

## IMPROVING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

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**Abstract:** *The study focuses on aspects regarding the development of students' abilities in acquiring knowledge, professional abilities and skills necessary for the didactic career. Filed-related literature presents different ways of training future teachers with impact on the relationship between theoretical learning and practice. It brings to our attention the variety of tendencies in the future teachers' professional training stressing the importance of reforms both in classroom approaches and in approaching the educational process as a whole. The three subsystems: teachers, pupils and learning activities coexist and interact in different ways and with different intensity influencing the learning results. A good theoretical and practical training of future teachers through initial training is therefore a goal of all faculties. Our faculty is specialized in training teachers for preschool and primary school and pays particular attention to the improvement of training strategies for future teachers, so as to make them true professionals in their field. Below, we will point out some directions for quality improvement in students' training for the didactic career.*

**Keywords:** *learning quality, didactic profession, educational process, reform, orientation in learning, the development of professional competences*

### Introduction

Although it can be noticed that the didactic profession is no longer so attractive for the youth (Moore Johnson 2004; Mulvey and Cooper 2009; OECD 2005; Strong 2009), we consider that this profession is absolutely necessary and at the same time it is a vocational profession that not anyone can profess. High quality training is required to achieve competence in a formal environment. The competence is divided into the following components:

- Knowledge of child development, knowledge of cultural diversity, knowledge of human learning;
- Knowledge of the learning process and of the process that links theory to practice;
- Knowledge about different subjects and ways in which they can be learnt by the pupils;
- Elements of pedagogy and didactics and ways in which different didactic methods and techniques contribute to a successful learning;
- Knowledge of authentic assessment and self-assessment.

Beside the above mentioned knowledge, good teacher's training requires a proper attitude, namely passion for the didactic profession, professionalism and love of children. Being a teacher requires certain inborn abilities: sociability, empathy, ability to change and openness for novelty along with quality professional training.

Training is a set of social and intellectual structures through which the teacher relates to students and all together they relate to the contents of the educational process to produce knowledge. The major objectives of the academic educational process are the improvement of learning activities, the increase of the didactic act's quality, efficient students' learning. The literature in the field of education reveals many ways and strategies of improving the didactic act with the aim of training specialist in education. In reality though, the results are not the desired ones. We legitimately ask

ourselves the question what is deficient in the process of future teachers' initial training. Some specialists in the universal field related literature (Hanushek, 2005; Sykes, 1996). Borko (2004), D. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), and Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008) argue in their research that the primary deficiency is connected to the way students put into practice the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom. In reality, they cannot link the theoretical information with concrete situations found in the pragmatic real life. Teaching and learning as parts of the educational process represent two extremely important sides of learning which require situational contextualization. The more the theoretical learning is connected to practice, the more rigorous and optimal will be the students' training for the didactic profession. Practice accompanied by studies in the filed literature shows us many times that the future teachers' training is carried out through emphasis on conceptualization, on disciplines and in a fractionate manner. Moreover, some subjects contain redundant information without bringing about professional development. It is necessary to stress out these tendencies that lead to the development of students' professional characteristics. Learning involves various mechanisms and variables that teachers need to be aware of. These are biological, normative, institutional, historical, etc. variables. They are differently combined at each person, in different proportions, with different emphasis in different circumstances. Hence, there are different ways to accede to learning. In this context, misunderstanding the nature of human learning in its complexity can lead to problems regarding the focus on certain contexts that don't see the pupil as an individual. We ask ourselves how can the future teachers' training be improved, through what methods and ways can we contribute to a better psychopedagogic training, to the increase of training quality from a personal, social and emotional point of view. As future teachers, their training has to be considered as a whole and in the complexity of the profession which is closely linked to the classroom, school community and local community where the school is placed.

### **Theoretical training**

Though there is criticism brought to the excess of students' theoretical training, we consider that it is absolutely necessary to acquire a set of general and field-related theoretical knowledge in order to become a good teacher. This is an endeavour which encourages students to acquire theoretical knowledge in the field of pedagogy, psychology and didactics through:

- participation at lectures and seminars in their field of study;
- thorough individual study outside the classes: in libraries, at home, on the internet.

Knowledge of psychology is absolutely necessary; without knowledge of human personality, proper education cannot be done. A good teacher has to know the subtleties of a child's individuality, what motivates and stimulates his learning, what is interesting for him at different ages, which are the most adequate methods of learning at different learning stages: Prescholl, early schooling, adolescence.

Knowledge of pedagogy is absolutely necessary for a teacher to understand the historical evolution of pedagogic approaches, to be up-to-date with research in the field of pedagogy, didactics, to use the most adequate learning strategies and to use the proper ones in a concrete learning situation.

### **Practical training**

Specialists have always drawn the attention on the necessity to link theory with practice, because purely theoretical knowledge has no value if not put into practice. Therefore, in the future teacher's training emphasis is laid on teaching practice. The curriculum contains observation classes and application practice. We believe however that the curriculum hours are not enough for adequate training; therefore we insist and propose our students a voluntary teaching practice system in kindergartens and schools for a week in order to understand the preschool and school educational system. Activating as volunteers in schools they will closely follow and understand

the preschool pupils/pupils behaviour at different times of the day, will understand better the components of the educational process: teaching, learning, assessment. This experience offers the student, future teachers opportunities for reflection, for understanding the level he places himself at a certain point, he is aware of his strong and weak points and can apply theoretical knowledge in practice.

The latest research in the field come to emphasize the role of several features related to the improvement of future teachers` training.

### Active learning

Creating opportunities for students` engagement in learning contributes to increasing the efficiency of their professional training. Seminars where students are actively involved in their learning are more useful to them than lectures given by brilliant professors. Interaction within such activities helps defining some concepts, to the development of critical attitude towards the student`s training, revising and reforming learning skills, the development of a behaviour for open-dialogue.

### Methodology

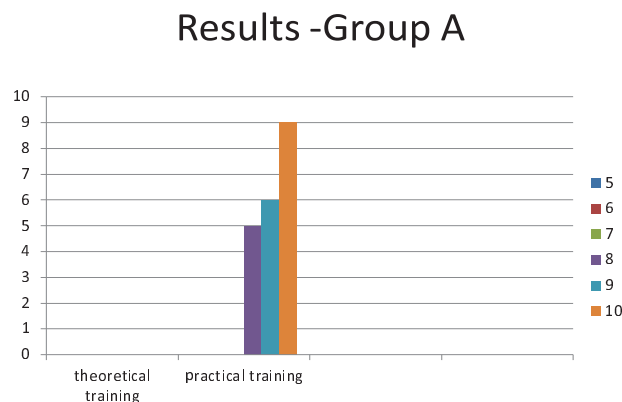
Our concerns for the improvement of teacher`s professional training contained a correlational study regarding:

- the development of didactic competences through field-related programmes;
- the development of didactic competences through the psychopedagogical module;
- the development of didactic competences through postgraduate studies;
- the development of didactic competences through projects.

The study comprised a number of 100 students, with 4 test samples of 25 students which are enroled in a form of psychopedagogic training. The study was carried out on a span of two years, 2010-2012. each of the above mentioned study programmes contain the same disciplines of psychopedagogic training with the same number of credits.

These students were recorded and observed through a span of two years and their progress was registered by assessment. Theoretical and practical results were observed, as well as the grades obtained at the assessment of theoretical and practical competences.

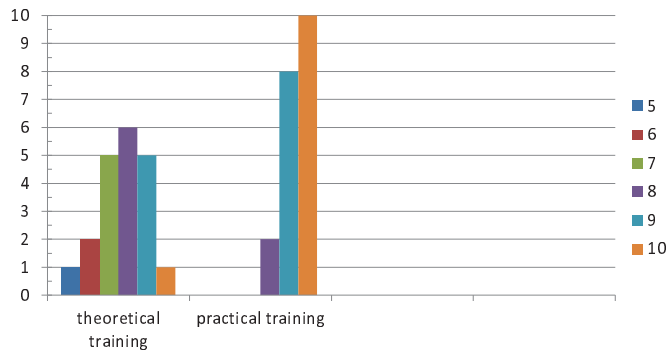
### Results



*Fig.1.Bar chart with the results of theoretical and practical training of students enrolled in initial training*

Observing the assessment results of students enrolled in initial training programmes we notice that they obtained grades between 6 and 10, the highest weight being grade 8 at theoretical training. For practical training, the grades were between 8 and 10.

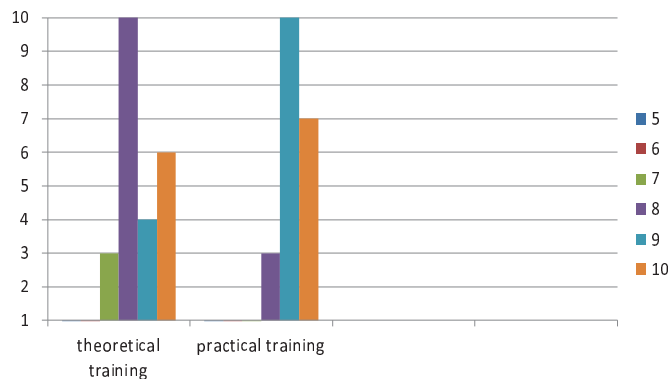
### Results-Group B



*Fig.no2. Bar chart with the results of theoretical and practical training of students from the psychopedagogical module*

The students from the psychopedagogical module obtained grades between 5 and 10, the highest weight being grade 8 at the assessment of theoretical knowledge and grades between 8 and 10, the highest weight being grades 9 and 10 at practical assessment.

### Results-Group C



*Fig.no3. Bar chart with the result of theoretical and practical training of students from postgraduate studies in psychopedagogical training*

The group from postgraduate studies obtained grades between 7 and 10 at theoretical training and grades between 8 and 10 at practice the highest weight being grade 9.

### Results -Group D

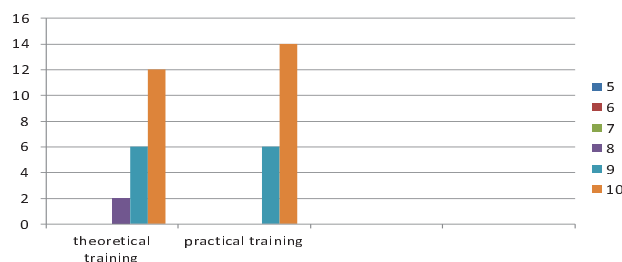


Fig.no.4.Bar chart with the results of theoretical and practical training of students from the psychopedagogical training project

Group D obtained results between 8 and 10 at theoretical exams and grades between 9 and 10 at practical exams, the highest weight being grade 10 in both exams.

Table no1. Centralized situation of sums obtained by students from all four training forms

DESCRIPTORS	A	B	C	D
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3,13</b>	<b>4,53</b>	<b>3,53</b>	<b>4,07</b>
Standard Error	0,11	0,08	0,09	0,11
Median	3	5	3	4
Mode	3	5	3	5
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>1,00</b>	<b>0,77</b>	<b>0,85</b>	<b>0,99</b>
Sample Variance	0,99	0,59	0,73	0,97
Kurtosis	0,00	1,73	-0,70	-1,43
Skewness	-0,19	-1,57	0,85	-0,37
Range	4	3	3	3
Minimum	1	2	2	2
Maximum	5	5	5	5
Sum	266	385	300	346
Count	85	85	85	85

Table no 2. Hierarchical situation with results obtained by students from all four training forms

	A	B	C	D
1	87	90	76	94
2	65	84	104	100
3	70	90	99	116
4	67	67	96	129
5	68	96	88	123
6	77	95	85	124
7	89	91	81	135
Total	523	613	629	821

We observe significant differences in the psychopedagogical training of future teachers from all four study programmes. The results have an ascending trend from initial training, to the module, postgraduate studies and the project, the lowest results being registered at students from the faculty and the highest at students from the project. We can interpret these differences by the students' lack of experience.

### **Conclusion**

We consider that high quality training of future teachers is a desideratum and a necessity that requires our full attention. The development of didactic competences implies a long process which involves biological, social, emotional and institutional factors that have to be reconsidered in the training of future teachers. A strong connection with practice, interaction between the contents of learning in the lecture room and the real situation in the classroom is required to improve the training of future teachers.

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