COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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Abstract:
An educational institution is a place blessed within its mission full of nobility and generosity—that of forming and cultivating personalities, shaping livings, of creating individualities, opening gates to culture, prompting the knowledge, and building step by step the foundation of the future society. Beyond the walls, old or newly renovated, school is about people.

According to Gonzales Report, one of the essential documents substantiating European policies – for the period 2020-2030, “human capital is the strategic key tool for success in the global economy.” Therefore, the school plays a central role in the formation and development of the younger generation in the field of human resources activity, being equivalent to the progress of society.

They should bring with themselves training, experience, reason, intelligence, discernment, creativity, motivation and effort in the service of increasing the quality of teaching and school organization visibility. All these elements underline the power of teachers, sine qua non condition of performance.

Referring to the set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that a teacher should have, the performance standard for teaching reminds methodological skills, communication and relationship skills, student assessment skills, psychosocial skills, technical, technological and career management skills. The literature suggests in turn a number of personal characteristics which define the structure of teacher effective and efficient.

The question is to what extent these skills contribute to the formation of educated citizens, citizens able to value the information, to use it creatively, to proactive spirit citizens, flexible and motivated for success. Do these competences talk about success in teaching, about individual and organizational performance?

Concerning performance in terms of result and behavior, that thing that a teacher leaves behind, we may say that it is a direct reflection on student performance, on school achievements and on the education system as a whole.

This research aims at investigating the relationship between competence and performance in secondary education teachers work in an attempt to achieve the professional profile of the performant teacher from students, parents and teachers point of view.

The performant teacher may be ideal teacher as well, the teacher able to perform the miracle of turning ordinary people into winners.

Keywords: competence, performance, teaching career, human resources

JEL Classification: I21, L25, M54

1. Introduction

The concept of career is controversial, in the specialty literature being found several definitions, meanings.

If traditionally, the concept of career is associated with a vertical development of an employee, modern approach gives the term the meaning of professional development, vertically or horizontally, which gives satisfaction to the individual to self develop and go through the successive stages of a personal project in the professional sphere (Frătișă, 2012, p.3).

Seen as a series of professions, occupations, positions, activities, experiences and roles applied/practiced by the individual throughout his professional life, along with their subjective interpretation, resulting in distinct professional trajectories (Zlate, 2004, p. 351-352), the concept of career must be viewed from two perspectives: "external career” and "internal career” (Johns, 1998, p.560) or, in the opinion of M. Zlate "objective career” and "subjective career”. Career can be both a succession of positions/posts occupied by an individual throughout his professional life, as well as the individual’s perception of his professional evolution.

In order to build a teaching career the individual contributes with the proper intellectual, moral, professional and leadership qualities, with self-knowledge capability, forming interpersonal skills, assuming different social roles, through competences, and also the organization/school organizations where he evolves, contexts that he intersects, the quality of specific legislation and the manner of its application (Marinescu, 2014, p.1).
According to the traditionalist orientation, the purpose of the teacher was to preserve and pass on the knowledge to younger generations. In this vision, the teacher appears to be a mediator who must cross the spiritual space between generations, on the same beaten track.

In parallel with this understanding, is the educator as social agent, active and responsible participant not only in the life of the school but also of the community he is part of, contributing through his work to all transformations that occur in it. From the existing data results that this orientation is imposed today more and more insistently, for any nation that is attentive to its future.

Romania's National Security Strategy specifies that the competitiveness degree of the nation is determined by the extent to which we are talking about a well-educated society that is able to value the potential of creativity and intelligence available to the Romanian people. In this regard it is imposed as priority the modernization and reform of the education system, its harmonization with the European one, efficient use of human resources in education.

The quality of the educational service offered in undergraduate education is largely conditioned by the quality of human resources, i.e. the professional quality of teachers.

Therefore, human resources in school organizations can be regarded as a strategic resource, human resource managers accounting for the task to identify, understand and value individual differences of employees to achieve organizational goals and aims of education, to provide opportunities for implementing professional skills and their continuous development, to objectively assess performances of teachers and support and encourage individual efforts to build a successful teaching career.

Successful teaching career is equivalent to professional competence and performance, teachers being assimilated with trained, creative, motivated, proficient, enthusiastic, loyal and with potential people.

2. Competence, professionalism, performance

A competence is a way of thinking, feeling and acting through which a person can be successful in a job or in a specific role. The level of competence of an individual may be one of the best indicators of his future performance.

A competence is best described as "a complex combination of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and desires that leads to efficient human actions in a particular field" (Deakin, 2008, pp. 31-55). Competence is therefore distinct from qualification, which is defined as the ability to complete complex acts with ease, accuracy and adaptability.

The term of sustainable development was introduced in the current language during the last decennium, and the importance given to it is reflected by the ample literature in support of the need to reconsider the current relation between man and the environment. There is an attempt of systematically identifying the aspects specific to this type of development and elaborating new concepts offering criteria for the reorientation of the human activity. (Iacob S E, “Controversies concerning the concept of sustainable development”, 2014, pp 91-98).

The recommendation of the European Parliament and of the European Union Council regarding key competences from the lifelong learning perspective outlines, for graduates of compulsory education, a "European training profile" divided into eight areas of competence.

Competence constitutes the action potential of a person, by action understanding things/complex issues (problem solving, decision making, projects) which mobilize adequate resources (knowledge, strategies) in different situations.

In terms of competences of the teachers, the ministers of the Member States of the European Union in 2009 considered that skills, knowledge and commitment of teachers and the quality of school leadership, are the most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes.

When talking about competences in education, it is useful to distinguish between teaching competences and competencies of teachers (OECD, 2009). Teaching competencies are focused on the role of the teacher in the classroom, while teachers’ competences imply a broader, more systemic view, which aims the professionalism of teachers at the level of the individual, school organization, local community, and the national education system.

Teachers' competencies viewed as a collection of "dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills" (González, Wagenaar, 2005) assume the combination of four fundamental aspects: learning to think like a teacher (critical examination and developing pedagogical thinking), learning to know as a teacher (knowledge of contents and methodology of the discipline, curricula, classroom management, new technologies, etc.), learning to feel like a teacher (commitment, trust, respect, flexibility, responsibility, passion, initiative, etc.), learning to act like a teacher (integration of contents, working methods and techniques in relation to the expectations of the educational environment) (Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

Beyond common aspects, teacher competences vary from one country to another, depending on the culture of the respective state, the elements related to the pedagogical tradition, the nature of teaching.

Seen from the competences’ perspective, the teacher should be an expert in the specialty field, an actor in the
classroom, a man who constantly learns, a social agent, a reflexive professional. By fulfilling these roles, the teacher can achieve superior performance.

In order to be a true professional and to be effective in his work, the teacher needs to possess the following qualities or skills: solid specialized training, psycho pedagogical and methodical training, professional, pedagogical, methodical, systematic and continuous improvement capacity, broad cultural horizon, moral and civic profile, management capacity, posture (Bontaș, 2008).

The scientific literature considers that professional performance of the teacher is a multidimensional construct. A teacher is performing when he is interested in his students as individuals and communicates this by creating carefully planned training opportunities, implemented and evaluated, in a productive environment, with the objective to increase the level of achievement of each student (Collinson, Killeavy, Stephenson, 1999 cited Stronge & Hindman, 2006), but also to achieve organizational and systemic goals.

Teacher performance is evaluated annually in line with MEN Order no. 3597/06.18.2014 for the amending and supplementing of the Methodology for evaluating the work of teachers and support staff, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports no. 6143/2011. Performance evaluation of teachers has two components: self-evaluation and assessment based on job description and evaluation form.

In the education system, in addition to annual evaluation of performance, is performed also the occasional evaluation: evaluation of the activity during class assistance; evaluation by the school inspection; evaluation of activity in semester of the methodical commission; evaluation with the occasion of teachers mobility; assessment to obtain gradation of merit; assessment to obtain awards/medals specified in the Status of teachers, Chapter I, Section VII of the National Education Law no.1 / 2011.

Objective, unitary, transparent evaluation of teachers implicitly leads to ensuring a motivational system with real impact on the increase of performance. However, it points out that teacher performances are subject to: the effort used for solving tasks, individual skills, understanding the role that they have in the organization, but also the knowledge or competence. But there is not a unified and generally accepted model of personal characteristics to be recognized as components of cognitive, emotional proficiency nature (Laursen, 2005), as there is a general competence system or professional standards of teachers recognized at the level of several states or the European Union.

3. Relations between competence and performance in the activity of teachers in secondary education

It is said that the best way to predict the future is to create it yourself. This happens when our decisions and actions can influence the course of events. Of all socio-professional categories, teachers seem to be the most able to contribute through work, dedication, professionalism in creating the future.

With the intention to come up with a particular contribution to the expansion of knowledge on the professional profile of the performing teacher in the vision of students, parents and teachers, we will go on the premise that performance in the work of teachers in secondary education correlates positively with their professional competence.

3.1. Research Methodology

The most important objective of the study was to operationalize competences which, according to the teachers, parents and students, are most relevant for the performing teacher profile. Moreover, we tried to develop a predictive model of teacher performance, considering professional skills as predictors.

Other objectives:
- identifying the existence of significant differences between the manner of perceiving teachers performance at the level of parents, students, teachers;
- existence of direct determination and direct proportionality between the professional competences of the teacher and his performance.

The two hypotheses that guide our approach are:

Hypothesis 1: The perception of teachers, parents, students on the competences composing the profile of the performing teachers is different.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between the performance of teachers in secondary education and their professional competences.

Research Tool

In order to investigate the hypotheses was used the structured questionnaire, which was divided into two sections. The first section contains information about the situation of respondents (target group affiliation, sex, age, professional experience) and the second part contains three items. The first item was created beginning from the Top Ten method which consists in establishing a list with ten relevant competences that define, in the perspective of respondents, the performing teacher, by choosing them from a number of 37 specific competences. The other two items
aim the degree of determination between performance and competence, as well as the need for "extension" of professional competences of teachers and beyond the classroom borders.

The sample

The investigated lot included 40 teachers, 40 parents and 40 former and current students select based on availability of two schools in Dâmboviţa county, one urban and one rural. Real Time needed to fill in the questionnaire was ten minutes and the period in which the questionnaire was applied was October 2014.

3.2. Research results

Data collection completion was followed by verification and validation of collected questionnaires (120 questionnaires). There were no cancellations of items and questionnaires and therefore the number of valid questionnaires was 120. After processing the data, we sketched the portrait of the performing teacher from the perspective of the three categories of respondents:

- **Teachers**
  - Use of appropriate teaching methods and strategies for individual or group characteristics, scope and type of lesson
  - Evaluation design and use of appropriate strategies for individual or group assessment
  - Manifestation of openness to innovative trends necessary in professional development
  - Accessing various information sources for documentation purposes
  - Manifestation of empathic behavior
  - Adequate organization of educational activities according to the dominant type of lesson
  - Use of computers in the instructive-educational process
  - Capitalization of methods and techniques of knowledge and activation of students
  - Optimal use of spatial-temporal factors in order to improve the instructive-educational process
  - Development of evaluation tools according to the purpose and individual or group peculiarities

- **Parents**
  - Use of appropriate teaching methods and strategies for individual or group characteristics, scope and type of lesson
  - Manifestation of openness to innovative trends necessary in professional development
  - Manifestation of empathic behavior
  - Use of computers in the instructive-educational process
  - Capitalization of methods and techniques of knowledge and activation of students
  - Optimal use of spatial-temporal factors in order to improve the instructive-educational process
  - Development of evaluation tools according to the purpose and individual or group peculiarities
  - Establishing materials and teaching aids used in learning activities
  - Implementation of joint projects school-family-community
  - Mastering the concepts and theories of modern communication

- **Students**
  - Use of appropriate teaching methods and strategies for individual or group characteristics, scope and type of lesson
  - Manifestation of openness to innovative trends necessary in professional development
  - Manifestation of empathic behavior
  - Adequate organization of educational activities according to the dominant type of lesson
  - Use of computers in the instructive-educational process
  - Capitalization of methods and techniques of knowledge and activation of students
  - Establishing materials and teaching aids used in learning activities
  - Implementation of joint projects school-family-community
  - Mastering the concepts and theories of modern communication
  - Development of evaluation tools according to the purpose and individual or group peculiarities

By analyzing the choices expressed by the population of the target group, it appears that six of the selected specific competences are common to the three categories of respondents. They fall into the following categories of general competences, listed in relation to the number of options expressed: methodological competences (use of appropriate teaching methods and strategies for individual or group characteristics, scope and type of lesson), career management competences (manifestation of openness to innovative trends necessary in professional development), communication and relationship competences (manifestation of empathic behavior), technical and technological competences (computer use in the instructive-educational process), psychosocial competences (capitalization of methods and techniques of knowledge and activation of students) student assessment competences (development of evaluation tools according to the purpose and individual or group peculiarities). We note that the performing teacher profile contains specific competences from all six categories of general competences defined by the Ministry of National Education in performance standards for teachers.

In outlining the successful teacher portrait appear other seven specific competences that are relevant only for certain categories of respondents:
a) only teachers: students' competences assessment (Evaluation design and use of appropriate strategies for individual or group assessment), communication and relationship competences (Accessing various information sources for documentation purposes).

b) teachers and parents: methodological competences (Optimal use of spatial-temporal factors in order to improve the instructive-educational process).

c) teachers and students: methodological competences (Adequate organization of educational activities according to the dominant type of lesson).

d) parents and students: methodological competences (Establishing materials and teaching aids used in learning activities), communication and relationship competences (Implementation of joint projects school-family-community; Mastering the concepts and theories of modern communication).

We present the following general competences considered predictors of performance for teachers in relation to their importance emphasized by the selection operated by the investigated lot: methodological competences (four specific competences selected), communication and relationship competences (four specific competences selected), students assessment competences (two selected specific competences), psychosocial competence (one specific competence selected), technical and technological competences (one specific competence selected), career management competence (one specific competence selected).

Chart no.1 Profile teacher performance

In evaluating items 2 and 3 was used the Likert attitude scale with five steps, where answer 1 signifies strong disagree and answer 5 complete agreement.

In formulating item 2, we started from the idea highlighted in the specialty literature, that the competence frame in the teaching profession involves deep knowledge of the manner to teach their specific object (we refer to specialized knowledge but also specialty methodic), cognitive and practical skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability (ability to adapt to the general requirements and national regional/local practices to meet the learning needs of students), ability to innovate, critical attitude towards their own practices, proactive attitude etc.

At the formulated question, 64% of respondents express total agreement and 24% of respondents agree that the teaching profession requires from the practitioners having not only teaching competences but also competences that involve the connection with the community or even the one for developing competences.

Chart no.2 Competence-performance relationship

Item 3, shows the respondents' opinion about the determination relationship, namely the proportionality between professional competences and performance of teachers. Thus, 66% of respondents felt complete agreement, 26% agree, while 8% have not expressed an opinion in this regard.
4. Conclusions

This present research was conducted to identify the extent to which practitioners' performance in school education is in a positive relationship with the number and degree of development of professional competences available to them.

Study results verified the two hypotheses (Hypothesis 1: The perception of teachers, parents, students on the competences composing the profile of the performing teachers is different./ Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between the performance of teachers in secondary education and their professional competences).

At the end of the research, we can say that the following areas of expertise are relevant to the professional performance of teachers in secondary education:

• professional consciousness - the need to comply with professional and ethical standards;
• knowledge - topicality, multitude and correctness of specialty information held;
• cooperation - dialog orientation of teachers in social and professional contexts;
• didactic ability - effective and appropriate use of teaching strategies;
• relationship - development of supportive behaviors, establishing interpersonal relationships;
• communication - mastering modern communication concepts and theories and their use in the teaching activity, in relation to colleagues, parents, students, authorities, community;
• reflexivity - critical analysis of the activity, formulation of conclusions and changing personal behaviors or of the beneficiaries of the educational act;
• self-management - personal development, creativity and vision, effectiveness, strategic thinking;
• cognitive flexibility: ability to organize, structure, capacity for analysis and synthesis, ease in the transition from concrete to abstract and vice versa, gradual transmission of knowledge.

The main limitations of the study are related to:

• results show validity for pre-university education institutions where the research was conducted, the investigated lot being reduced.
• reporting the study only for general and specific competences contained in standards of the teaching profession;

The performances of a teacher should be viewed conjugated from an objective point of view, measured against the standards set by measurements of specialists in education sciences and the results of best practices, but also subjectively, from the point of view of the beneficiaries of education.

In a world characterized by diversity and change, teachers must be defined by flexibility and adaptability, anticipative capacity, innovative spirit, professionalism, loyalty and commitment.

„This work was financially supported through the project "Routes of academic excellence in doctoral and post-doctoral research - READ" co-financed through the European Social Fund, by Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, contract no POSDRU/159/1.5/S/137926.”

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