

THE TEACHING CAREER IN ROMANIA AS PART OF THE INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING IN EUROPE*

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Abstract

In the last decades, all education systems in Europe have been faced with a crisis in the teaching profession. The pandemic period deepened this problem, through the shortage of teaching staff for certain subjects, through leaving the profession, through the low enrollment rate in professional development programs.

There is a consensus on the need to develop and implement certain policies meant to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, so that education systems benefit from well-trained staff willing to build a career and have availability for continuous professional development.

The study proposes an analysis of the European documents regarding the strategies of the European states in the field of the initial training of the teaching staff and an analysis of the current situation of the training of the teaching staff in Romania.

Key words: *Initial training; Professionalization for the teaching career; Induction into the profession.*

1. Introduction

The teacher development process, according to the latest European documents, begins with the initial training and induction seen as an entry package to the profession: "the training activity to become a teacher should be seen as a progressive process that includes the initial training of teachers, the induction phase and continuous professional development" (Raport Eurydice, 2022, p. 61).

The methods of initial teacher training for secondary education differ greatly from one country to another within the European Union, but they gravitate around two established classical models: consecutive and concurrent. The advantages and limitations of the two models have been extensively presented in the specialized

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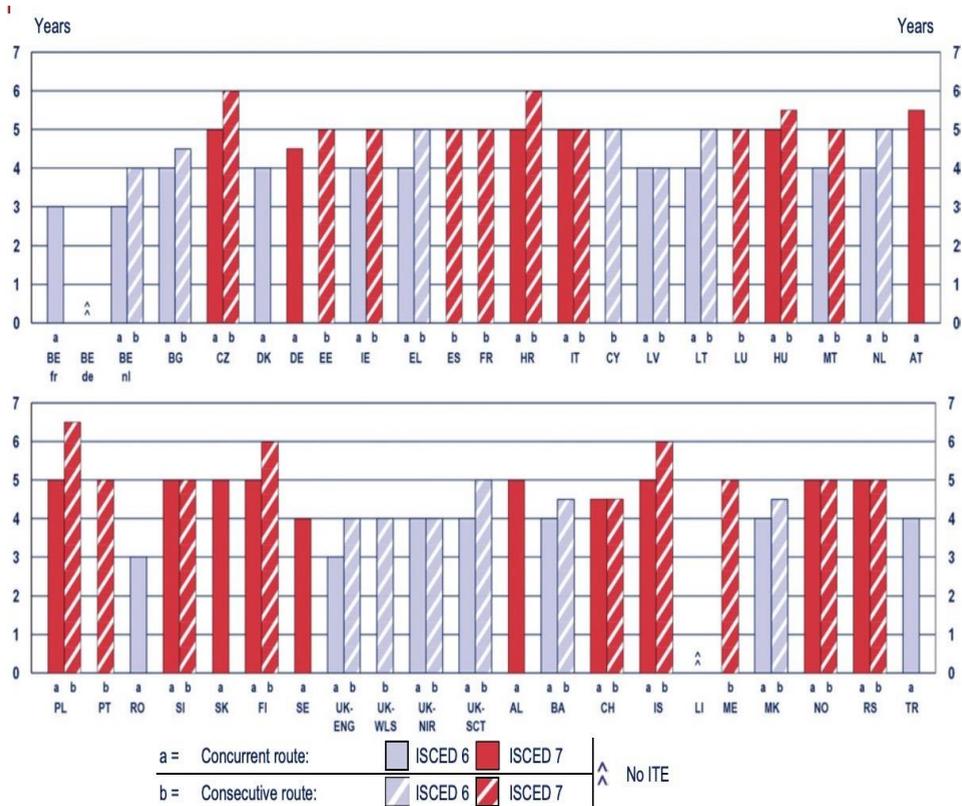
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literature: in the consecutive model, the initial training for the teaching career follows the university studies, and in the concurrent or coincident model, the psycho-pedagogical training disciplines are followed at the same time as the academic ones.

If the concurrent model offers integrated learning experiences (academic and psycho-pedagogical), the consecutive model seems more flexible, offering the possibility of selecting the profession, following the academic training.

From the figure below it can be seen that the two models are simultaneously offered by more than half of the European education systems for secondary education teacher training, the concurrent model is exclusively offered in nine education systems, and the consecutive model in eight of the European education systems. When only one initial teacher training route is offered, there is a tendency to offer alternative routes of entering the teaching profession.



Source: Eurydice.

Figure 1. Minimum nivel and minimum total duration of the mainstream initial teacher education (in years) for work in lower secondary education, 2019/2020

In the Czech Republic, the consecutive model is defined as a non-pedagogical master's degree plus 188 hours of professional training. Professional training can be

followed simultaneously or after obtaining a non-pedagogical master's degree. It usually lasts from one to two years.

In Germany, the minimum total duration of initial teacher training is 4.5 - 5.5 years, depending on how much the preparatory service lasts (Vorbereitungsdienst), which varies between 12 and 24 months, regulated by the Land.

In Greece, MA and PhD graduates in educational sciences can be qualified as teachers without following a teacher training program.

In Luxembourg, most teachers in lower secondary education obtain their master's degree diploma abroad.

In Malta, following a reform of the initial teacher training (2016/17), the Bachelor of Education program was replaced by a consecutive five-year course leading to the Master of Teaching and Learning Programme. There are still programs that offer a small number of concurrent initial teacher training courses.

In Hungary, the length of the initial teacher training programs depends on several factors (for example, the number of subjects covered; the field of study; the type of study).

In Austria, after obtaining their bachelor's degree, trainee teachers can start working. But they must complete their studies and obtain a master's degree within five years, possibly part-time.

In Slovenia, the consecutive initial teacher training program can also last six years.

In Sweden, the total duration of the initial teacher training is 4 years if it prepares teachers for two subjects and 4.5 years if it prepares teachers who are going to teach three subjects.

There are no teacher training courses in Liechtenstein, most teachers being trained in Austria or Switzerland, and the minimum requirement for recruitment is getting a master's degree.

In Norway, most initial teacher training programs lead to a master's degree, with the exception of the initial teacher training programs for teaching practical and aesthetic subjects, the final qualification of which is a bachelor's degree.

As there can be seen from the data previously presented, in most European education systems, initial training programs for lower secondary school teachers, lead to obtaining a master's degree (ISCED 7). In others, the minimum qualification is a bachelor's degree (ISCED 6). Some education systems – those where the bachelor's degree is the minimum level of the initial training required to be a teacher in lower secondary education – offer the possibility to carry out longer studies until obtaining a master's degree. This is true, for example, in the French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England). In Romania and the United Kingdom (Wales), starting from the 2020/21 academic year, new initial teacher training programs leading to a master's degree are available.

In Romania, starting with the academic year 2020/21, a pilot project for the consecutive didactic/educational master's model of initial teacher training is being implemented in eight universities.

In the United Kingdom (Wales), starting from September 2020, a new postgraduate course is available for the part-time teaching profession. This route

takes two years to complete and leads to a postgraduate certificate in education (including 60 credits at master's level) and the status of a qualified teacher.

As a rule, initial teacher training programs leading to a bachelor's degree last four years. Only in the French Community of Belgium, the Flemish Community of Belgium (competing model), Romania and the United Kingdom (England – competing model) these programs last for three years. In contrast, in Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Scotland), initial teacher training programs organized according to the consecutive model last for five years. The master's degree is usually awarded after the completion of the five-year program.

In the last five years, in some education systems, various aspects of initial teacher training have been reformed: in Ireland (the consecutive model), Malta (the consecutive model), Austria, Montenegro and Norway, the minimum level of ITT to work in lower secondary education has been updated to the level where it is necessary to have obtained a master's program diploma. In Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia, the consecutive model was introduced simultaneously with the competing traditional routes. Instead, two countries reduced the number of ITT routes. In Austria and Montenegro, there is now a single master's level route (concurrent in Austria and consecutive in Montenegro) which has replaced the previous models.

2. Current legislation and proposals for the initial teacher training model

2.1. The competency profile of the teacher

We are presenting in summary elements of the competency profile of the teacher in the current and future legislative documents (the project that is under public debate).

In the current updated Law 1/2011, we do not find a chapter that refers to the professional profile and the role of the teacher. In the Order of the Minister of Education No. 5561 of October 7, 2011 for the approval of the Methodology regarding the continuous training of the teaching staff in pre-university education, updated, we find the competencies corresponding to the teaching profession.

In the previously mentioned Methodology, article 91 specifies the main fields in which the competencies corresponding to the teaching profession are defined: the field of specialization and didactics of specialization corresponding to the educational disciplines and the position held by the teacher; the field of pedagogy and educational psychology; the field of educational management and school legislation; the field of information and communication techniques applied in the teaching and learning processes, in institutional management and data management; inter-trans-disciplinary and cross-curricular fields aiming at alternative and complementary training strategies, research and innovation, communication and partnerships with the social environment, etc.

The competency system presented takes over and adapts to the specifics of the teaching profession and to the requirements of Romanian pre-university education the categories and levels of competency the European Qualifications Framework

(EQF), the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE) and the European Qualifications Framework operate with.

Next, the aforementioned document presents a definition of the concept of professional competency and presents the fundamental categories of competencies: professional (knowledge/ cognitive dimension, functional-action skills), complementary (digital, linguistic, counseling), transversal (role, personal and professional development), leadership, guidance and control, acquired through professional conversion programs.

The professional competencies derived from the listed knowledge and skills aim at: the design, implementation and evaluation of the educational process in pre-university education, the logical structuring and psycho-pedagogical transposition of the contents of teaching and learning in the specialization obtained through undergraduate studies or, as the case may be, through secondary level specialization studies, investigating and solving problems specific to school and education.

The complementary competencies aim at: mastering the concepts and theories of horizontal/ vertical communication, the use of the computer in the instructional/ educational process, the application of the necessary knowledge, the abilities and attitude needed in the counseling activity of students and parents.

The transversal competencies aim at: the recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturalism, learning autonomy, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, openness to lifelong learning, respect and development of the professional values and ethics, active and effective insertion in the collectivity/ school and/ or professional community, cultivating a school environment centered on values and democratic relations, autonomy in searching, selecting, processing and communicating information.

The new draft law stipulates for the development of a new methodology for establishing the competency profile of the teaching staff, developed by the relevant ministry. As a new element, the document specifies in art.132: in the professional career, the teacher fulfills the necessary roles for the adaptation to the current requirements of the students.

The teacher fulfills the following roles: author of the teaching-learning process; learning facilitator; connector between all beneficiaries of the education process, direct or indirect; student mentor; innovator in education; creator of educational resources.

Also, the presentation of a medical certificate issued on a specific form developed by the Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Health, which establishes the medical incompatibilities with the teaching function, is a new element.

The curricular guiding marks regarding the initial theoretical training of the teaching staff in the specialty, according to the two documents under analysis, are established by the relevant ministry, based on the analysis of the training needs in the education system.

The initial training of teachers according to the legislation in force proposes both models: concurrently through the psycho-pedagogical training program (level 1 and 2) and consecutively through the didactic master's degree. The draft law, in addition to the two models, brings as a new element the alternative route of entry into the teaching profession by taking an examination of the theoretical knowledge of pedagogy:

Legislation in force – National Education Law 1/2011 updated	Proposed Legislation – Bill
<p>Art. 236. (1) The initial training for teaching positions in pre-university education includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) initial, theoretical training in the specialty, carried out by universities, within accredited programs according to the law;b) didactic master's degree lasting 2 years;c) the practical internship with the duration of one school year, carried out in a school, under the coordination of a mentor teacher.	<p>Art. 127 (1) Students and graduates of higher education who opt for the teaching career have the obligation to complete the courses of a two-year didactic master's degree with or the psycho-pedagogical training programs of level I, respectively II, accredited according to the law.</p> <p>(2) By way of exception, graduates of higher education who have not completed the initial training provided for in paragraph (1) can opt for the teaching career, under the condition of taking and passing an additional examination of the theoretical knowledge of pedagogy for the beginning of the teaching internship, organized by CNFDCD at the level of territorial structures.</p>

The alternative pathways to a teaching qualification may refer to education and/or training programs simultaneously introduced with the initial teacher training programs used as alternative entry points into the education system possibly leading to a teaching career.

Compared to the initial teacher training in public education, these programs are usually characterized by a high degree of flexibility, a shorter duration and are partly or entirely based on on-the-job training. In some education systems, alternative ways have been introduced to respond to the shortage of teaching staff. In others, such pathways serve to diversify the profession by attracting very good graduates and/ or highly qualified professionals from other fields.

The alternative programs usually target either people with professional experience acquired within or outside education (lateral entry into the system) or graduates of other disciplines. These courses can offer flexible forms of enrollment, such as part-time, distance or mixed courses, as well as evening courses.

All over Europe, 18 education systems report the introduction of alternative pathways to obtain a teaching qualification. Although there is no unique model for these alternative pathways, two main approaches can still be observed: short-term programs intended for professionals are mainly designed for higher education graduates from other fields (Belgium – Germanophobic community, Denmark, Malta, Austria, Slovakia, Sweden and Turkey) and activity-based and work-based training (Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (England and Wales) and Switzerland).

Although several European education systems have introduced alternative qualification paths to work in the teaching field, the number of teachers qualified in this way remains marginal. According to TALIS 2018, in the EU, only 4.4% of the teachers qualify through fast-track or specialized teacher training programs, and yet the new draft law on education in Romania provides for the introduction of professional training through activities and practice at work. Such a route is not

justified in the context where the problem is not the insufficient number of graduates of psycho-pedagogical training programs to enter the teaching profession, but the motivation of these graduates to enter and stay in the teaching profession.

2.2. The induction of teachers in Romania

Induction for newly qualified teachers is understood in the current context as a structured phase of support that lasts at least a few months. In this stage, teachers fully or partially fulfill the tasks of experienced teachers and are remunerated for their activity. Induction has important formative and supporting components; this usually includes additional training as well as personalized support and counseling. In addition, in some education systems, it also acts as a trial period before the position is confirmed. In certain education systems, the successful completion of the induction phase is a mandatory prerequisite for obtaining a full pedagogical qualification (European Commission\ EACEA\ Eurydice, 2018, p. 34).

In the current legislation, the induction into the teaching career is specified in art. 236, paragraph 1, letter c) the practical internship with the duration of one school year, carried out in a school, under the coordination of a mentor teacher, which has never been exerted.

In Romania, the consecutive route, through a didactic master's degree, was put into practice through the project Start in the teaching career, starting with the 2020 academic year, so that we are in a situation where the first generation of graduates should benefit from induction through the internship with duration of 1 year. The graduates of the concurrent route, through the psycho-pedagogical training program with a view to certification for the teaching profession, did not benefit from the provisions of career induction.

The draft law resumes the issue of the beginning in the teaching career and details the possibility of induction into the teaching profession: art.135 (1). The graduate of the initial training program takes a certification exam within the organizing institution. After passing the certification exam, the organizing institution issues a certificate, which gives its holder the right to enroll in the assignment procedure, in order to carry out the teaching internship at the level of a school.

2.3. The curriculum of initial teacher training programs in Romania

Regardless of the initial training model (consecutive or concurrent) that is implemented and the level of qualification it proposes, the content of the programs is very important in terms of the taught subject and professional, pedagogical competencies.

We are presenting in summary the training curriculum offered by the competing model given by the Psycho pedagogical Training Programs for certification in the teaching career.

The curriculum is established independently by higher education institutions, according to the national strategies for the development of higher education and national academic standards. The theme of the initial training courses for the teaching profession, the number of hours allocated, the number of credits and the form of examination are established by ORDER No. 4139/2022.

The curriculum of the psycho-pedagogical training programs is structured on 3 components: core curriculum, extended curriculum and optional curriculum. The core curriculum is made up of the mandatory didactic subjects and activities for levels I and II of certification for the teaching profession.

The core curriculum includes the following subject choices:

- a) fundamental psycho-pedagogical training subjects - 18 credits;
- b) specialized didactic and practical training subjects - 12 credits.

The extended curriculum is made up of the mandatory didactic subjects and activities for obtaining level II certification for the teaching profession.

The extended curriculum includes the following subject choices:

- a) subjects for extension of psycho-pedagogical training - 10 credits;
- b) subjects of extension of specialized didactic and practical training - 10 credits.

Thus, the mandatory subjects are: Psychology of education; The fundamentals of pedagogy; The theory and methodology of the curriculum; The theory and methodology of training; The theory and methodology of evaluation; Student class management; Didactics of specialization; Computer assisted training; Pedagogical practice in pre-university education (1); Pedagogical practice in pre-university education (2); Psychopedagogy of adolescents, young people and adults; Design and management of educational programs; Didactics of the field and developments in the didactics of the specialty; Pedagogical practice in high school, post-high school and university education.

In addition to the compulsory subjects, there are two packages of optional subjects from which one subject is chosen for study.

Here we are presenting the curricula for the consecutive model, offered through the didactic master's program, starting with the academic year 2020/2021.

According to the Methodology for the establishment and organization of the didactic master's programs, from 12.06.2020, the subjects provided in the framework education plans are:

Psycho-pedagogical, managerial training and educational research	Specialized training, specialized didactics and pedagogical practice
Pedagogy: theories and practices	Specialized discipline (main specialization)
Educational psychology (I. Cognitive processes and human development; II. Psychology of learning and personal development)	Specialized didactics (main)
School curriculum and curriculum development	Didactics of the field (integrated approach of the school curriculum)
Ethics and academic integrity	Pedagogical practice I (pedagogy)
Instructional design and learning theories	Pedagogical practice II (specialty)
Classroom management	Pedagogical practice III (specialty)
Educational Research I (observational field research, case studies, etc.)	Pedagogical practice IV (specialty)
Assessment and testing in education	Effective communication and emotion management
Inclusive education	Educational Research II (action research)
	Virtual learning environments
	Educational research for the elaboration of the dissertation (co-supervision)

The optional and facultative subjects (suggestions according to OM 4524/2020): Optional subjects at the discretion of the university, centered on the transversal fields of competency (over the 30 mandatory credits); Optional psychopedagogical/specialised discipline at the discretion of the university (focusing on transversal areas of competency).

According to the 2018 TALIS results, almost 70% of the teachers in the EU report that their formal education or training included all the main components of initial teacher training. In approximately three quarters of the European education systems, this proportion is significantly higher than the EU level.

The ratio exceeds 85.0% in Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Denmark, Austria, Romania, Finland and the United Kingdom (England), where there is a long tradition of combining the didactic content, pedagogy and practice in the initial teacher training.

Conversely, in the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus and Iceland, the share of teachers who have been trained in all the essential elements is below the EU level. In Spain, France and Italy, this percentage is below 60.0%, the lowest percentage being recorded in Spain (41.5%).

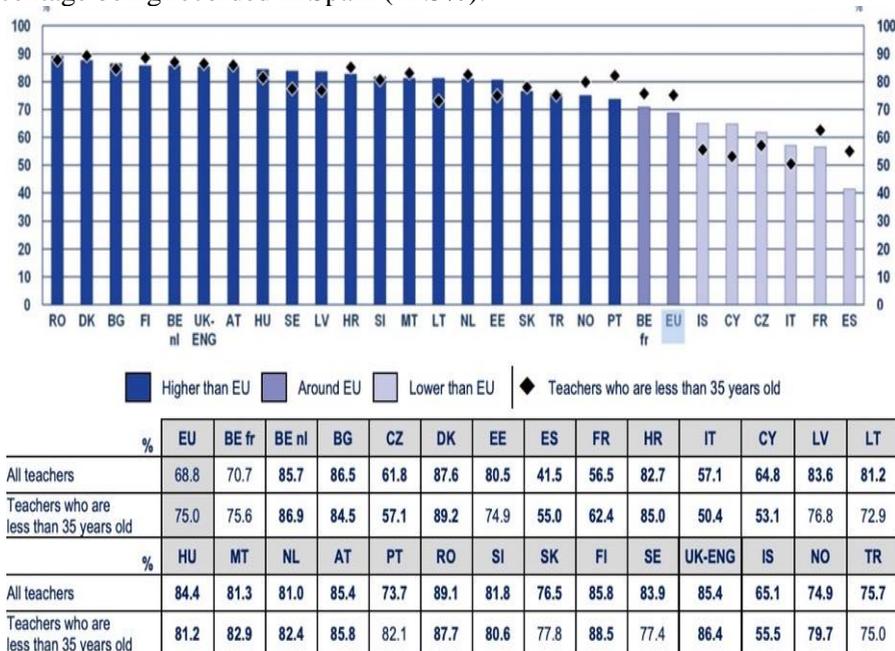


Figure 2. Proportion of lower secondary education teachers who have completed a formal education or training program that includes content, pedagogy and classroom practice, 2018

Source: Eurydice, based on the 2018 TALIS Report

By corroborating the initial teacher training curriculum in Romania with the

studies that were made at the level of the European Union states, it can easily be seen that Romania is among the European states where the initial teacher training includes didactic content, pedagogical elements and pedagogical internships.

3. Conclusions

The analysis of the initial teacher training system in Romania compared to the other teacher training systems in the European Union states, gives us the opportunity to identify the strengths, weaknesses, but also the opportunities and threats they face.

We appreciate the operation of the two models, concurrent and consecutive, from the perspective of access to initial training programs for those who wish to pursue a career. The possibility to follow the psycho-pedagogical training program, in a post-graduate, intensive and modular regime, can be considered an alternative way to access the teaching career for those who wish to do so, be it specialists in certain fields or people who want a change of their career path.

The European countries that have resorted to alternative ways of access to the teaching career face a shortage of teaching staff. The Romanian system is not facing a shortage of teaching staff, but rather a weak motivation of the graduates to enter the system.

Another problem is the career induction period, which has been provided for since 2011 in the Education Law, but which even today, in 2022, is not put into practice. The induction represents the mentoring period that the debutant teaching staff should benefit from, but which in Romania is not put into practice according to the legislation.

The initial training system for teachers in Romania needs reform from the perspective of building a competency profile of the teaching staff in accordance with the current needs of society, from the perspective of contents and training methodologies.

Another important aspect is the activities of pedagogical practice, the increase in the number of hours of pedagogical practice does not mean added value in the practical training of the graduates of psycho-pedagogical training programs, and there is a need for a reevaluation from the financial perspective of mentoring, a motivation of the mentors of practice.

There is a consensus regarding the need to develop and implement policies to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, so that the Romanian education system benefits from well-trained teaching staff that can build a career and have availability for continuous professional development.

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