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**EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING
TEACHERS TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE**

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Abstract: *The paper “Educational strategies for training teachers to promote excellence” is centered on the concrete applicative size, at the level of the elaboration of a coherent counseling program, aimed at training educational counselors from a scientist-practitioner type of perspective, which is adequate for the necessities and the psychological profile adapted to the real clients’ needs, those of children with high aptitudes in Romania, who represent an informational vacuum in the Romanian educational system in what concerns the applicative dimension of the counseling services involved in promoting excellence; it is necessary to raise awareness in what concerns the fact that the best way of understanding counseling in this area involves the integration of the paradigms concerning the counseling of talents in a more eclectic way.*

Keywords: *Talent, teaching, competent teachers, school counseling,*

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In what concerns the socio-economic and political field, it can be said that Romania has built a new image, and the reform of State has had as objective among others, the improvement of the assessment in the broader context of a new career structure so that the profession and the individual career might become more flexible, more dynamic and also more efficient. However, the instability that has been noticed in Romania lately together with various issues that have become familiar at an international level, have unfortunately led to financial constraints within the budget and, at certain stages of reform these constraints have inhibited individual development, implicitly in what concerns the development of a career, especially when it became necessary to differentiate individuals with similar knowledge and skills. This has represented a significant issue in what concerns the process of rethinking and reinvigorating the educational system in Romania. The Nr.1/2011 Law, the Educational Law, has developed a new vision concerning the teacher’s status, has developed a new vision of what the teaching profession, the new education manager in the context of globalization, and integration into European structures as viable by developing a highly competitive national human resource system capable of operating effectively in today’s society and in the future mean at the European level (nr.1/2011 Law, Article 2, paragraph 2). The Romanian educational system has been responsive and sensitive to government policies that have been developed and in the last 20 years there has not been reached a policy of national unity in terms of education and management. In the case of these internal counseling services concerning governmental policies interdependence of the educational system and the social and economic macro system has been developed. These circumstances have demonstrated that the school cannot and should not become an institution segregated by individuals and society, even if some social and political events have proven this theory, the national strategy should lead to the development of an environment in which autonomous and creative thinking are preferred. Consequently, in a society facing a modern cultural crisis, spiced with social upheavals and the emergence of subcultures of despair, the improvement of psycho-behavioral and attitudinal aspects

and the process of removing those that are socially undesirable within the instructive-educational process have led to systematic pedagogical activities developed for harmonious development of the individual personality. Romania has built a tradition in the field of psycho-counseling since 1930 and from this perspective a priority element in the Romanian education reform has been the psycho-pedagogical assistance. The reforming projects in educational institutions have had as objective this approach because it is the connecting link between the diverse and specific problems of contemporary society and the way in which those problems can be solved in the educational environment. The social biorhythm that is dynamically increasing constrains the development and the functionality of the psycho-pedagogical assistance in the most optimal parameters that are necessary for the integration of learners in societal structures, with all of its features and peculiarities. The scientific and technical evolution and the process of diversifying communication technologies have favored a bigger capacity of abstraction and generalization among the students and have led to a faster learning pace. All of these require the differentiation within curriculum structures for further training of teachers and at the same time the increase in interest in the process of teaching gifted children.

II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

Internationally, there have been created legislative structures enabling more and more specialists in psychology and education sciences to base their research on the issue of gifted children, as well as on the identification, cultivation and promotion of specific programs of initial and continuous teacher counseling programs in the field of giftedness. The motivation for proposing this study is based on the lack of information, of coherent policies in this domain, but also on policies implemented in the Romanian educational system. This study is based on the applicative-concrete dimension, on educational interventions for students with high availability, on the development of a special area within the current educational system dedicated to excellence, because a problem in the society is represented by the social, cultural and economic losses caused by inadequate educational services offered by specialized institutions (inadequate or insufficient educational strategies for the cultivation and development of inherent potential, the unfavorable educational climate, the presence of poorly trained teachers in this area) to support, promote and protect excellence.

III. METHODS

The development of a legal framework in 2007 has sustained the Romanian educational issues that have been faced after 1989, and has also led to the construction of educational policies aimed at the education of gifted students and by reporting these issues from a different perspective through the initiation, the development of educational approaches leading to identifying, monitoring, cultivating and the development of national infrastructure and of individual counseling programs that provide psycho-assistance to gifted students, parents and teachers involved in the educational process of these students, steps necessary to optimize the potential of gifted students. This is why it is necessary to start a special investigation because research results will be useful to teachers for curriculum improvements, for teaching practice as well as for the creation of individualized counseling programs and the development of interactive teaching and learning strategies for gifted children. The research purpose was that of analyzing the main strategies and methods used in identifying and developing the pedagogical process of intervention and assistance in the field of giftedness, aiming at continuous counseling teacher training. In this approach, teachers, counselors and educational partners have been involved.

Research objectives:

1. The identification of gifted children by using multiple criteria: teacher nominations, parent nominations, school results, denominations, manifested creativity;
2. The radiography of the existing state of fact regarding the training of school counselors in psycho-pedagogical assistance centers and offices in order to carry out characteristic activities for promoting talent;

3. The identification of an appropriate educational-formative approach, of a rational requirement, which circumscribe the scientific, pedagogical, methodological and managerial competence, which a counseling teacher should have in order to psycho-pedagogically assist talented children;

4. The highlighting of possible advanced solutions by teachers, students and parents in order to overcome the difficulties encountered during the process of counseling gifted children.

The investigation would cover a blueprint of the training level of school counselors in secondary education in North-West of Romania in terms of promoting talent, taking into account the following indicators: human resources (number of people involved in specific programs for this category of students, specialization, skills, continuous training), the organization of services (following the application of pedagogical assistance provided for talented students, as well as for their parents and teachers) and not the least important one, the material, embodied in equipment and specialized tools. By following the above mentioned objectives the hypothesis is supported by work with relevant subdivisions.

Main hypothesis:

Providing counseling services for talented students (in psycho-pedagogical assistance centers and offices) is performed poorly in terms of counseling methodology.

Secondary hypotheses:

SH1. Counseling teachers providing pedagogical support for talented students bear in mind the necessary development of specific professional skills

SH2. Counseling teachers who assist talented students do not have specific professional training necessary in this area;

Considering that the existing information in the literature can be only partially relevant to the current situation a prior interview with a total of 200 teachers (50 pre-school teachers, 50 primary school teachers, 50 secondary school teachers, 50 high school teachers) actually involved in daily class work was considered necessary. The following variables have been considered in terms of research: initial training, the specialization of teachers respectively the number of years that have passed by since they started working in the educational system, the institution where they hold their job, the age, the educational level that has been obtained, their type and the type of continuous training that has been considered.

In experimental research, the methods and tools that have been used have had one main purpose, namely that of gathering data that once analyzed would offer answers on this theme of research. During the investigation there have been used qualitative and quantitative research methods: the questionnaire-based survey and the semi-structured interview-based survey. The process of interviewing the subjects possessing characteristics, competences which should be possessed by the counseling teacher in order to work with gifted students is also an important element of research. The interview consisted of a grid of identification used by counseling teachers who considered the "benefits" and the "limits" in terms of their training in order to pedagogically assist talented students.

IV. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

By reference to information obtained from the investigation there were outlined the findings on the basis of which the conclusions will be outlined. Thus, the purpose intended by the research was achieved through the obtaining of the diagnostic study meant to identify those coordinates which conclusively and comprehensively show the quantitative and qualitative aspects that circumscribe the pedagogical support activities designed to promote talent in our country. It has also been analyzed the dimension of continuous training in correlation with the quality of the results that have been obtained during the process of counseling and promoting talents. In what concerns the research objectives it can be said that they were correlated with the general hypothesis and with the secondary ones, ensuring the consistency and the validity of the study.

Nowadays, the inexistence of a clear and complete national educational radiography as well as the poor qualitative and quantitative standards of psycho-pedagogical counseling in schools, the teacher counseling training level for promoting excellence have made this study more than necessary. These issues have been considered by using the questionnaire method. In what concerns the research objectives it can be said that they were correlated with the general hypothesis and with the secondary ones, ensuring the consistency and the validity of the study. The answers provided by the respondents represent a criterion in the analysis and questioning approach on the quality of teacher training in the education system for supporting the promotion of talent. The investigative approach that was developed is just one element of the complex mechanism of elaboration and implementation from behalf of local decision makers in taking concrete steps for identification, cultivation and promotion of children capable of high performance, from raising standards in terms of specific training practitioner advisors in order to obtain more favorable results in this field.

The results support the following methods used (percentage) to identify talented students in school: 80%- the evaluation of school performance, 55%- school performance evaluated by the teacher, 75%- intelligence quotient, 78% -individual psychological testing 75%- testing creativity, 85%- intelligence quotient, 43%- testing academic, standardized knowledge, 65%- parent evaluation and 20% -psychological assessment of apparent data. After this study, there has also been developed within the specific dimension of gifted student counseling the knowledge and the optimization of the psychic potential, through counseling teachers using activities meant to sustain and develop the affective side of cooperation specific for this environment.

Remarkable in this complex activity is the lack of positive emotional intelligence tests, of tests concerning the level of self-knowledge or of the level of intrinsic motivation even if the counseling teacher has developed a program concerning the development of skills, competencies, efficient communication skills, stress management skills, opinion maintenance skills, finding solutions to difficulties encountered by gifted children and which permit these children to optimally react to all the problems that they encountered in their day to day life. At the level of educational activity and pedagogical support strategies at a rate of 57% there is achieved the identification, cultivation and promotion of talented subjects using the multi-factorial model of giftedness proposed by - F. Monks, the psychosocial model of excellence considered by A. Tannenbaum and the global success model considered by the psychologist novel C. Cretu. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results of the semi-structured interview-based survey showed that a rate of 75% of surveyed teachers want a change in what concerns the unique school programs that are structured for normal students, which cause substantial lags for talented students and boredom in class. Also, 80% of them claim that the segregation of students according to their intellectual potential would allow the achievement of goals concerning specialized education in the case of gifted children in Romania.

This issue was also sustained in our country by M. Jigau [1], who is a specialist in this field but a more practical application was expected, even if more projects meant for classes of gifted children have been developed and tested by Carmen Cretu [2, 3]. 60% of the teachers consider that the lack of gifted children in normal classes tend to conduct to much less immediate and visible positive influence on normal children , as competition at the highest level is missing this way. Teaching methods have been proposed in terms of educational activities with gifted children: application of the class differentiated and personalized curriculum, and promoting rapid acceleration in the structure of the national education system as state, as well as the enrichment of individual work programs concerning gifted children.

The results of the analysis have outlined the necessity of correlating the educational policies within the entire system, the overcoming of the informational void in this field of activity, the organization and functioning of professional teacher training structures meant to offer continuous training courses; a low number of specialist has been identified in this field and we can remark the low offer in training courses for the promotion of giftedness, the lack of financial resources within and outside the country, the insufficient popularization in what concerns the development of certain counseling teacher training programs, the inexistence of a mentorship program which have not brought didactic benefits in the field of school counseling of gifted children who need continuous counseling involvement.. The results have demonstrated that the low percentage of identified gifted students or students oriented towards pedagogical assistance centers (between 2% and 6%) represents a limit in

the pedagogical assistance approach meant for talented children, the insufficient popularization in what concerns the development of training programs for counseling teachers in this respect and the lack of a mentoring system meant to allow information flow and involvement in activities related to promoting a specific talent is another deadline identified. Lack of financial resources for the sessions held in the country or abroad, participation fees at courses difficult to honor also represent an obstacle. All of these obstacles require continuous counseling teacher involvement. Differentiation among gifted children can only be established through rigorous planning, organizing and development of activities meant for the same profile, level of study, discipline, personal learning pace, and personal learning style and through an adequate didactic methodology for gifted children.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Even if the topic addressed is modern, current and relevant to the Romanian education in what concerns school counseling in promoting excellence, we see that at the system level as well as at the social educational level there is no clear, coherent and well structured focus on training teachers for counseling assistance in promoting excellence. Now that more than 20 years have passed since the fall of the communist bloc, the Romanian education system still faces an informational vacuum in this area of excellence so it is necessary to rethink the educational policies in this area by launching a program at the national level, with adjusted social and cultural needs of the Romanian society that can redirect the rethinking of school programs, the policy identification, cultivation and promotion of children with high abilities, decisions meant to develop their skills and their biophysical potential, ensuring an insertion of social active subjects related to gifted students, but it should not be neglected the continuous training of teachers involved in daily work with gifted students.

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