

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITS OF THE ACTUAL SYSTEM FOR EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES AMONG BEGINNING TEACHERS

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Abstract

The approach of analyzing the actual system for evaluation and certification the studies for the didactical career must start with preliminary conditions which lead toward certification, namely from the actual programs of initial training for teachers, including: goals of training, competences, the curricula and the strategies of teaching – learning – evaluating.

Our study intends to analyze the actual model of evaluating the professional competences of beginning teachers through the definitive exam in educational system. The comparative analysis of several models of certification for teachers, based on professional standards (USA, France, Great Britain, and Romania) offers us the possibility of identifying common and different elements in establishing „the reference point of competences and qualities of the teacher”.

The research was undertaken on a sample of 80 Sports teachers and aimed the following goals:

- Identifying the aspects of continuity between the program of initial training of future teachers and the probation time;
- Establishing possible correlations regarding the criteria and indicators for evaluating the professional competences of beginning teachers, licensed in Sports, during the special inspection and of those aimed within the definitive exam in educational system;
- Pointing out the advantages and limits of the actual system for initial training of teachers and of the certifying the competences, also of passing the definitive exam in the educational system;
- Suggesting the possible methodology of certifying the competences for beginning teachers and of passing the definitive exam in the educational system, including techniques and instruments validated by the educational practice and by domain researches undertaken on a global level.

Key words: beginning teachers, system of evaluation, studies certification, definitive exam in the educational system, professional standards.

Introduction

The formation of the didactical staff represents a continual and cumulative process of getting and developing the competences, that is based on the concept of permanent education and learning and that comprises two fundamental components, that are co-related organically: initial formation and continual formation.

In the attempt to analyse the evaluation system in order to certificate the studies for the didactical career, we started from the preliminary conditions that lead to the certification respectively, from the programmes of initial formation, including: the objectives of the formation, the aimed competences, the nature of the curriculum, the evaluation strategies used. We remind in this context the preoccupations, the studies and the researches carried out world wide in the complex intercession of making professionalism in the didactical activity, to pass from a “job” to the “profession” and to legitimate the didactical profession in the field of activities and social professions.

In order to establish the advantages and the limits of the current system from our country of evaluating the professional competences and the beginner teachers, through the definite exam we analysed several standards systems and validation models of the studies that are presented in Romanian and foreign literature of the field:

- National Standards for the Status of Qualified Teacher (SPC) – Great Britain (SWIPBBT, 1998);

- The Standards of the National Commission of Certification from the United States of America (C. Dumitriu, 2003);
- Programms of initial formation of the didactical staff and the certification of studies in the States of New York (NYSTCE), Texas (SBEC) and Georgia (C. Dumitriu, 2003);
- The formation and the certification of studies from France (Livret du professeur stagiaire des lycées et collèges PLC₂ et du CPE stagiaire CPE₂, 2001; Mémento des stages en établissement du second degré, 2001) ;
- Occupational standards (schoolteacher, kindergarden teacher, teacher) made by COSA, *Professional standards for the didactical profession* (coordinator L. Gliga, 2002);
- Project of methodology regarding the training of the didactical staff for the final exam by relating to the standards and Project of methodology – the definite exam in learning/certification of the didactical profession (MEC, CNFPIP, 2003).

The standards of the didactical profession were defined as an ensemble of expectations and requirements, that refer to the *knowledge, abilities, attitudes and competences* that a teacher has to test in his activity with the students, to be considered that he fulfills his professional roles at a qualitative level that is accepted by the society.

Each standard contains five elements:

- What activities are expected to be done by the teacher;
- The description of those activities (characteristics);
- The motivation of the necessity to carry out these actions (the reason for their performing);
- The criteria used to evaluate the quality of the required activities (noticeable and measurable behaviours that emphasise the attaining of the required activities, at the qualitative level that is socially accepted);
- The forms/ strategies of evaluation that are used (tests, observation, portofolio).

In Romania, the students' professionalisation for the didactical career from the pre-academic and academic education is made, based on the law, by the Department for the Training of the Didactical Personnel. The initial formation ensures the gaining of competences and of the official certifications that are necessary to the access to the qualified exertion of the didactical profession in the education system. According to the current laws, this level comprises two types of formation:

- *Speciality* formation that is ensured and certified by the promotion of academic studies, or, if it is the case, the speciality studies at post-academic level;
- *Psihopedagogical and didactical formation of speciality, theoretical and practical*, that is ensured and certified by the promotion of psihopedagogical studies that are offered by the Departments for the Training of the Didactical Personnel, by the faculties that have in their structure the major Pedagogy of primary and pre-school learning from the institutions of superior education.

The curriculum of the psihopedagogical studies programme that is offered by the Teachers Training Department comprises the integrated system of objectives, subjects, teaching learning and evaluation methods that are designed to ensure the gaining by the students of the competences that are necessary for the exertion of the didactical profession. The structure of the curriculum, as well as the extension of the didactical contents and activities throughout the duration of the programme of psihopedagogical studies are established through the next co-related elements:

- Learning plan;
- The shape of the didactical activities (classes, seminars, laboratories, practise);
- The ways of evaluation/ promotion (exams, colloquy, practical verifications, portofolios, docimologic tests, projects);
- The subjects' datacards (with the competences' definition, the structure of the contents and of the evaluation forms);
- The modality of finalization of the study programme (graduation exam, that means the elaboration and the presentation of a didactical portofolio).

The curriculum of the psihopedagogical study programme comprises three integrated components: core curriculum, extended curriculum and optional

curriculum. The didactical subjects and activities that are provided by the learning plan of D.P.P.D., alongside the allocation and the obtaining the credits system, are reunited into two distinct programmes of psihopedagogical studies, for the first and second level of certification.

The continuing formation ensures the actualisation and the development of the competences of the didactical staff, including the gaining of new competences and it is made mainly through the next educational intercessions:

- Programmes and activities of improvement of the scientific, psihopedagogical and didactical training or in the fields of management, guiding and evaluation of education.
- Training lectures and the final exam, and the exams for the first and second didactical distinctions;
- Conversion and professional readjustment programmes.

The granting of the definite exam means the recognition of the minimum acceptable competences that are gained by a person that made an option for the didactical career and that assures that he has the necessary training for the exertion of the didactical profession and he can enter on a route of ascendent professionalisation.

The comparative analysis of the four systems of teacher certification, based on the professional standards from the U.S.A., France, Great Britain and Romania offered us the possibility to identify the common problems/ elements but also the different ones.

First of all we notice similitudes in establishing the "referential of teacher's competences and qualities" that are aimed by the four systems of professional standards that we analysed. These are organized, structured and ranked in several large fields, often taking the form of "core-principles":

A thorough speciality training, the knowledge of the field and of the didactics of the taught subject/subjects;

- Knowing (by the teacher) of the psychical characteristics of age and individual of the students and their assistance in development (in different learning situations);
- The planning, teaching, management and monitoring of the class of students;
- The exertion of the educative responsibility and the professional ethics;
- Reflexive attitude towards his own activity and educational practise and the preoccupation for the continuing professional development;
- Competences regarding the integration and the active involvement in the community and the promotion of social-humane, moral-civic, cultural values that are congruent with the ideal.

We observe that the designed standards correspond, in general, to the objectives of the initial training of the didactical personnel and they cover the domain of competences (cognitive, evaluative, methodological, of communication and relation, psyhosocial) that are

required by the multitude and the complexity of the teacher's roles. They are based on a modern educational belief, on new trends in the field of cognitive, social psychology and the the sciences of education.

We appreciate that the valuable experience of these systems of professional standards and certification for the didactical profession can be put into use more in the making of the methodology regarding the training of the teachers for the final exam in connection to the standards, especially regarding:

- The assistance in internship;
- The intern and the principles of his professional formation;
- The responsibilities of the intern;
- Formation programmes of the interns;
- The mentor and his responsibilities.

The design of the research

Starting from the theoretical premises of the research we wanted to know the criteria and the indicators according to which the professional competences of the beginner teachers are evaluated, speciality phsyical education, in the frame of the definitive exam in educational system, as well as the emphasis of the advantages and the limits of this system of evaluation.

Research hypotheses:

General hypotheses:

The results of the beginner teachers, speciality physical education, at the tests of the definitive exam in education record different valuees compared with the ones obtained at the special inspection.

Specific hypotheses:

- *The performances obtained by the begining teachers, speciality physical education, at the test of psychopedagogy are lower compared to the ones obtained at the special inspection.*
- *The performances obtained by the begining teachers, speciality physical education, at the written test of speciality are lower compared with the ones obtained at the special inspection.*

Chart 1: The mean obtained at the special inspection, psychopedagogy, written speciality and oral speciality

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Special Inspection	80	9.9625	.19118	.02137
Psychopedagogy	77	7.3778	.82724	.09427
Written speciality	80	7.3388	1.83300	.20494
Oral speciality	77	8.0844	1.30637	.14887

We want to know if at the psychopedagogy test the candidates for the definite exam in education obtained media that are singificantly higher or lower compared with the media obtained at the special inspection.

The statistical processing of collected data point an average of 7.37 obtained at the

Chart 2: The mean and the standard deviation at psychopedagogy

One-Sample Statistics

- *The performances obtained by the begining teachers, speciality physical education, at the oral test of speciality are lower compared to the ones obtained at the special inspection.*

The participants to the research

The research was made in Bacau, on a lot of 80 teachers, with 1-3 years experience in teaching, structured as it follows: 48 (60%) were males and 32 (40%) were females; 50 participants (62,5%) were between 25 and 30 years old, 15 (18,8%) were between 31 and 36 years old, 13 (16,2) were between 37 and 42 years old and 2 (2,5%) were between 49 and 51 years old.

According to the variable experience in teaching the sample is distributed as such: 1 teacher had one year experience, 61 had 2 years experience, 18 had 3 years experience in teaching. According to residence variable 44 participants that means 55% are from urban areas, and 36 participants that means 45% are from rural areas.

Method:

In order to collect the data we used the method of analysis of the avticity's products and the school documents and the discussion, and for the verification of the hypotheses, the One-Sample T Test.

We also used the statistical data processing program SPSS 15.0, statistical program designed for research in the field of social sciences.

Results and discussion

Hypothesis 1. The performances obtained by the begining teachers, speciality physical education, at the test of psychopedagogy are lower compared to the ones obtained at the special inspection.

In chart 1 there are the media and the standard deviation obtained by the begining teachers at the special inspection and at the three tests of the definite exam in education: psychopedagogy, written speciality and oral speciality.

psychopedagogy test and an average of 9.96 obtained at the special inspection. Comparing the two means we notice that the teachers form the research sample obtained a lower average at the psychopedagogy. To verify if this difference is statistically significant, we apply One-Sample T Test.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Psychopedagogy	77	7.3778	.82724	.09427

Chart 3: Results at the t test of comparing the means
One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 9.96					
	t		df		Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Psychopedagogy	-27.391	76	.000	-2.5822	-2.7700	-2.3944

Chart 3 presents the results at the t test of comparing the means. We notice that $t(76) = 27.391$, $p \leq 0,000$. It results that the difference of 2,59 between the two means is statistically significant. The chart also presents the level of trust with a probability of 95% in which we can place the difference between the means. Therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed, the performances obtained by the beginning teachers, speciality physical education at the test of psychopedagogy being significantly lower compared to the ones obtained at the special inspection.

How can we explain this significant difference between the two means?

We notice that from the 80 candidates at the definite exam in educational system 77 (96,3%) obtained 10 (A) at the special inspection and 3 teachers (3,7%) obtained a 9.

By analysing the criteria and indicators used to evaluate the teachers at the special inspection, we can see that the accent was put on the measurement of the methodological competences regarding:

- the planning of the didactical activity (the structure and the performance of the lesson plan, the operationalization of the objectives, the correlation of the components of the learning process, creativity in the designing of the didactic situations);
- the making of the activity (the preparation of the conditions and the efficient management of the resources, the ensurance of the scientific content, the selection and the use of the methods and procedures of teaching – learning, the integration of the learning means into the structure of the lesson, the connection of different forms of activity, the activation of the students).

The following evaluation indicators aim at the behaviour of the proponent (the management of the class, emotional equilibrium, efficient communication and inter-relationship with the students, leadership style) and the evaluation competence (using the evaluation methods and techniques, the development of

the motivational function of evaluation, the development in the students of the self-evaluation competences, giving feedback).

By analysing the pedagogy curriculum for the definite exam in educational system, teachers of all specialities (2007) according to which the exam subjects were made, we can notice the intention of the curriculum's authors to make "an operative testing of the relevance of the initial training for the didactical career, from the perspective of competences, attitudes and values" (2007, p. 4). But the criteria and the indicators of evaluation aim more at knowledge, the understanding and the operational use of the psychopedagogical concepts, abilities to explain and interpret the ideas, the believes, the patterns, theories and paradigms in this field. There are also aimed the critical and evaluativ-structural thinking abilities of some projects, processes, phenomena, as well as the competences of practical-aplicative and transfer competences.

The candidates perceive and appreciate the curriculum as having a high degree of difficulty, especially the contents regarding the theories and patterns of learning, the training paradigms, the adequate use of the psychopedagogical language.

Hypothesis 2. The performances obtained by the *beginning teachers, speciality physical education, at the written test of speciality are lower compared with the ones obtained at the special inspection.*

We want to know if at the written test of speciality the teachers obtained means that are significantly higher or lower compared with the mean obtained at the special inspection. The statistical processing of the collected data show an average of 7.33 obtained at the written test of speciality and an average 9,96 obtained at the special inspection.

Comparing the two averages we notice that the teachers from the sample that is the subject of the reaserch obtained a lower average at the written test of speciality than at the special inspection, the difference being of 2,63. In order to verify if this difference is statistically significant we apply One-Sample T Test.

Chart 4: Mean and the standard deviation at the written speciality test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Written speciality test	80	7.3388	1.83300	.20494

Chart 5: Results at the t test of comparing the means

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 9.96					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Written speciality test	-12.791	79	.000	-2.6213	-3.0292	-2.2133

Chart 5 presents the results of the t test of comparing the averages. We notice that $t(79) = 12.791$, $p \leq 0,000$. It results that the difference of 2,63 between the two averages is statistically significant. The chart also presents the level of trust with a 95% probability in which we can situate the difference between the averages. Therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed, the performances obtained by the beginning teachers, speciality physical education, at the written test of speciality being significantly lower compared to the ones obtained at the special inspection.

Hypothesis 3. The performances obtained by the *beginning teachers, speciality physical education,*

at the oral test of speciality are lower compared with the ones obtained at the special inspection.

We want to know if at the oral test of speciality the teachers obtained averages that are significantly higher or lower compared to the average obtained at the special inspection. The statistical processing of collected data show an average of 8,8 obtained at the written test of speciality and the average 9,96 obtained at the special inspection (chart 1).

By comparing the two averages we notice that the teachers from the research sample obtained a lower average at the oral test of speciality than at the special inspectio, the difference being of 1,88. To verify if this difference is statistically significant, we apply One-Sample T Test.

Chart 6: Mean at the oral speciality test

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Oral speciality test	77	8.0844	1.30637	.14887

Chart 7: Results at the t test of comparing the means

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 9.96					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Oral speciality test	-12.598	76	.000	-1.8756	-2.1721	-1.5791

Chart 7 presents the results at the t test of comparing the averages. We notice that $t(76) = 12.598$, $p \leq 0,000$. It results that the difference of 1,88 between the two averages is statistically significant. The chart also presents the level of trust with a probability of 95% in which we can situate the difference between the averages. Therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed, the average obtained by the beginning teachers, physical education speciality, at the oral test of speciality being significantly lower, compared with the one obtained at the final inspection.

Conclusions

The research data confirm the general hypothesis and the specific hypotheses and they allow the formulation of several conclusions and action directions:

- We can notice the presence of some aspects of continuity between the programme of initial formation of the future teachers and the first years of teaching of the beginning teachers. These aim, first, the preoccupation for the curriculum's design of the didactical activity,

the adequate use and management of the teaching means, the perfecting of the didactical methodology of teaching – learning, as well as the evaluation techniques. But we can notice a lower preoccupation for the theoretical deepening of the problematics from the literature of this field and from the psychopedagogy one, giving the fact that they do not always manage to offer operative and adequate answers at the many complex problems that the educational practise raises.

- Referring to the advantages and the limits of the current system of initial formation of the teachers and that of the certification of their competences, we consider that the share of the pedagogical practise has to be higher in the programme of formation. We appreciate as being necessary the diversification of the practise forms, respectively noticeable practise, of testing, merged etc, so that the students have the possibility to apply in practise the concepts, theories, paradigms that are assimilated theoretically at the speciality subjects and psychopedagogical ones.
- We propose that the methodology of certification of the competences of the beginning teachers, as well as the definite exam in the educational system to include some methods, techniques and instruments that are validated by the educational practise and by the research made in the field world wide.
- Thus, on the period of internship, the beginning teachers have to be helped in the exertion of the professional roles, they need to benefit from assistance and guidance, through the implication of the mentor, principal, the school's staff, of the speciality's inspector, of the university and local community.

At the end of the internship period the candidate enrolls to be evaluated based on the standards for the didactic profession, in order to obtain the certificate for the definite teacher. In this evaluation process, we consider that an important role has to be

given to the elaboration and the presentation by the candidate of a competence portofolio, whose valencies were validated by the research and educational practise. In its turn, the curricula for the definite exam has to be rethought and it has to be centered on the evaluation of the candidates' competences.

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