

Original Paper

Teacher Education and Competencies in an Open Democratic Society

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Abstract

Currently, Albania, our homeland, is involved in the integration processes for membership in the European Union. European integration processes should first of all be understood as processes: achieving standards, adaptation and legal, structural, curricular improvements, etc. The Albanian education system is also part of these processes. The education system, especially in recent years, has been and continues to be part of programs and political, academic, scientific and educational programs and projects of the dominant actors of Albanian society for its reform and adaptation to the education systems of European societies, within Albania's ambitions for integration and membership. The teacher is the main actor of the educational process. It is necessary for the teacher to redefine his position in this constantly changing and integrating society, to empower and acquire new competencies.

I think it is very interesting to discuss and research on re-dimensioning the position of teachers regarding the competencies of educating democratic citizens that they should gain in this period of reforms and European integration. The idea of the study is: Today's children can learn better if teachers focus more on activating their strengths than on identifying their weaknesses. Students should be evaluated not only on the basis of the results achieved, but, above all, on the basis of the capacity to fully address life situations.

Keywords

educational competencies, initial education, integration processes, legal improvements, reform period, teacher qualification

1. Introduction

Currently, in Albania teaching based on learning competencies is being implemented. Regarding the teaching profession, a re-dimensioning of this profession is required, referring to these competencies.

Among the main competencies for teachers, we mention:

A. Initial teacher education.

B. Teacher training

C. The profession of teacher and lifelong learning.

D. Teachers, project participants, and mobility within the education system.

E. The teacher is a contributor to others and a collaborator with others.

F. Teacher as a user of technology, information, and new knowledge. The idea to undertake this study arose from discussions conducted in February 2014 with some of my doctoral colleagues. The discussions held on the reform in higher education by the leaders of the working group of this reform served as the beginning of the discussions. Discussions continue to be present at school, in leisure time, etc. In these presentations for discussion the following educational issues:

1) The teacher should focus on reinforcing the strengths (Most Developed Intelligence).

2) The teacher should focus on reducing the weak points (Most underdeveloped Intelligence).

Students should be assessed:

a. On the basis of the results achieved.

b. On the basis of capacity to handle and resolve life situations.

1.1 Theoretical Basis

The discussions did not arise in vain, without having a real basis, they arose on the basis of the state of the education system and the conclusions presented by the Pisa program of the World Bank in Albania. According to the researcher from Albania, P. Karameta: "Our education system fails to prepare creative people who lead the development, just as it fails to form citizens with democratic tendencies... This requires that reforms and innovations reshape educational practices in pre-university education, the higher and the system of lifelong learning about a new perspective, according to which "education to identify and develop the potential of each individual, as a prerequisite for the formation of man who knows how to act" (Karameta, 2012).

During the last years, numerous legal, structural, curricular, human-professional resources, school infrastructure, technological etc., are been undertaken in our education system. It is necessary for the education system and especially the teacher as part of it to become part of a great movement for the realization of the Common European Principles on the competencies and qualifications of teachers (Progress towards Education and Training, 2004). I am aware that reflecting on the educational competencies of the XXI century and studying the optimal ways for their realization in educational institutions may require numerous studies. "An individual may have a learning disability or learning disability. Early detection and intervention are key to preventing a learning disability from adversely

affecting a student in the classroom” (Logsdon, 2019). However, I think this study can help however little in the great need for reflection and concentration. At the beginning of this century, the world has moved by leaps and bounds. Teaching is also undergoing transformations. Increasingly, student-centered teaching is being talked about and implemented. Despite their methods and designations, one thing I believe is clear: the teacher continues to be in the position of leader, leader, organizer, performer, controller, and evaluator.

The nature of work has changed and continues to change. Changing the form of work and the needs for the competencies and skills of the century also needs to change the conception of the effective teaching that students need to prepare for life and its products. What is required of students is not just memorizing knowledge and information but education should focus on how to teach students how to learn in order to manage constant demands and changes. But what are some of the key educational competencies of the 21st century?

1.2 Historical Context

Educational competencies of the XXI century.

The educational competencies of the 21st century in my opinion can be categorized into:

- 1) Basic values possessed by man as a member of society.
- 2) Professional skills.
- 3) Training for life, career, and entrepreneurship.

In the first category, we can mention those values that are related to human characteristics such as:

- Self-awareness.
- Self-management.
- Responsible decision-making
- Relationship management.
- Social awareness.

In the second category: Professional skills we mention:

I. Communication and information skills.

II. Civic education, ability to accept cultural and religious diversity, and awareness of globalization (Civic literacy, cross-cultural skills and global awareness).

III. Critical and creative thinking.

The third category: Life, career, and entrepreneurship training includes:

- Ability to believe in oneself.
- Lifelong independent learning skills.
- Ability to be an active contributor.
- Ability to be an active citizen and engaged in the problems of social, political, economic life, etc.

Teaching is the activity that can strongly contribute to the recognition and realization of these competencies.

Teaching is a planned and organized activity, it is an act of teaching led by the teacher. It plans and organizes the development of the teaching and learning process, which takes place in the processes of pre-action, interaction with students in learning, and post-action that aims to analyze and evaluate the teaching work developed. “Essential characteristics of teaching:

- Teaching is a series of systematically planned events.
- Teaching is a process that communicates ideas, concepts, laws, and habits.
- Teaching takes into account individual and environmental factors related to the learner.

“Effective teaching enables all students to understand and master the essence of the content of the teaching material” (Zekaj, 2018, p. 7).

Through teaching, the teacher facilitates the process of student learning through the implementation of various and appropriate learning strategies with forms, methods, which make the role of student and teacher change where the student becomes the main actor (student-centered learning) and not a simple spectator.

A school is not judged by its beauty but by the results its students achieve. The beauty of the school is brought by the variety of students involved in it. Students are different from each other, everyone has special requirements, everyone perceives, everyone listens, everyone speaks, everyone thinks, everyone learns differently from each other, so everyone should be given the opportunity! Today when we talk about educational competencies we take into account or take into account the individual potentials and abilities of students, which makes it possible to help all students regardless of the difficulties they have. In the educational curriculum based on the competencies that the student should acquire in pre-university education in the Republic of Albania, we read: “Pre-university education creates conditions and opportunities for students to build and develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that require a democratic society; to develop independently and comprehensively; contribute to construction and well-being and Albanian society and face the challenges of life in a constructive way” (Institute for Educational Development, 2017). Since the ways of students’ learning are figuratively speaking, they are as different as their appearance, we say that the educational competencies of teachers in open democratic societies are also of great importance. As part of the development of the theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner writes that “Intelligence Quotient (IQ) should not be measured as an absolute figure like weight, height or blood pressure. It is a mistake to assume that IQ is a single fixed whole, which can be measured through a test. “It does not matter how smart you are, but it does matter what you are smart about. We all have the ability to solve problems of different kinds” (Gardner, 2003). According to the theory of multiple intelligences, it is necessary for the teacher to recognize and promote in a wider space the talents and abilities of students, which means that teachers, in addition to recognizing the difficulties that students have in learning and efforts to facilitate them, they should also focus on students’ talents. “The teacher enables learning for all students through his interaction with students and students with each other, using effective communication techniques, learning strategies

that actively engage students in the learning process and orient, guide him in time to achieve the quality of the result” (Zekaj, 2018, p. 113). For the role and re-dimensioning of the personality of the teacher and pedagogue, Prof. Peshkëpia writes: “He guides the student or even the student in the process of obtaining”.

2. Method

2.1 Laying out the Problem

Then let’s go back to the discussions on the problem I mentioned. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the need to conduct this study arose from the discussion with colleagues on defining as primary one of the issues:

- 1) The teacher should focus on reinforcing the strengths (Most Developed Intelligence).
- 2) The teacher should focus on reducing the weak points (Most underdeveloped Intelligence).

Students should be assessed:

- A. On the basis of the results achieved.
- B. On the basis of capacity to handle and resolve life situations.

2.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is:

- 1) To identify where we need to intervene for education and educational competencies at the beginning of this century.
- 2) Where should teaching focus on the realization of learning competencies?
- 3) What should we evaluate in the student in order to realize the educational competencies of the XXI century?
- 4) To propose forms and working methods for the realization of educational competencies of the XXI century.

2.3 Variable

Teaching developed intelligence and educational competencies.

Independent variable: Teaching focused on developed intelligence.

Dependent variable: Educational competence.

Research question. Does the improvement of intelligence-focused teaching lead to the realization of educational competencies?

2.4 Hypothesis

Ho: Educational competencies are realized without the need to focus teaching on developed intelligence.

H1: Educational competencies should focus on improving teaching in developed intelligence.

2.5 Field Study. Methodology

For the development of the study, discussions, debates, and surveys were conducted with school

teachers: “Ptoleme Xhuvani”, “Dhaskal Todri”, “Ali Myftiu”, “Inkus”, Papër, Broshkë, Pajun of Elbasan district, Albania.

The study was conducted in February-March 2018, all these schools in the municipality of Elbasan. The study included 82 teachers from the above schools. For the teacher survey, there was no preference in the selection but this method was followed: Those teachers were included in the surveys who entered the teachers’ room during the long break that day I was present in each school. So put another way the champion was with teachers who accidentally entered the teacher's hall that day. This random sampling method was followed in each school.

3. Results

Through the survey the teachers were asked a questionnaire with the following questions:

- 1) The teacher should focus on strengthening the strengths (Most developed intelligence) or
- 2) The teacher should focus on reducing the weak points (Most underdeveloped Intelligence).

The results of the answers were:

Table 1. Teacher Focus on Developing Students’ Intelligences

A	Teacher should focus on reinforcing strengths (Most Developed Intelligence).	54
B	The teacher should focus on reducing the weak points (Most underdeveloped Intelligence).	23
C	Teachers who did not list any of the alternatives.	3
D	Teachers who did not participate in the survey.	2
E	Total Teacher.	82

As for the next question: Students should be evaluated:

- A. On the basis of the results achieved or
- B. On the basis of capacity to handle and resolve life situations.

The results of the answers were:

Table 2. Teacher Focus on Assessing Student Achievement

A	On the basis of the results achieved.	33
B	On the basis of capacities to handle and resolve life situations.	45
C	Teachers who did not mark any of the alternatives.	2
D	Teachers who did not participate in the survey.	2
E	Total Teacher.	82

4. Discussions

From the answers and the diagrams constructed, it is noticed that:

- 1) Regarding the first question from 82 teachers with whom the sample was formed as we mentioned above it turned out that 3 teachers did not circle any of the alternatives while 2 teachers were not involved at all, did not want to participate in the survey.
- 2) In the first question, in order to realize the educational competencies the teacher should focus on improving the most developed intelligence, it was noticed that out of 80 teachers that were included in the survey 54 teachers or 66% circled that we should focus on strengthening the points strongly, i.e., to the most developed intelligence. This does not mean that other types of intelligence should be neglected. It also means teaching needs to be invested to further empower that more developed intelligence.
- 3) “Career Education” should orient students in such a way that if a student has developed computational-mathematical intelligence then he should study in profile such as economics, finance, mathematics etc., and it should not happen that students with kinesthetic motor intelligence to try to study in mathematics profile while such students are invested to realize competencies in the field of physical education and sports.
- 4) The teacher should activate and motivate the student to strengthen the intelligence that he has more developed.
- 5) Regarding the second question from 82 teachers with whom the sample was formed, it turned out that 2 teachers did not circle any of the alternatives while 2 teachers did not want to participate in the survey.
- 6) In the survey for the second question which had to do with assessment, specifically: whether students should be assessed on the basis of their achievements or on the basis of capacities (competencies) to deal with and resolve life situations, it was noted that by 82 teachers included in the survey 33 teachers or 41% answered that we should evaluate students on the basis of achievements and 45 teachers or 55% circled the exact alternative that evaluation should be based on the formation of competencies to deal with and resolve life situations.
- 7) Pupils and students should be evaluated much more on the basis of capacities to address and solve life and school problems.
- 8) The teacher should not be satisfied with the control and evaluation of the knowledge acquired by the student but above all on the potentials that the student presents in the realization of knowledge in everyday life.

5. Conclusions

Regarding the educational competencies of teachers should:

- 1) Continue to develop the capacity of teachers to lead learning on the basis of 21st-century educational

competencies.

- 2) The portfolio of teachers should include the results achieved in the development of students' educational competencies and subjects.
- 3) Teachers should conduct studies on the results that students achieve in the competency-based curriculum.
- 4) Clear definition of knowledge, skills, habits, and values that students should acquire in the curriculum based on competencies based on several years of experience of its application.
- 5) Reformulation of the substantive structure of pre-university education in order to reflect the educational strategies for the development and evaluation of educational competencies of the XXI century.

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