

DIDACTICA



DANUBIENSIS

Aspects Regarding Training Activity Analysis and Characteristics in the Romanian Educational System

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Abstract: The continuous education is an important part of any national educational system. In this matter, we have developed a study whose aim is to explore and understand the continuous training of pre-university teachers in Romania. The study represents an opportunity to bring to the fore the importance of continuous teacher training, to identify their needs and requirements in terms of professional development and to promote innovative and relevant educational practices for the Romanian education system. The study was conducted in a specific period of time and on a representative sample, showing the importance of the training process in the educational field.

Keywords: training; continuous education; training needs

JEL Classification: I25; P36

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1. Introduction

The most important part of educational processes is related to the continuity of the learning process, including the ones related to the teacher actors of the educational system. In this matter, in this paper we aim to analyse the training activity in Romania for a period comprised between August 2022 – July 2023, along with the needs and determinations of the barriers and characteristics of the training process in this area. Section 2 is referring to related work regarding this area, after that presenting the problem statement, the terminology used and the study objective. The latter part contains the analysis of the conducted study.

2. Related Work

The trends highlight the fact that teacher training is a dynamic and constantly evolving field that adapts to new requirements and challenges in the field of education. Regarding the educational process and the training process, the latter work worldwide is centred on personalized in-service training, by determining flexible professional development programs which are developed and adapted to the individual needs of teachers, in order to increase their relevance and impact on the quality of teaching and learning (Janssen, et. al, 2019). Also, a great deal of importance is given to the integration of the technology in teacher education (Kirkpatrick, et. al, 2019). Technology is playing an increasingly important role in the teacher education process (Ciurea, 2019). Digital platforms (Petre, 2022), online resources, distance learning tools and innovative teaching methods are developed and used to facilitate and enhance the continuing education experience of teachers. Also, studies are made on active and hands-on learning approaches and interactive activities (Mamurov, 2019; Khamroevich, 2021) special needs education (SNE) training (Hester, et. al, 2022), COVID-19 implications, especially in Romania (Barbu, et. al, 2022; Hatos, et. al, 2022; Ionescu, et. al, 2020) and socio-emotional skills and social learning (Mislia, 2021).

Also, collaboration between educational institutions and the professional environment is promoted to ensure continuous training that is as relevant and up-to-date as possible, aligned with the real requirements of the labor market and society.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the research, in this case, would be to investigate and understand the aspects related to the continuous training of pre-university teachers in Romania. Continuous training of teachers is an essential process for developing and improving their skills and abilities in order to ensure a quality education for students.

By conducting this study, the researchers would like to obtain relevant information on courses and continuing education activities in which pre-university teachers in Romania participate or have participated in the past. Also, other aspects were related to the duration and frequency of these in-service training activities, i.e. how much time teachers spend in these professional development courses or programs. Also, there were taken into consideration the subjects and themes covered in the continuous training, such as modern teaching methods, educational technologies, specific approaches for students with special needs, development of assessment skills, etc., the degree of satisfaction and usefulness perceived by teachers in terms of continuous training and its impact on the didactic activity, some potential obstacles or challenges encountered in the continuous training process, including issues related to funding, accessibility and relevance of training offers, and suggestions and recommendations for improving in-service training programs so that they better meet the needs and requirements of teachers.

The ultimate aim of the research is to bring understanding and useful information to education authorities, educational institutions and others involved in the professional development of teachers. Based on the results of the study, policies or programs can be proposed to improve and support the continuous training of teachers, which can contribute to increasing the quality of education offered to students in Romania.

4. Concepts and Terms

In a study applied to pre-university teachers in Romania to determine their continuing education, the following relevant concepts can be used:

- **Continuous education:** It is the process by which teachers develop and improve their skills, competences and professional knowledge throughout their teaching career. This concept involves participation in professional development activities,

such as courses, workshops, seminars or conferences, aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

- **Pre-university education teacher:** It refers to teaching staff who work in schools, high schools, gymnasiums or other pre-university education institutions, who teach students in pre-primary, primary or secondary education cycles.
- **Professional development courses:** These are structured and planned programs offered by educational institutions or other specialized entities with the aim of enhancing the professional skills and abilities of teachers.
- **Duration and frequency of in-service training:** This concept refers to the total time teachers spend in in-service training activities and the regularity with which they participate in these activities.
- **Continuous education topics and themes:** Refers to the areas and themes addressed in professional development activities, such as educational technologies, student assessment, differentiated pedagogy, specific approaches for students with special needs, etc.
- **Satisfaction and Perceived Usefulness:** This concept measures the degree of satisfaction and value perceived by teachers regarding in-service training and to what extent it has been useful to them in their teaching work.
- **Barriers and challenges:** These represent the difficulties or challenges teachers face in the process of participating in continuing education, such as lack of time, financial restrictions, or limited access to professional development programs.

These concepts will be analysed in the next sections.

5. Solution Approach

The study was applied to 285 people, conducted through the Google Forms application, can be described as an online research study, based on the use of a digital platform for data collection. Google Forms is a popular and affordable tool for creating online questionnaires and surveys that makes it easy to collect information from a large number of participants in an efficient and convenient way.

Research using Google Forms has the following key features and aspects, as well as the methodology:

- **Questionnaire Design:** The study authors created a custom questionnaire in Google Forms that included questions specific and relevant to the study's objectives and research questions. Questions were designed to be of different types, including open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions, or Likert scale.
- **Sample:** The study was conducted on a sample of 285 individuals, who were selected in a relevant manner to represent the population of interest. The respondents were participant to the courses of the “Education is Power” Association.
- **Data collection method:** Participants were invited to complete the online questionnaire through the link shared by the researchers. Data collection took place within a specific time frame (August 2022 – July 2023) and the information entered by the participants was stored electronically in a database.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** the study ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, thereby protecting personal data and ensuring research ethics.
- **Data analysis:** After collecting the data, the authors of the study probably used statistical analysis tools to examine the responses and obtain relevant results. This may include frequencies and means.
- **Limitations and considerations:** the limitations were related to the fact that the study was conducted in an online environment and on an relatively small environment, which may affect the representativeness of the data.

Studies conducted through the Google Forms application can bring many advantages, such as ease of data collection, accessibility for participants, and the possibility of obtaining a large number of responses in a relatively short time.

6. Analysis of Results

We will present next the main results related to the specified group. The first results show demographic aspects of the group.

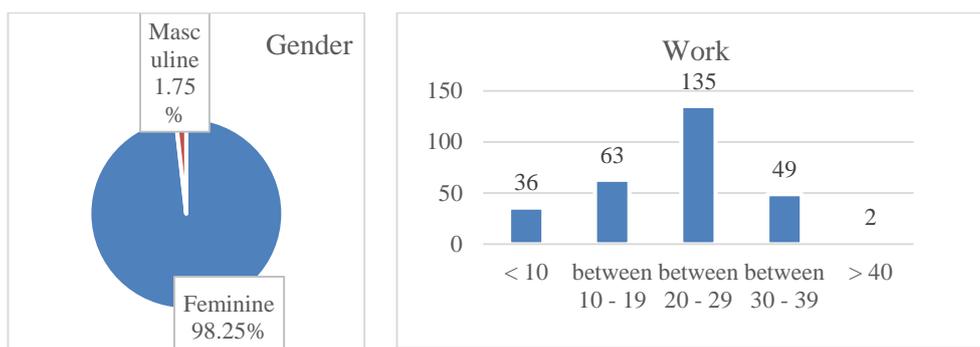


Figure 1. The Expressed Gender of the Group and the Length of Service

As we can see, the large majority of the participants (above 98%) to the questionnaire correspond to the feminine gender, corresponding to a greater deal of women that are interested in formal education in Romania. We can also see that the most populated category of work age is the one between 20 and 29 years (135 persons), with a maximum of 1 year of work age, a maximum of 41 years of work age and an average of approximately 21.56 years. The data related to the type of residence and work environment are shown in the next figure.

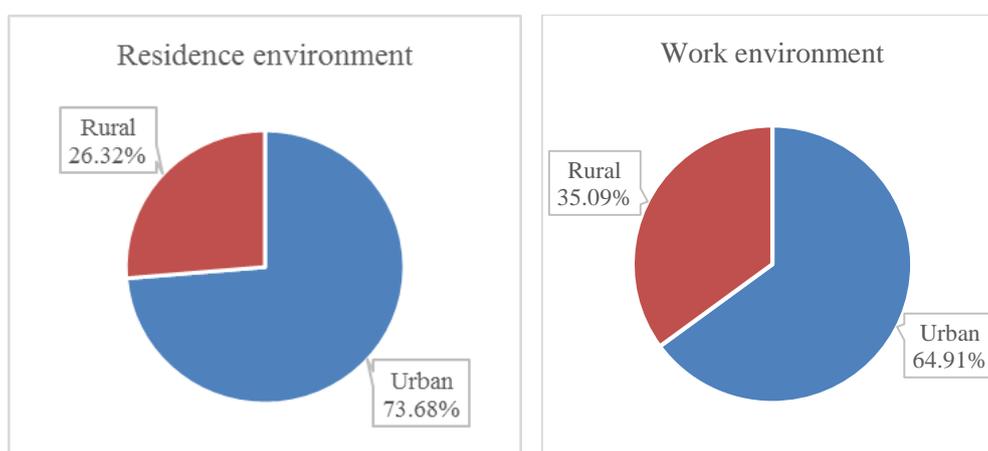


Figure 2. The Data Related to Residence and Work Environment

Approximately three quarters of the group (73,68%) are related to urban residence and a slightly elevated percentage of people work in the urban educational

institutions. Next, we will analyse the responses related to the educational background and training aspects.

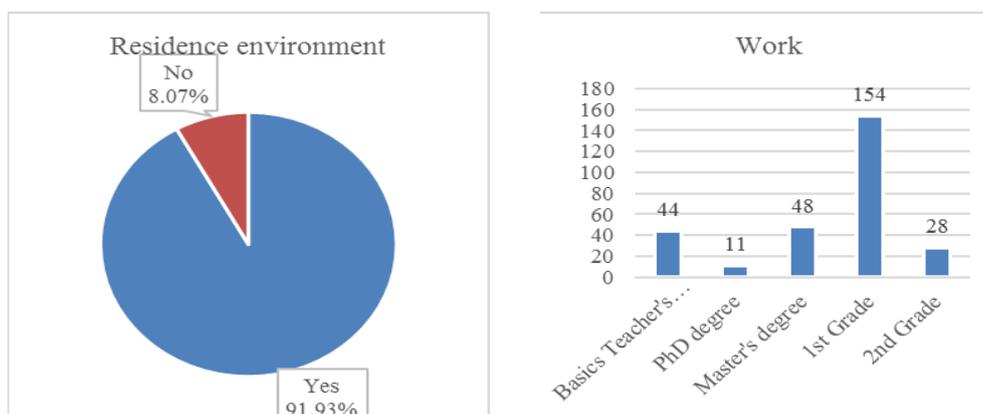


Figure 3. The Participation at Previous Training Courses and the Latest Obtained Educational Degree

We can observe that a large part of the group (154 persons) respondents obtained as the latest form of educational background in the field the 1st grade, followed by a lower number of teachers that obtained Basics Teacher's Degree, 2nd Grade, Master's Degree or PhD degree. Also, we can observe that a vast majority of teachers, larger than 90%, followed training courses along with the initial education. The next part shows the aspects related to organisational characteristics of the training courses preferred by the teachers.

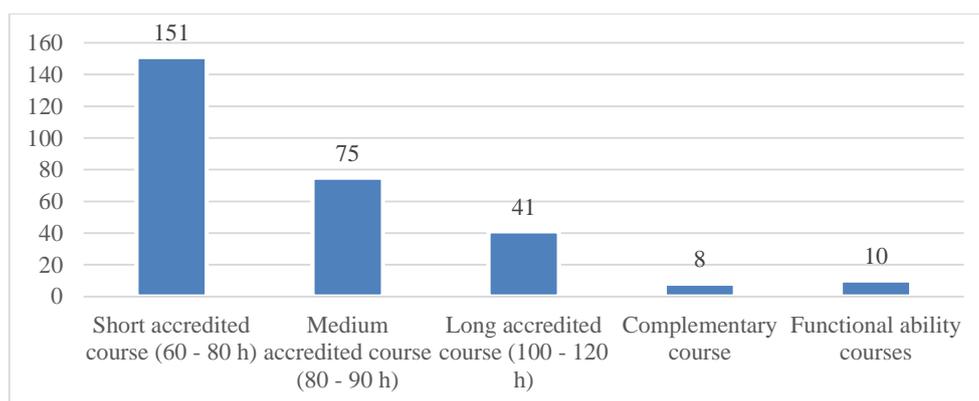


Figure 4. The Preferred Duration of the Courses

All the course categories were established accordingly to The Order of Romanian Ministry of Education no. 4.224/06.07.2022, which states that the training courses

for the teaching domain can fall under three main categories: accredited courses, complementary courses and functional ability courses. Approximately half of the respondents (151 persons) chose the short accredited course category, meaning that the course has a duration between 60 and 80 hours. A little number of teachers considered the complementary and functional ability courses, also possibly due to the fact that the terminology used for the training is still new and the teachers are not very familiar with it and to the need for the credits given for the accredited courses.

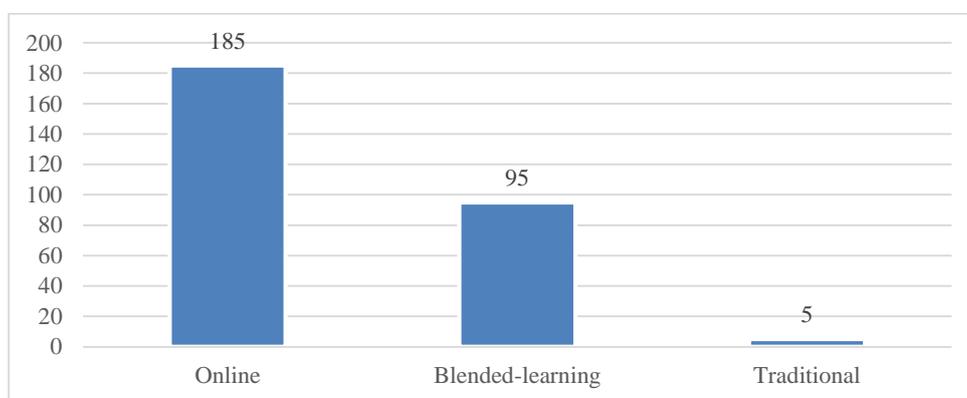


Figure 5. The Preferred Form of Organization of the Course

As for the preferred form of organisation, the most chosen one was the online form (185 persons), due to its versatility and the fact that teachers are familiarised with this form of organisation. Approximately half of the respondents preferred the blended-learning (traditional and online combined) form of organisation of the courses.

In response to the question “In which area do you feel the need for improvement for yourself?”, the respondents showed several facts.

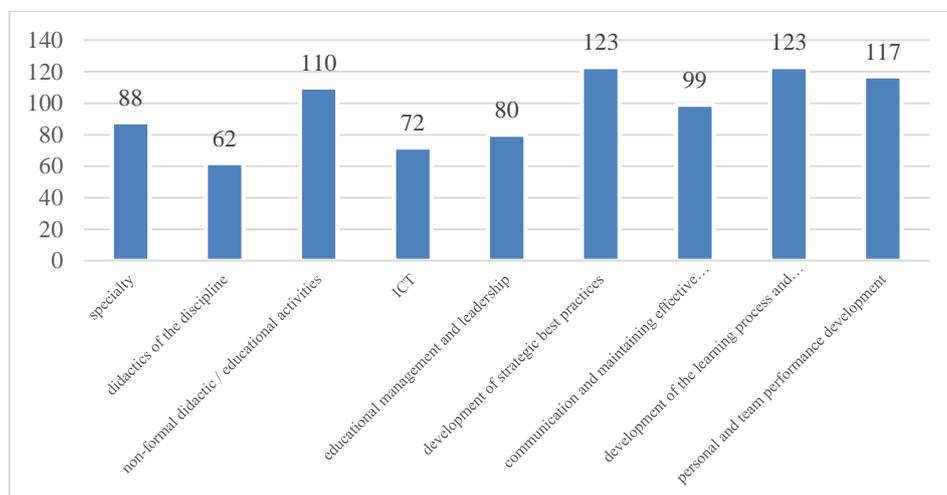


Figure 6. The Area Considered to be Improved

The responses were centred on the development of strategic practices in education, development in the learning process and the educational environment, personal and team performance development and also non-formal didactic or educational activities.

In response to the question “What category of knowledge/skills/topics do you think would be useful to fulfill your responsibilities?”, the respondents had the structure of responses presented in the next figure.

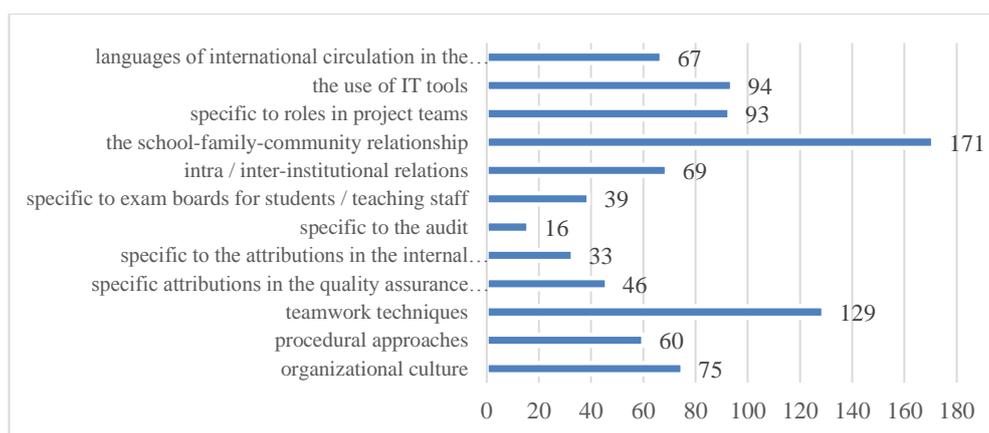


Figure 7. The Categories of Competencies Useful for the Professional Teaching Activity

The most responded choices were referred to the school-family-community relationship (171 persons), followed by teamwork techniques (129 persons), the usage of IT tools in education (94 persons) and specific roles in project teams (93 persons), leading to the conclusions that the teachers desire to develop competencies in emotional and community areas, as well as digital and project management-based areas.

The latter question included an open opinion about a course topic that the teacher would like to follow. The question, "If you would like to take a course for a specific subject, what would it be?", was answered very diversely, many of them related to:

- Educational leadership and management;
- ICT tools usage in the educational process;
- Integration of SEN (Special Education Needs) children in the mass school system;
- educational project management;
- mentorship;
- teamwork techniques;
- school relationship with community and parents;
- specific domain competencies;
- interactive teaching methods.

In conclusion, the continuous training of the teachers in Romania has several characteristics related to demographic and training aspects. The majority of the teachers have a feminine gender, with a predominance of teachers in urban areas and with a teaching experience of approximately 22 years. Regarding the educational aspects, the typical teacher has achieved at least the 1st Grade in the initial education and has certainly made at least one form of continuous education. Related to training preferences, the teacher desires accredited courses with a duration between 60 and 80 hours which are held in an online environment. The main areas needed for improvement are related to development in the learning process and the educational environment, personal and team performance development, as well as related to community relationship area.

Acknowledgement

We would like to address special thanks to the members of the „Educația este Putere”/„Education is Power” Association for the precious help given related to the data and research aspects.

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