

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND ADVANCED TRAINING AS A WAY TO DEVELOP TEACHER COMPETENCE

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Summary

Continuous education takes place after the award of a formal degree; it is in continuity with the previously attained education; it is realised within or outside institutions; it serves the function of building a person who can anticipate the future; it helps the teacher to enable students to educate themselves; it goes on until the end of life. It represents a teacher's personal need and a societal need. For a pertinent approach to continuous education, it is important to have motivation. Continuous education and advanced training are an integral part of the educational system. Between the initial and continual education of the teacher, there is organised continuity. Global determination of the means and forms of continuous education include cooperation (both formal and informal), personal or individual advancement, and group or collective advancement.

Key words: continuous education, advanced training, teacher, development, competences

With initial teacher education, the process of the development of professional competences is not finished. Initial education provides the basis for competences, but this does not meet the requirements of modern teaching. Along with immediate practical experience, the teacher develops and perfects his or her theoretical knowledge, while competences gain quality and become applicable in a sophisticated way. Continuous education should not compensate for potential deficits arising from the initial education, but should primarily constitute the teacher's advanced training, and, in some cases, revision.

Continuous education actually represents education which (Nikodinovska-Bancotovska, 2005):

- takes place after formal graduation;
- is a continuity of the previously acquired education;
- is realised within or outside institutions;
- serves the function of developing an individual who is capable of anticipating the future;
- helps the teacher to enable students to educate themselves;
- goes on until the end of life.

The teacher's continuous education and advanced training is his or her personal and, at the same time, a societal need (Hargreaves, Fullan, eds.1992). Ongoing changes in science and understanding in general, which are basically changeable categories, result in the need for their constant revision, supplement and modification. It is necessary for teaching material to be in equilibrium with scientific achievements. For this reason, a syllabus constantly needs to be revised and its objectives redefined. This type of education is the base for the teacher's professional and pedagogical evolution, which allows for the upgrading of his or her professional competences.

An important mark of the teacher's profession is the *topicality and scientific value* of the knowledge being acquired. Thus, in this profession, especially noticeable are the consequences of not conducting the constant revision of the knowledge attained, skills, values and attitudes. In such conditions, the influence of the teacher on the student would be insufficiently clearly structured, obsolete and unproductive, which ultimately would have a negative impact on society as a whole. In comparison with some other professions, regarding the organisation of continuous education and advanced training, the teaching profession has an advantage. The educational system's basic concept is constantly provided with the systematic conditions for the teachers' continuous education and advanced training. It is assumed that this situation also influences the teacher's motivation for continuous education. Under the teacher's educational need we assume all the needs that refer to change, supplementation, and expansion of the systematic-structural constitution of his or her professional competences.

The teacher's pedagogic competences in modern teaching are directly dependent on his or her personal pedagogic needs and pedagogically-based societal needs (Burke, 1989). Therefore, whether and how the teacher's pedagogic competences will be put into practice is dependent on the manner of the actualisation, presentation, acceptance, realisation and evaluation of these needs. In this regard, the segment of the teacher's motivation for continuous education is highly important. What motivates the teacher for his or her own advancement and perfection can be seen through this constellation of motives:

- the desire to acquire new knowledge which arises from modern scientific developments and technical-technological achievements;
- the need for "keeping pace", i.e. getting in touch with all that is new and can be raised as a subject of interactive dialogue with the students;
- the aspiration to realise the upbringing-educational process in the context of the latest innovative changes (Goodlad, 1994);
- the need to bring the student's potential development to the highest point;
- the awareness of the responsibility for educational achievements in the teaching process;
- the desire for the inauguration of the teacher's own system of values, which constitutes the whole of individual and professional development.

Personal desire, need, aspiration and awareness of continuous advancement stimulate the teacher's activity in this realm. Stimulation is the essential feature and is a part of the entire motivational system. Personal, inner stimulation ought to be in conjunction with outer stimulation, which is stirred by the individuals and institutions competent to evaluate the teacher's work. The outer stimulation should be systematised in such a way as to facilitate material and status support to the teacher.

Continuous education and professional advanced training should represent an integral part of the educational system as a whole. They should be systematically posed, so that the functioning and activities of this subsystem are precisely determined and defined. These activities must be programme-based, with a desire for their constant innovation. As stipulated by the law, besides other institutions, teacher training colleges are responsible for planning, implementing and effecting the teachers' constant education and professional advanced training. This is a completely justified requirement, since the teacher's initial and continuous education are closely related. An organised continuity should exist between them, since they are two components of a unique process for training teachers in their upbringing-educational work. Accordingly, teacher training colleges ought to be *centres* for the continuous education of the appropriate teaching staff. Primarily, these centres would observe teachers' educational needs and, according to those needs, they would plan, organise, realise and coordinate their own activity.

The teacher's professional competences develop and advance through appropriate ways and forms of continuous education and advanced training:

- *Cooperation* (both formal and informal) - this cooperation can be realised through contacts, dialogues and other forms of interactive communication of the teacher

with students, colleagues, parents, and subjects from other organisations and institutions connected with the teacher's activity;

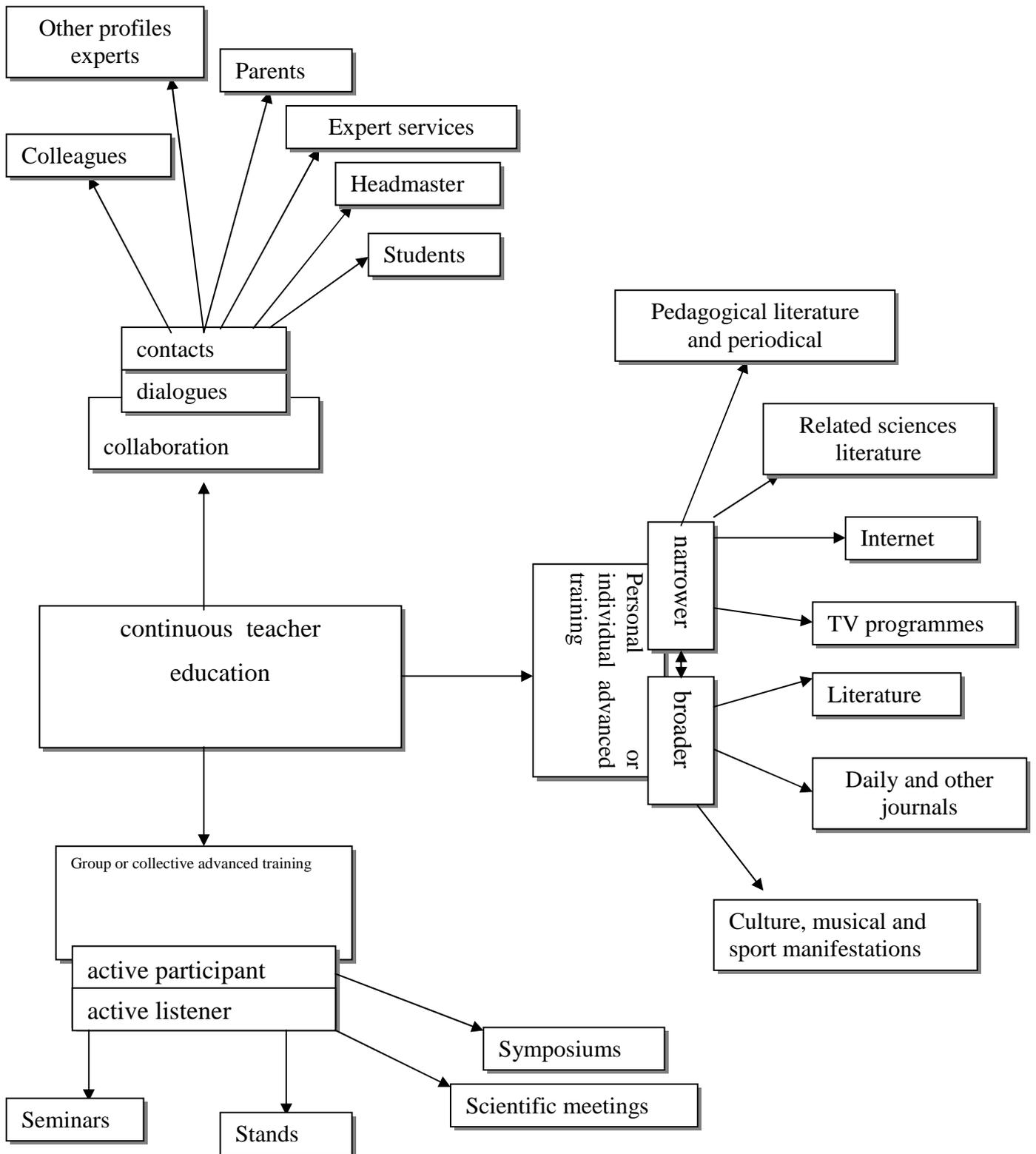
- *Personal or individual advanced training* - this type of advanced training may be narrower (within the teacher's vocation), or broader (within general education). It is realised through different methods and forms of self-education, based on general provisions for personal advanced training in activity planning. The teacher, according to his or her individual features, needs and interests, develops his or her potentials, while changing himself or herself and changing individual teaching practice. Personal advanced training is realised through the following activities:
 - actively keeping up to date with *pedagogic literature and the periodical press*;
 - reading *daily newspapers, reviews, magazines and other types of printed material*;
 - reading literature from *distinguished literary authors' broader writing*;
 - checking the *literature of related pedagogic sciences* and the sciences which the teacher teaches as school subjects;
 - having a selective approach to domestic and foreign *television programmes* and using their educational values (Nikodinovska-Bancotovska, 1999);
 - using *the Internet* as a means for obtaining all sorts of information and understanding;
 - becoming informed about cultural, musical and sports events;
 - taking part in *scientific-research projects*.

- *Group or collective advanced training* – this is realised mainly through participation in different organised forms of professional advanced training. It is based on the general planning of the teacher's advanced training and is realised as such. This type of advanced training assumes that the teacher is an *active participant* by engaging in arguments on a specific subject, or in the role of an *active listener*, with an opportunity to involve himself or herself in the discussion. The forms of this type of advanced training may be various, depending on the objectives, topic and other parameters. It is important that they are in concordance with the previously planned goals and tasks of advanced training. The most frequently applicable forms are: seminars, symposiums, scientific meetings, forums, round tables, etc.

The processes and results of professional advanced training should be appropriately monitored and assessed. The assessment assumes identification of the developing changes in the teacher's personality and his or her way of work with students. It is done for the purpose of establishing conditions after the advanced training, and of establishing whether and what type of changes and improvement in educational work with students is possible. In accordance with the results of assessment, a conclusion can be reached on whether and how the advanced training makes an impact on the development of the teacher's pedagogic competences. The assessment can go through programmes for teachers' professional advanced training; activities undertaken for this purpose; the results; the application of the acquired knowledge. The assessment itself requires comprehensive, organised and long-lasting work, because the process of advancement is not simple at all.

The teacher's professional competences develop and advance through appropriate ways and forms of continuous education and advanced training. Continuous education and advanced training offer opportunities for the teacher not to accept the future as something set, but are a means to shape the future according to one's needs and the necessities of society, in the framework of education.

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Presentation: *Forms of continuous education and advanced training*

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