

Chapter 54

Evaluating Teacher Education Programs for Philology Students

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ABSTRACT

The chapter will deal with the process of training philology students for their future careers as language and literature teachers in the compulsory education system of Romania. Based on the concurrent model, their training implies studying at the same time for the Bachelor's and Master's degree and a teaching qualification. An analysis of the transformations undergone by Romanian teacher training education in the last twenty years may enable an exchange of opinions among the researchers concerned with the improvement of the field. The chapter will offer a chronological analysis of the process of training philology undergraduate and graduate students paying particular attention to the creation and development of new programs at academic level.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of an ever-changing society, teacher education has been a permanent concern of practitioners, researchers and education policy makers. In the particular case of Romania, an ex-communist country that is now part of the European Union, any discussion about the teaching and learning process has to refer to two major periods, that is, before and after the implementation of the Bologna reform in the education system. Briefly speaking, the Bologna process took place between 1999 and 2010 with a view to establishing a European higher education area by promoting common organizational and educational principles such as introducing a two-cycle system (undergraduate/graduate) into universities, using a system of transferable credits (ECTS), stimulating student and teacher mobility, strengthening cooperation to assure the quality of the instructional process and founding higher education on European dimensions and criterion.

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As to pre-service teacher education, it is significant that before the Bologna process schools and universities were dominated by a traditional educational trend that survived in various forms ranging from curriculum design to teaching methods and style, whereas after the introduction of the Bologna model teacher training had to adapt to new educational purposes required by a new social and historical environment. Consequently, the new initial teacher training education programs shifted from teacher centered education to the various advantages of student centered education, to competence-based curriculum and assessment, and a better interrelationship between theory and practice.

Starting from these pre-requisites, the purpose of the chapter is to show to what extent university-based teacher training programs reflect the new educational standards required by the reform applied to the Romanian higher education system. Specifically, it attempts to analyze the relevance of the curriculum that forms the basis of the language teachers' preparation focusing on its content, structure, and educational aims and purposes. It also tries to highlight the degree to which such programs meet not only learners' needs but also of society. Last but not least, the study aims to identify what elements resulted from the Romanian educational reform could be useful for the researchers interested in the field of initial language teacher training.

BACKGROUND

Over the past decades teacher education has been critically reviewed by numerous researchers and educators in an attempt to rethink the model of teacher training and adapt it to the requirements of a constantly changing world. There have also been various studies in the field of language and literature teaching, which have helped the conceptual understanding of the process and led to the design of better pre-service teacher training programs. From the vast amount of existing research, the present analysis has selected several views and principles that lie at the basis of teacher education. Thus, some researchers (Bansal, 2009) make the distinction between “the technical rationality” approach and the “realistic approach” to teacher training. The former tends to neglect all aspects dealing with the affective side of teacher education because the focus is mainly on “information processing” (Bansal, 2009, p. 33) which is seen as the “rational or logical” (Bansal, 2009, p. 33) side of such an approach. The latter, on the other hand, adds to the cognitive processes involved in learning teaching an affective dimension consisting in the feelings, emotions, beliefs, values and attitudes which are inherent to any teaching activity. The author calls psychological factors “gestalts” to “refer to the personal conglomerates of needs, concerns, values, meanings, preferences, feelings and behavioral tendencies united into one inseparable whole” (Bansal, 2009, p. 35), whose influence can be manifested at the conscious and unconscious levels. Strictly speaking, teacher education means a dynamic interplay between two main components, abstract knowledge and concrete experience, or in other terms, theory and practice.

The traditional viewpoint on teaching considers “classroom practice to stand out as being the most significant element of professional training to student teacher because of its vividness and emotional associations” (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997, p. 10). Generally speaking, the practical dimension of teacher education can be defined as a cyclic process based on five phases, A.L.A.C.T., as stated by Korthagen:

1. **Action,**
2. **Looking back on the action,**
3. **Awareness of essential aspects,**

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