MOLDOVAN TEACHERS' PERCEPTION REGARDING KEY COMPETENCES DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION

Abstract. The way in which key competences are introduced in general education today conditions a distorted perception of teachers about their development in general education. In order to advance the introduction of key competences in general education, it is necessary to develop large-scale initiatives or national strategies to promote key competences in general education. Exploring the ways of their integration through inter and transdisciplinary approach to the teaching contents sets training premises for the institutions of in-service training of the teaching and managerial staff in the general education.

Keywords: key competences, general education, interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity.

The current situation regarding the introduction of key competencies in general education, introduced in the Education Code [5], mentioned only in the introductory part of the National Curriculum, in the absence of project-type curricular documents and without a didactic and methodological tool developed from its perspective for ensuring teaching-learning-assessment, conditions a distorted perception of teachers regarding their introduction and training in general education.

In order to convince us of this, an opinion poll was conducted in April-August 2021 on the perception of teachers on the formation of key competencies in general education and the prospects for their integration into the teaching-learning process.

In order to confirm the hypothesis of contradictions in educational policy documents and conceptual, projective and methodological curricular policy documents that generate a distorted perception of teachers on the formation of key competences in general education and prevent their advancement, we developed and applied at various time intervals questionnaires on a total sample of 146 teachers in...
general education, randomly selected from both urban and rural areas from different parts of the country, respondents teach various subjects, at various levels of general secondary education.

Of the 48 teachers surveyed in April 2021 during the methodological seminar organized by Institute of Education Sciences, 40 teachers (83%) consider that they are developing digital skills, and 31 of them (64.6%) develop the skills of cultural expression and awareness of values.

To the question “How do they think they currently integrate key competencies in the classroom teaching-learning process”, 37 respondents (77.1%) consider that they integrate key competencies in each lesson, and 13 of them (27.1%) consider that at the end and only 4 of them (8.3%) consider that they integrate only the key competence correlated with the dominant study discipline in the formation of the respective competence (e.g. communication in the mother tongue, respectively the Romanian Language and Literature).

All this in the context that we do not have a description of the constituent components and a reference framework of key competencies developed for each level of education and each key competency, as well as the lack of recommended learning activities to be associated with transversal key competencies. Respondents intuitively consider that they develop these key competencies even if there is no theoretical, pedagogical and methodological framework for achieving this transition at the level of teaching-learning-assessment nor their dimensions for each level of education.

According to the National Curriculum Framework [4], the nine competencies can be represented in several situations: the field of competence; key competencies; transversal skills. Of those nine key competencies, five competencies are correlated with a dominant study discipline in the formation of that competency. The other four competencies are not equivalent to any specific school subject. These competencies have a rather cross-cutting status [4] and are not found in the Curriculum in the subjects of study except in the introductory part in some places.

This confusion is conditioned by the name of the key competence correlated with the dominant study discipline in the formation of the respective competence.
Thus, although the National Curriculum requires the development of specific competences in the study discipline, the respondents consider that they develop students’ communication skills in the mother tongue, communication skills in foreign languages, skills in mathematics, science and technology and digital skills.

Even key transversal competencies, such as the competence of learning to learn; social and civic skills, entrepreneurial skills and initiative, skills of cultural expression and awareness of cultural values that are not defined in the methodological framework, respondents consider them to be developed by integration within the teaching discipline taught.

When asked *which of the ways could most help them to train students’ key competencies*, 38 of them (79.2%) indicated professional development courses, 36 of them (75%) methodological guides, and 29 of them (60.4 %) also consider national curriculum and extracurricular activities. Only 28 of them (58.3%) mention projects between schools and 22 of them (45.8%) local partnerships and the textbook and only 16 of them (33.3%) consider the national educational plan/ curriculum framework.

This would indicate that the group of respondents perceive support for the transition of key competences from methodological and didactic tools and not from the theoretical conceptual part. First, to understand the frame of reference of the components of each key competence and to study the didactic-applicative aspect and the integration opportunities and then to explore the general and regulatory interventions.

In order to verify the hypothesis and study the degree of teachers’ awareness regarding the key competences, the perspectives of integrating some transversal competences within the existing study disciplines, we applied a questionnaire, in August of this year, for another group of respondents 98 teachers from general education, randomly selected from both urban and rural areas from different localities of the country and teaching various subjects of study, at various levels of general secondary education.

To the question "*Which of the following curriculum models do you implement in your school?*" 79 respondents indicated the curriculum framework plan for grades
5th to 9th and 21% the general high school education framework model (Model IV), and 15 respondents come from institutions where other models of high school education framework models are implemented (Models I, II, III).

Moldova implements currently at high school level 4 models of national curriculum framework / educational plan that states which list of subjects are mandatory and which are options, so that students can choose a set from a list of school subjects given depending of their profile of study: humanities or science.

Model IV is the one used before as the one with only 1 Options course of students ‘choice. The other 3 models offer more choices from a list of school subjects for students to choose from. Regardless of that, none of these is structured from the perspective of key competences development, but specific competences development from a monodisciplinary perspective.

To the question “How do you rate your awareness level on key competences”, 85 of them answered that they have sufficient information on communication skills in Romanian, 91 have sufficient information on communication skills in their mother tongue, 80 have information have sufficient information on the competence of learning to learn, 70 have sufficient information on social and civic competences, 70 have sufficient information on cultural expression and values awareness competences, 54 have sufficient information on the competence to communicate in foreign languages, 42 have sufficient information on competences in mathematics, science and technology, 40 have sufficient information on entrepreneurial skills and initiative and 34 have sufficient information on digital skills.

The highest level of knowledge and possession of sufficient information is recorded regarding the competence of communication in the mother tongue, although only 10 respondents were teachers of Romanian language and literature and 37 teachers of English, the rest of them teach other subjects.

In the case of this group, 71 respondents (72.4%) have taken professional development courses in the last 3 years, this number also corresponds to the number of 70 who have sufficient information on key competencies. This could indicate the impact of lifelong learning and the fulfillment of its role of updating teachers' competencies on current educational guidelines.
To the question "To what extent would the following support the successful development of key competencies in the subjects you teach?" 78 of the respondents consider that this would be the elaboration of a guide with methodological landmarks regarding the inter- and transdisciplinary development of key competences, 75 of the respondents consider the training of teachers and managers from this perspective and 75 consider the correlation of disciplinary competencies with key competencies in the disciplinary curriculum. 74 of them consider it opportune to develop and apply teaching materials from this perspective and 65 of the 98 respondents consider that the development of the curriculum framework/educational plan from the perspective of the formation of key competencies.

Both groups of respondents confirm the need to have methodological and didactic tools as basic support and further perceive the role of projective documents such as the curriculum.

To the question "In your opinion, to what extent could the following facilitate the implementation of key competences in general education?" 63 respondents consider that in the largest increase by reviewing the number of hours allocated to each subject, 53 respondents consider that by reviewing the number of curricular areas, and 60 respondents consider the reconfiguration of the curriculum from the perspective of key competences and only 39 respondents consider the integration of school subjects.

The resistance and reluctance of teachers to integrate school subjects is confirmed, partially subjectively justified by the teacher’s salary proportional to the number of hours taught.

The question “To what extent do you think the following may hinder the implementation of key competencies at your school level?” 70 of them consider the absence of textbooks developed from the perspective of key competency training, 66 of them indicate the attitude of students and parents, 64 of them mention lack of motivation and 63 of them indicate lack of materials and resources required for the implementation of key competency areas, and only 46 of them perceive the curriculum as an obstacle that is not linked to the key competency system.

To the question "What do you think about the current curriculum?" 73
respondents have a good and very good opinion, 21 of them have a satisfactory opinion and only 2 of them state it as unsatisfactory, 3 of them did not want to answer.

These responses indicate a degree of satisfaction of respondents regarding the current structure of the curriculum, which is not currently structured in terms of key competences development, and the existence of methodological and didactic tools should be correlated with project-type documents and not in the absence of them.

Although to the question about the impact of curriculum orientation on the development of key competencies on the student and the effectiveness of education, most perceive it as a major one.

To the question "What impact do you consider to have, from the student's perspective, the orientation of the curriculum towards the development of key competencies on the following coordinates?" 75 respondents consider preparing students for life as a major impact.

To the question “To what extent do you think that the implementation of key competencies in the teaching process can lead to an increase in the efficiency of education in general education?” 56 respondents consider that to a large extent, and 40 consider that to an average extent.

To the question “Based on your experience, make a ranking of the competencies that you consider possible to develop within the discipline / disciplines taught. From the 1st place for the most favorable situation, to the one that has the lowest chances, the 9th place” 57 of them considered the most favorable situation for development in the taught subjects to be the competence of communication in Romanian, 56 of them consider the competence of communication in the mother tongue, 49 of them the competence of learning to learn, 43 of them indicate the competence of cultural expression and awareness of values, 38 of them consider social and civic skills to be favorable for development in the subjects taught and 26 of them consider the situation regarding entrepreneurial skills and initiative to be less favorable, and only 23 of them consider competences in mathematics, science and technology to be favorable for development within the disciplines taught by teachers of other study disciplines.
Conclusions

The opinion poll showed that the existence of contradictions in educational policy documents and conceptual, projective, and methodological curricular policy documents generates a distorted and contradictory perception of teachers on the formation of key competences in general education.

Exploring the dimensions and components of each key competency, describing them by level, as they exist in Romania [9], and teacher training, with the support of institutions and professional development programs would familiarize the teachers with the formative values of key competencies and ways of integration through the inter and transdisciplinary approach to school content.

Also, the set of key competences in the Education Code of Moldova needs to be updated according to the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 [8].

In order to advance the introduction of key competences in general education, there is a need to develop large-scale initiatives or national strategies to promote key competences in general education, for at least three key competences: Mother tongue, Mathematics and Science, as in most schools in Europe [6]. There is a particular need for large-scale initiatives to explore strategies to promote key competences with a cross-cutting status that are not currently linked to or integrated into any school subject.

References:
