, in the Education Sciences collection, is the result of constant concerns and exemplary collaborations between the authors, Laura Șerbănescu, Mușata-Dacia Bocoș and Ioan Ioja. The long experience of the authors and their solid contribution to the design, implementation and evaluation of the training system for teachers in Romania is like a "guarantee of good execution", for a distinguished paper with a strong impact on the community.

Data about authors

Laura Șerbănescu is a Professor Phd in the Teacher Training and Socio-Human Sciences Department of the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. For ten years she worked in the Ministry of Education, gaining a rich experience in teacher training, participating in the development of educational policies and implementation of strategic projects, including the project funded by the European Social Fund Quality, innovation, communication in the system of continuous training of teachers in higher education (2010-2013). The main scientific fields approached are teacher training, general pedagogy, educational policies, and educational management. Among the published papers, we mention: Analysis of the Teacher Training System and the Training Needs of Higher Education Teachers (coordinator 2013), Perspectives on the Training of University Professors in the Field of Pedagogy and Educational Psychology (co-author, 2014), Educational Management Treaty for Primary and Preschool Education (co-author, 2015), Pedagogy. Fundamentals of Pedagogy. Curriculum Theory and Methodology, Vol. I (coordinator, 2015), Pedagogy. Theory and Methodology

of Training. Evaluation Theory and Methodology, Vol. II (coordinator, 2015).

Mușata-Dacia Bocoș is a Professor Phd in the Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and PhD supervisor in the field of educational sciences. The main scientific fields approached are the theory, methodology and management of training, theory, methodology and management of the curriculum, interactive pedagogy and didactics of pedagogical disciplines. Among the published works, we mention: Praxiological Dictionary of Pedagogy (coordinator Vol. I, 2016; Vol. II, 2016; Vol. III, 2017; Vol. IV, 2018; Vol. V, 2019), Classroom Management of Students. Supportive Curriculum for Pedagogical Highschools (in coll., 2017), Treatise on Modern Didactics (in coll., 2017), Didactics of Pedagogical Disciplines. A Constructivist Framework (2017), Adult Pedagogy. Definitions, Elements of Reflection and Applied Exercises (in coll., 2017), Psychopedagogy. Support for Initial and Continuous Training (in coll., 2017), Theory and Methods of Training. Theory and Methodology of Assessment. Landmarks and Teaching Tools for Teacher Training (et al., 2019), Fundamentals of Pedagogy. Theory and Methods of Curriculum. Landmarks and Teaching Tools for Teacher Training (et al., 2019). She also published Interactive Training at Polirom Publishing House. Axiological and Methodological Landmarks (2013).

Ioan Ioja is a mathematics teacher with the first didactic degree, doctor in education sciences, permanent teacher at the Technical College Infoel, Bistrița and manager of the Teaching-Staff Resource Center of Bistrița-Nasaud county. Since 2014 he has been an associate professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences - Nasaud extension within the "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca. The main scientific concerns are

adult training, especially continuous training for teachers, absorption of European funds and project management. Since 2006 he has coordinated several externally funded projects that have contributed to the development of human resources in the education system and to the provision of complementary educational services. He is the author of the volume *Continuing Education of Beginner Teachers of Mathematics* (2020), co-author of the *Treatise Educational Management for Primary and Preschool Education* (2015) and contributor to the *Praxiological Dictionary of Pedagogy* (Vol. I, 2016; Vol. II, 2016; Vol. III, 2017; Vol. IV, 2018; Vol. V, 2019). He is also the author of several articles and studies published in journals.

The current context of continuous training for teachers

Teacher training is a key to progress, prestige and efficiency of any education system. The amplitude and profile of education in school or university is also questionable by the training course, of first instance or which is added later, of those who will train others. In a formative exercise, it is important both the giver and the receiver. The receiver must be known, conquered, trained. This book will be about the giver. Giving to others (knowledge, motivation, value positioning etc.) is a very important exercise. It is important what and how much you convey to others; it's even more important, how you do it, how you teach others, how you teach yourself.

The reform of an education system, through the related norms and the adjacent practices, must also target the specific subsystem of training and professional development of teachers. Unfortunately, school policies do not often naturally link sectoral changes such as system, curricular, didactic, procedural etc. reforms with teacher training policies or strategies. Of course, initial training cannot anticipate future developments or challenges, which is why smart, open, flexible sizing of lifelong learning pathways is required. We need an integrative perspective and a continuum between initial training and that during the exercise of the profession, permanent openness to new problems and incentives.

The training segment for future teachers is part of the educational system and, as such, will bear the stamp of the whole to which it is subsumed. As the educational system is, so will the route or profile (cultural, professional, social) of those who will educate others. It is important to create alternatives that evade generalized pressure, to maintain its value autonomy so that, regardless of the context, to ensure the preparation of a responsible, creative, involved teaching staff.

At present, it is unanimously accepted that European education systems, and not only, deliver results to the extent that training systems succeed in providing them with the best, most motivated and best-employed teaching staff. This means that the future of contemporary society depends, to a very large extent, on the quality of training of educational actors in the education system: "Of all the

factors in the school environment, teachers are considered to have the greatest impact on student learning outcomes. (...) Any policy effort aimed at improving learning outcomes - or effective education and training - must closely examine the role of teachers and look for ways to help them excel in their required profession" (*Education and training monitor 2019 - Romania, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture*, p. 18, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-romania_en.pdf). As we can see, taking into account the deep plea of the authors, the aspects of public policies related to the design of excellence in the teaching profession combine very closely with the landmarks better anchored in concrete decisions, which also support the financing of active processes, dedicated to teacher training, compared to total spending on education: "At the same time, in the EU, over 60% of public spending in the education sector is aimed at teachers" (*Ibidem*, p. 18). The above information, so well structured and coming from a source of maximum credibility, by presenting the willingness to invest in this field, shows us, not necessarily the state of the financial allocation, but especially the prestige enhanced by the teaching profession in many European countries. This is also one of the deep desires of the book *Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide, the search for the prestige of the teaching profession / career* (we could say, in a Proustian style in which, literally, a term is missing), through an efficient management of the continuous training system.

Converting in a more applied way the issue of interest of the paper, but also customizing our analyzes on the Romanian realities, the authors put in the foreground the system of professional training, in order to highlight its primordial needs for high quality continuous training. This is all the more so as, another large-scale study, the OECD, addresses rather a number of issues or challenges, including those related to human resource management and training system management: "Several countries are already facing or they are about to face teacher shortages, either in general or in specific areas, or in certain geographical areas. Given the percentage of teachers at least 50 years old, the 23 EU countries that participated in TALIS 2018 will have to renew almost a third of their own teachers in the next decade. At least five EU countries will have to renew about half of their secondary school teachers in the same period (the same is valid for Romania)" (*Ibidem*, p. 19). The above observations are strongly impregnated by the critical notes on the specific processes of teaching career management, in which the need to strengthen the teaching profession, recruitment, training and evaluation of staff, in accordance with the highest standards, becomes a necessity to the level of scientific reflection, but also in terms of designing management and leadership solutions for systemic gears.

We do not believe that the future field of training can be left out of specific professional frameworks. Taking into

account the fact that some of the members of the group of authors have distinguished themselves so far by promoting this idea, the professionalization of teaching career, they now come up with a concrete proposal to professionalize the management system of continuing education programs, offering us, with skill and clarity of writing and technical support for training processes.

Many voices, from the field of expertise of education sciences, have spoken about the evolution in the field of training and professional development of teachers in the last period, but leaving ample room for everything to come, a stranger who we are convinced that it is already enveloping spirits and careers. A UNESCO study finds that almost 1.3 billion secondary and tertiary school students around the world have been unable to attend school due to the ongoing health crisis, which, undoubtedly, has begun to have a huge impact on global education ... causing, as many voices in the global public space say, one of the greatest learning crises: "I fully anticipate that this period will be remembered as the only one, the biggest disruption the training has ever seen. Learning will never be the same! Learning will be forever changed!" (Gary Hepburn, "The Great Disruption: How COVID-19 Changes Education Instruction", Medium, March 26, 2020, https://medium.com/@bcurran_25513/the-great-disruption-how-covid-19-changeshigher-education-instruction-6d608e35129 - accessed at 26.04.2020). But, under these determined conditions, the impact on teachers and their training has been taken into account, will we witness in the near future and a crisis of the training system? Will there be effects on professional development; will most of the changes be expected in that direction?

All the more important is the paper that the authors propose for reading and study to the generation of teachers, but also of experts in the field of education, who will be forced to face a challenge never seen before, given that, in our view, the most important topic of the training agenda is, not necessarily the re-learning of the skills required by the new exceptional conditions in which teachers will work in the future, but especially the process of giving up what they have learned/ "Professional learning" (adapted translation from English for the notion of "unlearn"), in order to make room for anew learning and re-learning. Everything that will be guided in the future by the teacher training system will be largely related to this process and continuing education will not be ignored.

Alvin Toffler, among many other predictions that earned him well-deserved public respect, touched on an extremely sensitive topic for the future of today's society, marked by a major challenge: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be the one who can't write and read, but the one who will not know how to learn, to give up what he has learned/ to lose the habit of learning (the English translation for «unlearn») and to relearn".

The structure of the book

The book proposes an almost exhaustive picture related to the training of teachers, starting from the normative dynamics, the reference of professional competences, structuring, administration and monitoring of training programs, profile and curricular structure, strategic and methodical specificity of professional development, determinants and results of psycho-pedagogical training activities to those who serve education and teaching.

Conceived in a theoretical-reflective but also applicative-practical manner, the book has guiding virtues for managers or entities concerned with the design and implementation of training programs in the teaching register. Bringing to attention international training models and paradigms, comparative perspectives are opened that facilitate a better significance of the local teacher training framework. The practical training formulas are not forgotten, from the psycho-pedagogical modules provided by the profile departments to the didactic master's degree, which will be implemented starting this autumn.

The authors' plea convinces us of the need to strengthen the dignity and professional identity of the contemporary teacher subjected to pressures that often erode or affect their status (from decision makers, parents, students, etc.) or marginalize them socially, even economically. The competency framework, detected and described by the authors, aims precisely to emphasize the importance of professionalization and the construction of a complex professional profile of great importance for today's or tomorrow's society.

At the same time, the authors consider the issue of the insertion of graduates - teachers in the education system, an issue still unresolved, even if both the legislative framework and European practices require us to more carefully absorb and mentor beginner teachers in the first years of internship. Adjacent mentoring programs are fragmented, discontinuous and not convincingly, strategically and economically supported. The authors bring particularly strong arguments in the sense of the importance of entering the profession, transmitting, almost explicitly, to political decision makers, a message to build and ensure monitoring routes and appropriate professional guidance in the first years of teaching.

With the same acuity are discussed about the programs of continuous training of teachers which involves a pluralization of perspectives for targeting training needs - both from the perspective of beginning teachers and managers, student outcomes, educational climate, organizational culture etc., which can lead, each but also correlated, to relevant results. All these perspectives, transposed in unitary and integrated practice, acquire an addition of adequacy to a dynamic reality, having virtues that are not only predictive-anticipatory, but also effectively transformative-reforming.

Conclusions regarding the relevance of the book

Through the paper "**Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide**", the authors propose a welcome guide for the construction of training programs that allow a convenient operationalization in relation to open training contexts and topics, customized in relation to diverse and expanding needs, depending on future evolutions and dynamics. Well designed and structured, the volume contains numerous answers, solutions and suggestions that can cover multiple contents dictated by new professional requirements and challenges. In addition, the volume inserts at the end a series of exercises, work tasks, creative, dubious applications, which contributes to increasing the interactive and incentive dimension and makes it a source of generating other and new heuristic solutions.

The subject of the book is approached systemically and professionally assumed by the authors, who offer us an editorial product that can lead, with the help of decision makers, directly and safely, to another side of Romanian education.

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