Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association

Authentic assessment in the in-service teacher training system
Guidebook for training providers

Prepared by
Maria Kovacs and Ariana-Stanca Văcărețu
within the project
Promoting authentic assessment in the Romanian in-service teacher training system
implemented by
The Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association
supported [in part] by a grant from Foundation Open Society Institute (Zug.)

June 2010

Content

Introduction

In Romania, in-service teacher training is an important lever by which changes in the education system can be implemented, which is why many stakeholders in education are interested in it, including the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, schools, teachers, training providers etc.

As a significant stakeholder in teachers' continuous professional development, the Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association takes an active interest in teacher training, especially in the result of teacher training programs, and generally in their impact on the education system.

Within the project entitled „Promoting Authentic Assessment in the Romanian In-Service Teacher Training System", supported by the Open Society Institute, the Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association set out the analyze the manner in which the competences of teachers who have completed in-service training courses (especially courses that are accredited by the National Center for Teachers' In-Service Training – in Romanian, *Centrul Naţional de Formare a Personalului din Învăţământul Preuniversitar* – CNFP) are assessed, and to promote authentic assessment, i.e. assessment of teachers' performance as an outcome of their completion of teacher training programs in an authentic school/classroom-based context.

The present guidebook is one of the outputs of the above-named project. It addresses especially in-service teacher training providers, and it we hope it will prove a useful tool in planning and carrying out the assessment of teachers' competences developed in in-service training programs.

In the first chapter, we share some of the theoretical underpinnings of competence assessment in adult education. The second chapter introduces action-research as a means of continuous professional development, which allows for the authentic assessment of the in-service training program beneficiaries' competences, while at the same time serving as a means of self-assessment and validation of the developed competences. The last chapter details our experience of the proposed approach to assessment through a series of action research carried out by a group of teachers who completed the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking in-service training program, and who also completed a module on Action Research. This final chapter serves as the basis for the set of recommendations that the Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association is preparing to submit to significant stakeholders in the Romanian in-service teacher training system.

We hope that this guidebook will support teacher trainers and teacher educators in Teacher Training Houses across Romania in planning and implementing an authentic, valid and coherent assessment of the teachers' competences upon completion of in-service training programs.

1. Competence assessment in adult education – Theoretical underpinnings

1.1. Assessment in adult education

In education, in general, and in adult education in particular, assessment is of maximum relevance thanks to its regulatory function and to its role in the optimization of the path, the quality, the effectiveness and the timeliness of education. In adult education, assessment is highly important because:

- Adults have their own goals when they enroll for courses, they bring their own experiences into the course, they have specific expectation, etc.; in this context, without an initial assessment, their learning can fail before it has started;
- Assessment in adult education involved the adult learner directly and actively, making assessment an internalized process. Moreover, the learner is a partner in assessment, the assessment is discussed, explained and negotiated with the leaner, thus ensuring that the adult will also engage in self-assessment;
- Assessment holds a special place in adult education due to its close connectedness to the labor market. The competences adults develop in a training program are to be used immediately at the workplace. (Sava, S., Ungureanu, D., 2005)

There are many aspects to be assessed in adult education: the quality of the training program (curriculum), the learners' performance, the trainers' performance, the quality of teaching (the teaching –learning situation), etc.; however, in the following, we will focus on the learner's evaluation assessment.

The adult learner's assessment involves a few aspects, such as:
- The assessment of the adult learner's learning needs
- The assessment of the adult learner's preferred learning style
- The assessment of the outcomes of his / her learning.

In the assessment of the outcomes of learning (the degree to which the adult learner masters a set of competences that the training program set out to develop) is related to the objectives of the training program and the level of performance the adult learner comes to the training with. For this reason, the assessment of learning in adult education programs must be closely related to the competences that the training program targets.

Remember:
- In adult education there are four levels of evaluation in any training program (Kirkpatrick, L.D. 1994 as quoted in Sava, S., Ungureanu, D., 2005):
  - The learners' response (whether they enjoyed the course);
  - learning (the resulting increase in knowledge);
  - post-learning behavior (whether the learner demonstrates mastery of the competence in the targeted professional field);
  - results (the impact on the environment resulting from the trainee's learning, added value).
- In adult education, pre- and post-training assessment is more important than monitoring the process of learning because the trainees' learning needs must be identified, and relevant differences between the pre-training and post-training performance must be revealed, as well as the funds allocated for the program must be justified. In addition, post-training evaluation may be used as

the starting point in assessing the needs for participation in a new training program.

- Learners' assessment goes beyond the training program, all the way to the workplace, because it is only there that the developed competences can be put to an authentic test. Taking assessment to the workplace is complicated, but the real measure of the workers' learning can only be found there. (Sava, S., Ungureanu, D., 2005)
- In adult education the final / exit performance of the learner is essential, and while their conduct during the course is of secondary significance, it is not to be ignored.
- Evaluation seen as an input-output process monitoring (Sava, S., Ungureanu, D., 2005, p. 163) in adult education provides the possibility to build a comprehensive and objective evaluation plan into the training program. In this sense, assessment is planned in detail alongside with the entire training curriculum, by deciding why, what, how and when assessment is going to be done, and the results of assessment will be related to the inputs and the outputs of the training program.

1.2. Competence assessment in adult education

In adult education, an increasing number of training programs aim to develop learners' competences. Competences are an organic and functional fusion of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are targeted simultaneously in training. (Sava, S., Ungureanu, D., 2005)

In adult education, assessment of learning outcomes is done on two levels:

- Assessment of the learners' capacity to transfer – i.e. the extent to which they effectively use the new knowledge, skills and attitudes in solving problems that occur at the workplace;
- Assessment of the competences acquired by the learner upon completion of training as validated at the workplace through the results of the learners' work (impact evaluation of the training). The competences acquired by the learner upon completion of the training must be identifiable at the workplace as added value. It is difficult to assess this impact as the effects may appear in the long term, generally making it difficult to attribute a new behavior exclusively to one clearly distinct segment of intervention.

In a system based on competence assessment, the evaluators make judgments based on evidence collected from a variety of sources that can reveal that the individual is meeting the set standards or criteria.

Basic principles in competence assessment

The basic principles to be observed in competence assessment are: validity, credibility, flexibility and fairness. (McDonald, R., Boud, D., Francis, J., Gonczi, A., 1995, p. 20)
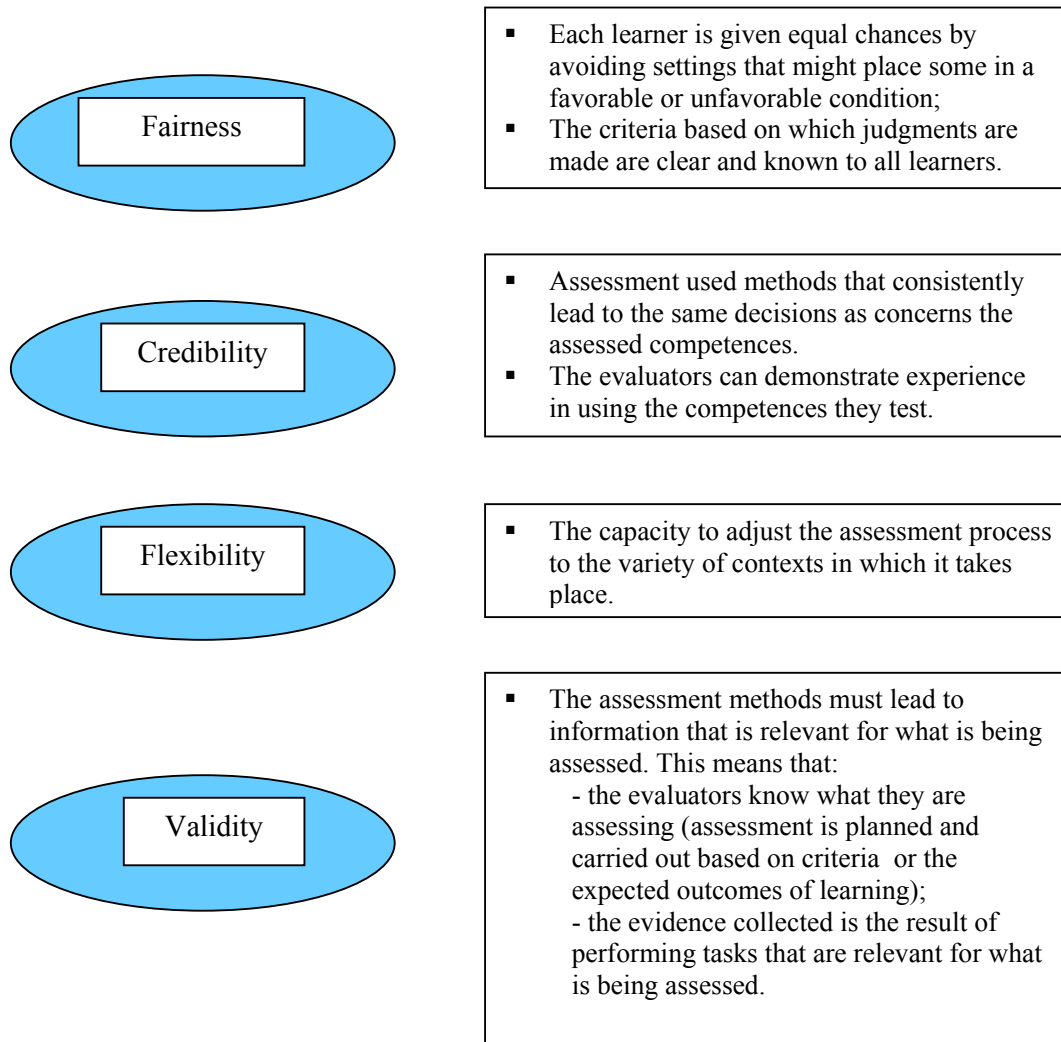
Fairness	▪ Each learner is given equal chances by avoiding settings that might place some in a favorable or unfavorable condition; ▪ The criteria based on which judgments are made are clear and known to all learners.
Credibility	▪ Assessment used methods that consistently lead to the same decisions as concerns the assessed competences. ▪ The evaluators can demonstrate experience in using the competences they test.
Flexibility	▪ The capacity to adjust the assessment process to the variety of contexts in which it takes place.
Validity	▪ The assessment methods must lead to information that is relevant for what is being assessed. This means that: - the evaluators know what they are assessing (assessment is planned and carried out based on criteria or the expected outcomes of learning); - the evidence collected is the result of performing tasks that are relevant for what is being assessed.

Figure 1. Basic principles in competence assessment

1.3 Assessment of the beneficiaries of in-service teacher training programs

In this subchapter we will look at the Romanian legislation that regulates the assessment of in-service teacher training program beneficiaries in Romania and we will share some aspects of the current practices in the field.

1.3.1. Legal aspects of the assessment of in-service teacher training program beneficiaries in Romania

According to the Methodology of continuous training for pre-university teaching staff (2009), the objectives pursued by training programs are the updating and development of competences and the acquisition of new competences. In Annex 1 of the above-mentioned methodology, it is pointed out that the planning, implementation and evaluation of in-service training programs for teachers is based on the model of competence assessment. According to the same methodology (Article 4), teachers' in-service training is based on the concept of *cumulative development of competence*

levels. The level of competence targeted in training programs is evaluated depending on:

- The teachers' capacity to mobilize, combine and use independently general and professional knowledge, skills and competences, in agreement with the requirements of a specific context, situation or problem;
- The teachers' capacity to face chances, complex and unforeseen situations.

Teachers' in-service training is based on the European Framework for Qualifications for Lifelong Learning and on focusing on learning outcomes (Methodology for in-service teacher training, 2009 [Metodologia formării continue a personalului didactic din învățământul preuniversitar]). Therefore, the assessment of learning results in in-service teacher training programs must be related to the competences that the training programs target to develop or update.

In the methodology for accreditation of teachers' in-service training programs the issue of trainee evaluation is mentioned in Chapter 5, more specifically in

- art. 18 b) – where it is stipulated that the dossier submitted by the training provider must demonstrate that the curricular criteria are observed (i.e. it contains the rationale – its need and usefulness – of the training program, the objectives, the structure of the modules, the methodology of assessment and the time resources allocated); and
- art. 20 f) – where it is specified that the final assessment of the beneficiaries must be done in a public examination, including the presentation of a project or a topic from the trainee's portfolio, or a paper prepared for this purpose. The final examination commission includes a representative of the CNFP or the Specialized Commission for Accreditation (CSA). Assessment of the portfolio and of the presentation is expressed through qualificatives (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Sufficient, and Insufficient). The time budget allocated for evaluation should be part of the overall training program.

1.3.2. Current practices in the assessment of teachers' in-service training program beneficiaries

The information contained below is taken from the *Analysis of the current situation in assessing teachers' competences upon completion of accredited in-service teacher training programs in Romania* (Kovacs, M. 2010)

- Although the training programs address the development of competences and in the documentation submitted for approval aspects related to assessment are covered, assessment in fact focuses on knowledge acquired by the trainees rather than on the competences they developed / mastered as an outcome of the training.
- The in-service training providers encourage the beneficiaries to evaluate the usefulness of the training programs from their own perspective. They also encourage school principals to monitor the changes that occur in the classroom as a result of the teachers' participation in training programs, but this does not mean that the principals in fact do it effectively. The lack of a genuine culture of professional development in the schools leaves room for the speculation that this recommendation made by CNFP or the training providers is rarely acted upon. In general, after the evaluation of the trainees, the training providers stop monitoring whether the competences developed by the teachers are actually used in everyday activities.

- Practice indicates that the training program providers use a variety of assessment instruments: project work (individual or group projects), portfolios, on-line evaluation, essays, etc.
- Portfolios are a common instrument of assessment used in in-service teacher training programs. When the expected content of the portfolios is presented to the trainees from the very beginning of the training program, the teachers know how to put together a portfolio that demonstrates their progress during the training program. However, when the portfolio only includes plans but not evidence of delivery and of students' response to the new input by the teacher, then the development of the teachers' new competences is
- The participants who are interested in the development of their professional competences feel the need of authentic assessment, and for guidance and feedback upon applying the competences in real classroom situations.

Below, we are sharing the opinions of a representative of a non-governmental organization that is also a significant in-service teacher training provider:

In our training programs, assessment of competences is done according to the provisions of OMEdC 4611/2005. After each module, the trainees are assessed by the trainers. They assess each participant's level of engagement, the relationships they establish within the group of learners, as well as their understanding and application of the new concepts. For the final evaluation, the participants are asked to prepare a portfolio to include evidence of activities they conduct in the classroom using the new learning from the training program, which should reflect mastery of the concepts (e.g. new teaching strategies). For a period of minimum two weeks, the participants are assisted by the trainers as they prepare lessons that reflect the new learning, during which time the material for the portfolio is also compiled. These portfolios are then presented in front of the evaluation commission.

In relation to this approach to assessment, in the training provider's perspective, some of the shortcomings of the current system are the following:
- *The teachers do not have mastery of self-assessment of their competences, nor do they have the culture of thorough preparation for external evaluation. This is related to the fact that in recent practice, attending the final evaluation session has been perceived as a guarantee of obtaining credit.*
- *There is no or limited guarantee that the portfolios have been compiled by the trainee undergoing assessment.*
- *There is no observable difference between the performance of a trainee that completed the course and obtained the best or the poorest qualificative (see above or Order of the Minister of Education no. 4611/2005).*
- *The number of trainees who are evaluated on the same day by the same commission is very high, and therefore the discussion the commission engages the trainee in is superficial.*
- *The mere submission of the portfolio does not constitute a proof of acquired competences.*
- *The significance of credit points obtained upon successful completion of a course is very low, which may lead to the trainees' lack of interest in developing competences in this manner.*
- *The quality of the training programs as stated in the paper documentation submitted to the CSA must overlap with the quality of program delivery. "So*

far, a number of training programs have been completed only on paper."
(NGO training provider representative)

- *Assessment of the participants' competences should be done by external or independent evaluators, other than the trainers, following a carefully designed procedure. "CNFP should not engage in evaluation (insufficient staff, potential for conflict of interest, lack of competence, etc.) (NGO training provider representative)*
- *Assessment of competences should be done also a 6-month or 1-year period after the completion of the course. A procedure should be developed by which teachers can demonstrate not only that they have the competence, but also that they use it in the classroom.*
- *CNFP and the Ministry of Education should understand that a more rigid piece of legislation and more constraints will not lead to better competence acquisition; the central public institutions should try measures that rely on incentives and flexibility.*

1.3.3. Assessment of teacher's professional development. Experiences reflected in international literature

In the article entitled "Beyond Assessment: Performance Assessment in Teacher Education", (Chung, 2008), the author states that in the last decade, teachers' *performance evaluation* has been gaining importance mostly due to its potential to promote professional development and reflexive teaching. The emphasis on reflection is based on theories of professional development as that promoted by Donald Shon about reflection in action and reflection on action as premises of professional development. The reflective practitioner teacher is also described by Lee Shulman who sees this as pedagogical reasoning in action (*cited in* Chung, 2008), which in fact expects the teachers to reason and think about the pedagogical decisions that they make to investigate, analyze and solve problems, to avoid the simple replication of "good practice".

The UK-based Training and Development Agency for Schools defines continuous professional development as a reflexive activity aiming at an individual's improvement of professional competences. In a recent study published in March 2010 by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), entitled "Good Professional Development in Schools", the authors identify the factors that contribute to teachers' successful professional development, and also identify some of the challenges that reduce the potential for success. The list of support factors includes the school management's strong commitment to the staff's continuous professional development; harmonizing teachers' professional development efforts with performance management; self-evaluation of the school coupled with setting priorities for improvement, as well as a careful harmonization of the individual and institutional needs.

A significant finding of the OFSTED 2010 report was that school-based professional development with sensible use of external support proved to be the most effective manner of developing teachers' competences. The schools that had positive

experiences in teachers' professional competence development made effective use of coaching and mentoring programs run by their own staff.

According to the OFSTED report, the successful schools were proud of the fact that they were identified as authentic learning communities. A common feature of the successfully developing schools was that they hosted one or several research and development groups carrying out professional dialogue about learning, and thanks to which the teaching staff was more actively engaged in professional development and encouraged to reflect upon their teaching. In these schools, efforts were focused on improving students' learning. The aforementioned schools used effective performance management to identify the real staff development needs and to help the teachers understand that they were accountable for the students' learning outcomes.

The biggest challenge to professional development identified by the OFSTED report was the insufficient attention paid to the results of investment in continuous professional development. Also, the schools where especially the management did not have the skills to do self-assessment and to redress the shortcomings, there was need for external support to identify the professional development needs.

Based on their findings, the OFSTED team recommended to the Training and Development Agency for Schools to provide support for the schools to be able to monitor and evaluate the impact of professional development upon the students' elarning outcomes. For schools, they recommended to improve their skills to monitor and evaluate the impact of teachers' continuous professional development, to allocate enough time for the staff to participate in relevant and meaningful professional development activities, to reflect on the learning, to make sure that the management staff has the skills to assess the teachers' performance correctly and objectively, and the skills to address shortcomings in a constructive manner.

In the last two decades, a new aspect in international educational science literature, which is less known to Romanian educationalists, is the attention paid to the authenticity of assessment. Authentic assessment is discussed both in terms of students' school performance, and in the context of teacher training. Authentic assessment shifts the emphasis from assessment of knowledge as stated by those who are assessed (whether they speak or write about what they know) to the assessment of demonstrated competences (those who are being assessed demonstrate that they can do something, they can transfer knowledge and skills from familiar contexts to new contexts). The significance attributed to authenticity is correlated with the increasing focus of the educational systems on competence development, on mastery of higher order thinking skills. Grant Wiggins (Wiggins, 1990), a promoter of authentic assessment, argued as early as 1990 for the introduction of this type of assessment in the US schools.

Birenbaum and Dochy (cited by Gulikers *et al*, 2004, p.68) describe authentic assessment (which they in fact call "alternative assessment") as follows: the learners bear the responsibility for learning; they reflect, collaborate, and discuss meaningful things with the teacher. Assessment contains tasks and contexts that are interesting, authentic, real life, and it is done at different times and using a variety of methods which reveal the learning and development of the learner. In some authors' opinion

(Herrington and Herrington, cited in Gulikers *et al*, 2004, p.68), the higher the degree of authenticity, the more positive the effect on learning and motivation for learning.

We should point out here that performance assessment is often interpreted as a synonym for authentic assessment. However, Gulikers et al (2004) point out the distinction they make: while each authentic assessment measures performance, performance assessment is not always authentic. The difference is in the degree of fidelity (conformity with reality) of the evaluation task and the context in which the task is carried out.

Gulikers, Bastiaens and Kirscher (2004) from the Educational Technology Expertise Center of the Open University of the Netherlands, after having reviewed a large volume of literature in the field, identified two important arguments which justify authentic assessment of competences (Gulikers *et al* , 2004):
- the validity of the construct and
- the impact on learning (also called *consequential validity*).

The validity of the construct in authentic assessment is inrelation with the fact that assessment measures what it should measure. As concerns competence evaluation, this means that
- the assessment task should adequately reflect the competence that is being assessed;
- the content of the assessment includes authentic tasks which reflect real-world issues;
- the task should include the assessment of thinking processes that experts in the field, who have that competence, use when solving real world problems.

Consequential validity describes the intended or unintended effect of assessment on teaching and learning. J. Biggs, cited in Gulikers *et al*. (2004), in the paper entitled *Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment*, launches the theory of constructive alignment of teaching, learning and assessment, which should be compatible and harmonized. If the learners perceive a discrepancy between what is being taught and what is being assessed, this will have a negative impact on learning.

The five dimensions of authentic assessment that Gulikers, Bastiaens and Kirscher (2004) identify are:
a. the assessment task;
b. the physical context;
c. the social context;
d. the assessment result or form;
e. the assessment criteria.

These five dimensions can vary in their level of authenticity (i.e., they are continuums). The authors point out that it is incorrect to think that something is either authentic or not authentic. For example, carrying out an assessment in a team is authentic *only* if the chosen assessment task is also carried out in a team in real life. The main point of the framework is that each of the five dimensions can resemble the criterion situation to a varying degree, thereby increasing or decreasing the authenticity of the assessment.

Authentic assessment in teacher training promotes teachers' genuine professional development, because it requires that the teachers carry out real life tasks whereby they demonstrate that they master the competences that the training program sets out to develop. Essentially, the assessment tasks must reflect the manner in which the competences are used in real contexts. Hence, assessment involves measuring the degree to which knowledge is grounded in profound understanding and can be demonstrated in an authentic manner. Assessment tasks will include solving problems that occur in the learners' everyday professional life. At the same time, the assessment tasks will indicate the type of intellectual work that is valued, and consequently this will influence the manner in which the learners will learn. Because assessment impacts not only learning, but also teaching, the training programs must be planned in such a manner that instruction, learning and assessment are aligned for the purpose of developing the genuine competences targeted by the program.

2. Action research projects and teachers' continuous professional development

Teacher training is a lifelong learning activity which begins prior to pre-service training and continues along the entire teaching career. (Fullan, 1992)

The concept of the teacher researcher is a well-known idea in the international educational arena, and many contemporary reformers in the field of education have promoted it in their publications. In Romania, the profile of the teacher researcher has been promoted in teachers' professional journals (e.g. *Dialoguri didactice* and *Perspective*), which encourage collaboration among teachers in activities aimed at revising school curricula, improving the learning environment, perfecting instruction and developing educational policies. The teacher researcher is an active and reflective participant in all the efforts that are aimed at improving defining aspects of education.

Teachers' enhanced autonomy comes with increasing responsibilities. The teachers, the schools and the school inspectorates are accountable to all stakeholders for the policies, the programs and practices they implement. Teachers should not simply make decisions about their work; they should make sure that their decisions are informed by concrete data and made in full awareness of the implications of such data. Therefore, it is necessary that teachers prove that they have initiative in documenting and assessing their own practices and take ownership of their professional development.

2.1. Action-research

An increasing number of studies demonstrate the positive personal and professional effects of practitioners' involvement in action research. The term "action-research" was first introduced in 1949 by Stephen Corey and his colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, although the concept can be traced back to John Dewey and Kurt Lewin. Corey, cited by Beverly (1993), defined action research as the process by which practitioners study their own practices in order to solve problems they face in carrying out their professional tasks.

In our interpretation, action research provides opportunities for teacher to learn and develop skills needed in research methods, and to become aware of the options and possibilities of introducing changes favorable for learning. Teachers that are action-researchers become better critical thinkers and reflect more on their practices. The teachers involved in such activities are more careful when they make decisions on their teaching strategies, they are better at understanding issues related to the entire teaching learning process.

Action research is used in a variety of fields: in developing school-based curriculum, as a professional development strategy, in planning systems and developing policies. Action research can be used as an instrument of assessment which supports individual or institutional self-assessment.

As they get involved in action research, teachers understand better the instruction process. The new elements that they learn will have an impact on the classroom, the school and the school community. The future professional development programs, the curriculum of teacher training and the initiatives of school improvement will be significantly influenced by the elements that the teachers learn as they carry out action research, which require critical investigation of their own practices, the school curricula and school development, in general.

The questions posed by the teachers in action research arise from the discrepancies between intentions and realities, in fields that are found to pose problems. The unique characteristics of the questions posed by the teachers do not come simply from theory or practice: they come from the critical reflection on the results of applying theory in practice. Research carried out by teachers may lead to the re-evaluation of current theories, and influences future practices in instruction, learning and assessment.

Action-research initiatives help practitioners and other stakeholders to identify the needs, to evaluate the development processes and the results of the changes that have been promoted, planned, and implemented. The educational decision-makers who are interested in action research must take into account the advantages of teacher-led action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (cited by Johnson, 1993) define the concept as follows:

> *"Action research is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation done in groups or individually. It is defined by cycles of identification of the problems, systematic collection of data, reflection, analysis, and actions based on them, and eventually a redefinition of the problems. The connection between the terms action and research emphasize the essential features of this method: testing new ideas in practice, a means of curriculum development, of improving instruction and learning." (p.1)*

Teachers can implement action research in order to obtain specific information about their own schools. Data are needed to inform a well-founded decision which will bring adequate changes in education and improved learning (Saba, 2000). Action research is defined by four major features:

- **Cyclic** – there is a tendency to repeat the same steps in the same order.
- **Participative** – the subjects of the research and the sources of information are involved as partners or at least as active participants in the research.
- **Qualitative** – it involves description rather than a series of figures.
- **Reflexive** – critical reflection on the process and the results is an essential component of each cycle (Dick, 2000).

2.2. The action research process

Action research is a process of systematic testing of new ideas in the classroom or in the school, of result analysis and decision making whether to apply the new ideas or to repeat the investigative process. Action research is different from formal research, carried out by theoreticians, because it is planned and controlled by practitioners, individually or in groups.

The action research process includes three basic phases:

Observation – getting a general idea and collecting information. Here we evaluate, we define the problem to be investigated, and the context. Also, we describe the activities of all the actors (teachers, members of the group, principals, etc).
Analysis – interpretation and explanation. Here we evaluate, analyze and interpret the situation. We reflect upon the participants' activities. We identify the fields where good results have been obtained, but also the shortcomings and the problems.
Action – problem solving. Here we evaluate, we judge the value, the effectiveness, the relevance and the results of the activities. We propose solutions for each problem. (Stringer 1999, 18, 43 – 44,160.)
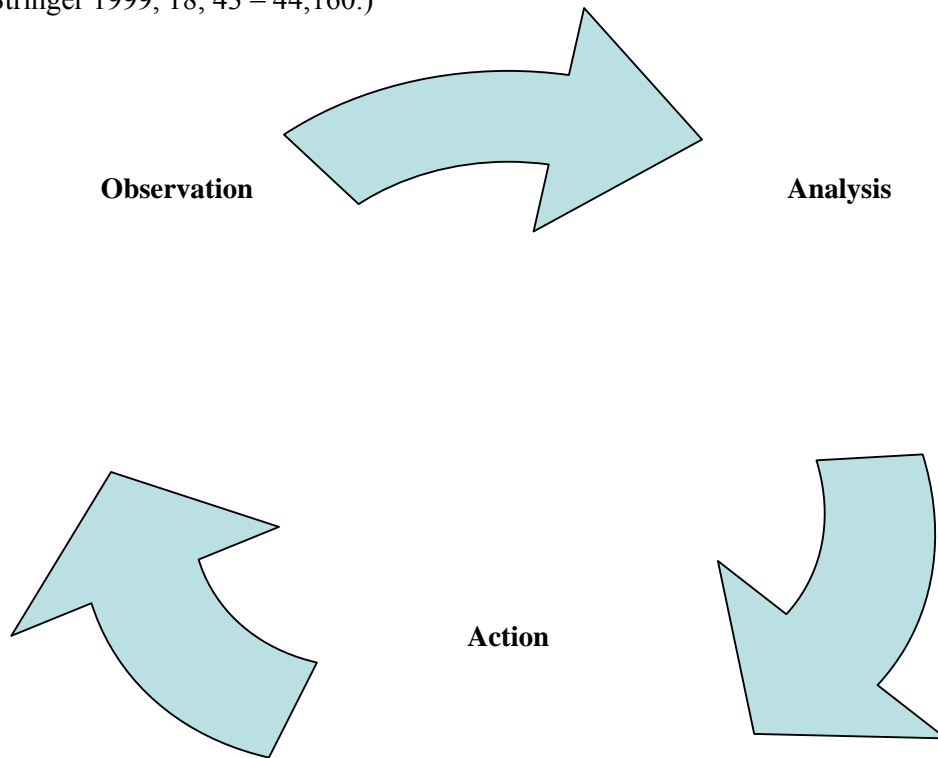
Figure 2. The cycle of action-research process

Reading: teachers' action research projects

Action research carried out by teachers is the best opportunity to use critical investigation in order to bring changes into education in a specific and unique form.

Action research projects are carried out on three levels. On the first level, the action research is carried out by a teacher who implements and documents solutions for the improvement of their teaching activities in the classroom. On the second level, the action research project is carried out by a group of teachers (for example, the members of a department in a school), who implement action and document solutions for the improvement of teaching in several classroom or at the level of the entire school. The third level involves principals, inspectors and other decision-makers, teachers and other stakeholders. The purpose here is to introduce changes at the level of the entire school community.

In the following, we introduce a list of five arguments for involving teachers in action research. Through action research projects, the teachers

- Develop practices based on reflection and tested techniques.
- Try out new ideas and can evaluate their effectiveness.
- Gain self-confidence in their decisions concerning instruction.
- Contribute to the development of a professional school culture.
- Introduce relevant and sustainable changes in practice, in the students' learning and in the school environment.

How to run an action research project?
Action research projects pursue objectives that target the improvement of teaching practices or other educational processes and they are designed, run and controlled by teachers.

An action research project always starts with a significant question. For instance, "*Why do my students not take better notes*?*"*
Action research proposes a new practice (an intervention) to solve the issue that ahs been identified through asking the significant question. "*If we use a graphic organizer to teach new concepts, will the students improve their note-taking skills*?"
It then uses a systematic manner of testing the intervention or the solution. "*Does the solution we propose improve the students' skills? How?"*

The stages described below are included in most action research projects:
1. Identification of the question or the problem to be addressed.
This will always be the starting point. Sometimes finding the starting point or the central issue takes time.
2. Defining a solution.
This step involves designing an intervention, which may entail using a new strategy, or a new material, which we believe may help solve the problem.
3. Applying the intervention and data collection about the response.
In this stage, we define how to apply the strategy and how we will collect data. If possible, it is useful to have at least two research groups which are as similar as possible, and use one as a test group, and one as a control group (where we do not apply the intervention). The manner of recording the results of the intervention should also be decided upon.
 4. Data analysis.
In this stage, we analyze whether the intervention has led to the expected results or not. For instance, we may compare the response of the test group with that of the control group to draw conclusions.
 5. Transfer to practice.
This can be done by either revising the intervention by repeating the cycle from stage 2 on to test a new intervention, or if the first intervention was successful, then we can use the same strategy repeatedly in our current classroom practice hoping for an improvement of the results (disappearance of the problem identified in stage 1).

3. Teachers' professional development and authentic assessment of the competences. Findings from an action research project

3.1. Background

The *Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association (RWCT Romania)* promotes and supports teacher training at all levels of education, including in adult education, with a view to improving the quality of teaching. In 2007-2009, RWCT Romania implemented the accredited training program called "Critical thinking. Active learning". Through the implementation of this in-service teacher training program, RWCT Romania aimed to support teachers in their efforts to develop their students' critical thinking skills. At the same time, we wanted to encourage the trainee teachers to take responsibility for their own professional development. The teachers received support to transfer their learning in their current classroom practices; they were helped in each workshop to plan lessons that integrated the new teaching strategies in their instruction.

As we reflected on the effectiveness of the program, we decided to use action research to assess the extent to which the training program indeed supported the teachers in taking responsibility for their own professional development. Our design included several individual action research projects which we used in order to demonstrate that the teachers have become more reflective. In order to select the participants in the project, we launched a call for action research project proposals. We were going to select 5-6 projects to support from the stage of detailed design through implementation and evaluation. We launched the call for project concepts, but we received no proposals. Then we realized that the teachers were probably not ready to accept our challenge.

3.2. The problem

The teacher training program management team had expected the training beneficiaries, after having developed their competences to reflect on their professional activities, to be able to identify a problem related to the development of their students' critical thinking skills, to design an action plan, to implement it and reflect on the manner in which their action leads to solving the problem. As we had received no proposals for action research projects, we decided to change our approach. We wanted our training beneficiaries to become truly reflective teacher, genuine teacher researchers. In Vygotskian terms, we wanted to support their professional development by working with them in their zone of proximal development. The teachers had already mastered a large set of active learning strategies which helped them engage students actively in learning, and knew how to conduct cooperative learning, but we did not have evidence that they reflected enough or profoundly enough on the changes that the new strategies were bringing into the classroom. It was not obvious that they made efforts to interpret, analyze and in general process their own classroom experiences and their students', to establish valid connections between the new approach to teaching and the impact on the students' learning.

3.3. Participants

Our project involved 7 teacher participants who had completed the *Critical Thinking. Active learning* in-service teacher training program. The teachers had diverse backgrounds, in that

- they came from a variety of schools: arts and crafts school, technological highschool (vocational), elementary private school, sports school;
- they were teachers of a variety of subject matters: technologies (engineer teacher), Romanian language and literature teachers, a social studies teacher, a school counselor, a French teacher (foreign language), and a primary school teacher;
- they teach students of various age groups: highschool (5 teachers), lower secondary (1 teacher), primary education (1 teacher).

All the teachers work in urban schools and all chose to be participating in our project.

3.4. The process

In order to support the teachers to develop their action research projects, we organized a 15-hour training workshop (see Annex 1).

When the training was completed, the teachers had a first draft of their projects. They were then given one week to finalize their project, with support and feedback from the trainers. After that, in a next four months, they implemented their projects. In the middle of the implementation period, we organized mentoring visits to the teachers because we felt that they needed support, guidance and encouragement, as well as confirmation that what they were doing was valuable.

The purpose of the visits was to support the teachers while they were applying what they had learned in the training program.

The objectives of the visit was:

- to encourage the teachers as they were transferring their learning from the training to the real classroom situation
- to clarify some aspects of the action-research process;
- to provide feedback on the activities they had already carried out;
- to help them document the process and collect our own evidence about the process;
- to plan the next steps in detail.

During the two hours that each visit lasted, we did th following:

- studied the materials that the teacher and / or her students produced during the implementation of the project;
- provided constructive feedback
- provided clarification when needed
- discussed about the forthcoming activities and all the details they entailed (see Annex 2).

When they completed their classroom-based interventions, each teacher reflected on what they had done, and on the results they obtained, and produced a complex report.

3.4.1. Process documentation

As trainers and teacher researchers, we wanted to analyze the learning processes that the teachers experienced in our project. To this end, we carried out the mentoring visits, we recommended that the teachers collect evidence of their interventions, we gave the teachers a questionnaire, and we analyzed the report each of them produced.

3.4.2. Mentoring visits

The mentoring visits were genuine opportunities for learning for both the teachers, and the mentor. In most cases, the visits were made in the schools where the trainee teachers work. The mentor discussed with each teacher individually, in a room where they were not interrupted. The mentor asked questions which the teacher elaborated on. When necessary, the mentor asked for clarification, which – among others – provided the teacher the opportunity to think aloud. Some of the aspects of the intervention were thus clarified not only for the mentor, but also for the trainee teacher. For instance, some of the trainee teachers collected a lot of evidence to document the process, but they did not have any clear ideas how they were going to use them. Some other teachers did not keep valuable evidence that would have documented the early stages of their intervention.

An added value of the visits was that, having observed positive practices of one trainee teacher, the mentor could then recommend it to other trainee teachers as well. For instance, one of the trainee teachers had the initiative to make entries in a professional reflection journal every day. The mentor found this out during the visit, and then she recommended it to the other trainee teachers as well.

An important moment during the mentoring visit was when the teacher and the mentor discussed the next steps. The teachers described their plans, and the mentor would ask questions and provide constructive feedback. The discussions were often occasions for clarifying the reasons for expected outcomes of the activities the mentors were planning.

3.4.3. What evidence has been collected?

The trainee teachers collected a variety of evidence as they wanted to richly document the interventions they made:
- **plans and resources used in the lessons:** lesson plans, the detailed description of the activities planned, learning tasks; texts used in the lessons (both from textbooks and from other sources, such as the Internet, magazines, etc.); CDs containing recordings of pieces of literature in Romanian and in French (recordings of actors' voices);
- **Instruments of assessment** – questionnaires, initial and final tests, observation sheets of individual and group activities; evaluation sheets of the students' products, teachers' observations on the students' activities during the lessons; students' self-assessment forms;
- **Students' products**: *written,* such as chain of events, concept maps, fishbone graphic organizer, word web, clustering, worksheets completed by the students; *audio*: recordings of the students reading in French;
- **Feedback** provided to the teacher by the students and their parents. Feedback from fellow teachers;
- **Aspects to document changes to the physical environment** documented by photographs**;**
- **Reflection diaries of the teachers.**

One finding about the evidence that the teachers collected was that before the mentoring visit these pieces of evidence were collected but not really processed. They had not been grouped, or analyzed, the reason why they had been collected or how they could be helpful was not really clear to the teachers. In their discussions with the mentor, the teachers clarified these aspects, and realized that the evidence had to be carefully studied and interpreted. The teachers had been used to collecting such evidence because in a number of in-service training courses the form of assessment involves portfolios. However, the portfolios they had been used to were a mere collection of documents which were at best superficially processed, so the teachers had not been aware of the wealth of information that the portfolios could convey or how that information can be exploited for the improvement of their teaching. In our project, a concrete result of processing information in the documents collected as evidence of the process was that each teacher wrote a detailed carefully structured report (for details in Romanian, see www.alsdgc.ro). The reports include the detailed documentation of the action research processes, as well as chapters on the teachers' findings ("What have we learned?") and relevant conclusions for the problems they had identified at the beginning of their action research.

One aspect that calls for a short comment is the following: from empirical observations, made during the numerous training programs that the project team members have delivered, as well as in other interactions with teachers (conferences, editing professional journals, etc.), we have realized that in general teachers in Romania are hesitant when asked to write about their professional experiences. Their hesitation and lack of security makes them look for "inspiration" in others' writings (in most cases without critically reflecting on the meaning of those writings), and quote whole passages from publications that already exist on the market. As portfolios are a very widespread form of evaluation in teachers' in-service training programs, and these portfolios include written materials, we believe that the teachers' hesitation to write original texts is a serious threat to the genuine professional development they are expected to experience. Therefore, in our project we paid special attention to the trainee teachers writing the report upon completion of their action research, and provided ample and frequent feedback to each author.

3.4.4. What have the reflection questionnaires revealed?

The questionnaires that the trainee teachers filled in referred to three major aspects (see Annex 3):
- The respondents' perceived degree of difficulty of each step in the action research;
- The respondents' perceived degree of usefulness of their participation in the project, and the envisaged effects;
- The respondents' perception about action research as a means of authentic assessment of the competences developed in in-service training courses, and as an approach to genuine professional development.

As concerns the perceived level of difficulty, the respondents found that the stages of problem definition, question formulation and action planning were not difficult, which can also be explained by the fact that these stages had in fact been covered together with the trainees in the Action research workshop, where they had the opportunity to share their drafts and get feedback from both their peers and the trainers.

Implementation, including the development of the instruments of assessment was more difficult, while in most cases the stage of data analysis and organization of the findings were perceived as the most difficult parts.

Most of the teachers thought that action research is a valuable approach to the improvement of the teaching-learning processes. The respondents thought that their action research would have a positive impact on their instruction, and on their students' learning. They agreed that the action research project they had implemented demonstrated their mastery of the skills developed in the Action research training program. However, only one of the respondents called herself a teacher researcher, while the others considered that they did not feel confident enough to do so yet.

As concerns the long term effects of the action research projects, it is important to note the impact it may have on the trainee teachers' careers; the respondents pointed out that they would probably start new projects or they will expand their initial ones; however, no-one pointed out the value of the skill to reflect on one's professional development as a result of experiencing carrying out action research.

The teachers agreed that action research is indeed an authentic manner of assessing one's competences developed in a training program. " […] classroom practice is what really amplifies the competences one gains in a training program", said one of the participants.

3.4.5. What has been revealed by the action research reports?

As they themselves pointed out in the reflection questionnaires, the teachers experienced difficulties in producing the reports on their action research. These difficulties may be related to the fact that the teachers are not confident when they need to analyze and interpret the results of their own research. The numerous documents collected as evidence need to be sorted, and analyzed; the findings need to structured so that the conclusions one draws are relevant for the problem that was identified in the first place as the leading question for the action research.

Report writing was a complex process of reflection in writing. The teachers shared three or four drafts with the trainers, who provided feedback, asked for clarification, suggested places where to elaborate on some important aspects, etc. All these are aspects closely related to the process of writing, which however is something that most teachers in Romania are not yet very confident about.

3.5. What have we learned?
What we have learned from experimenting with a means of authentic assessment through action research, within the project we called *Promoting authentic assessment in the Romanian in-service teacher training system*, can be structured as follows:
- aspects pertaining to the implementation of action research projects by the trainee teachers (beneficiaries of in-service training);
- aspects pertaining to the design of in-service teacher training programs;
- aspects relevant for the organization as a provider of teachers' in-service training programs.

3.5.1. About the implementation process of the action research projects

- Peer support is essential.

The participants in the project needed numerous opportunities for professional interaction. Although during the training there was a lot of support as well as peer interaction, which allowed the participants to get feedback on their draft projects, when the workshop was over, the teachers had to carry on on their own, only relying on themselves and the trainers' support. Both in finalizing their reports, and in the implementation of the project, the teachers would have welcomed their peers' support. One of the trainee teachers asked a colleague teaching at the same school to provide her feedback.

At the end of the project implementation, we realized that we should have facilitated the teachers' exchange of ideas during both the action research implementation and the report writing. An appropriate frequency for group meetings would have been once a month. On the one hand, these occasions would have been good for the teachers to reflect on the progress to that point, and on the partial outcomes so that they could share with their colleagues. On the other hand, these professional meetings would have been good to ask for the colleagues' feedback on the possible interpretations of some of the results, on the plans to make adjustments, etc. They would also have been good opportunities to receive suggestions from peers on what aspects are worth pursuing in further research. As concerns writing the report, the trainee teachers could have learned from each other how to structure the information they wanted to share, how to formulate ideas so that they are clear to everyone, how to use the right voice in writing the reports, and how to write persuasively. In brief, the trainee teachers could have been critical friends for each other. While in our project all these roles were now played by the trainers, our intention for the future is to facilitate much more interaction among the trainee teachers.

- Authentic assessment of teachers' competences is a worthwhile investment of time and effort.

Another aspect we want to remember from the experience of running action research projects as means of authentic assessment is that the size of the group is very important because the process impacts the learning of each participant only if time is dedicated to each individual. Authentic assessment requires an important – and profitable – investment of time from both the learners and the trainer. In addition to the training proper, the trainer has to allocate time for individual discussions to provide feedback, to guide the learning process and the transfer to practice of the things learned in the workshop. We are confident that all these are profitable investments because there is alignment among teaching, learning and assessment, which increases the chances that the teachers' competences indeed are developed.

3.5.2. About planning in-service teacher training programs

- Assessment must be planned in close relation with the competences targeted in the training program.

As concerns design of in-service training programs, what we have learned is that assessment (methods, tasks, instruments) must be planned in close relation to the

general and specific competences that the program aims to develop. All the aspects of assessment must be shared with the trainees in view of the principle of fairness to all, from the very beginning of the program. They will thus understand what they are expected to do to demonstrate that they master the skills, and will thus also be better able to carry out self-assessment. In addition, in the above-described conditions, the management of the school will be able to decide to what extent the participation of the teachers in the training program will be to the benefit of the school and the students' learning. Management will thus stand a better chance to be actively involved in monitoring the transfer of the new skills to the teachers' everyday professional activity, and to assess the impact of the training on the school.

- Time must be set aside to teach the participants how to produce good quality original and professionally valuable text.

After piloting the Action research training module, we noted two aspects that need improvement. One is that in order to help the teachers produce good quality professionally valuable texts, we need to introduce a session on writing, which should send the message to the trainees that good writing involves a lot of rewriting, and that critical friends are of great help in the revision process.

- Time must be set aside to teach the trainee teachers how to collect and process relevant data and information.

Another session that should be included in the training program should target the improvement of the teachers' skills to collect and analyze data. We have reached this conclusion having experienced the difficulties our trainee teachers had when asked to collect and process data related to their action research: the dominating tendency was for them to collect masses of documents but they rarely if ever analyzed and interpreted them to inform their findings and conclusions, or the next steps of the action research process.

3.5.3. About the organization as a teachers' in-service training provider

- In addition to providing a true image of the competences the trainees develop, action research gives a sense of professional satisfaction to both the trainees and the trainers.

While we implemented the action research projects, we noticed how the trainees responded, reflected and adjusted their approach – revising their original designs – and overall enjoyed the experience of professional accomplishment when their students responded well to the strategies they proposed. This observation also gave us, the trainers, and to the organization a good feeling that the efforts we have made are meaningful, and that it is worth investing time and energy into in-service training because the effects will show in the classroom and in the students' learning. Needless to say, there is also a sense of *professional credibility* that we gained. It is true that the group we worked with was small in size, but we are positive that it is better worth working with a small group of trainees and doing a good job developing genuine competences, than working with large groups to meet quantitative indicators set in an office, which may well translate into zero impact. We have the confidence that the teachers who implemented the action research projects will continue to 'search', to experiment in the classroom, and to carefully monitor the students' response; moreover, we are hopeful that the teachers will be able to communicate in a

meaningful manner their findings to the professional community they belong to, thus building a valuable teaching career. As an organization, we are proud that we have managed to contribute to empowering teachers so that the decisions they make about the development of their professional careers are more substantially informed. Besides, we hope to have contributed to their becoming more responsible and accountable teachers, who have a sense of professional dignity conferred by the satisfaction of doing their best in the classroom.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Curriculum of the Action research module

I. Title of the module:
Action research
II. Description:
Specific objectives: At the end of the module, the trainees will be able - to explain the concept of the action research process - to identify the phases of the action research process - to identify the stages of a project that involves action research - to explain the role of action research projects in the improvement of the teaching-learning and assessment processes - to develop an action research design in order to improve their instruction and the students' learning - reflect on the need for professional development. **Specific competences:** - to plan and experiment with action research in order to improve their instruction - to share the experiences gained during project implementation with other teachers **SUBTOPICS** Subtopic 1 – The action research process Subtopic 2 – The action research project Subtopic 3 – Designing an action research project **TOTAL TIME**: 15 hours **Subtopic 1: The action research process (3 hours)** Goal. To enhance teachers' knowledge of the action research process Objectives. Having covered the topic, the trainees will be able to: - explain the concept of the action research process - identify the phases of action research process Contents: 1.1 The teacher researcher 1.2 The action research process: definition, phases The topic covers the issues of teachers as action researchers. Covering the topic, the trainees will be able to point out the positive effects of involving practitioners in action research. The trainees will thus be more careful about their approach to instruction, about their understanding of teaching and learning and the entire teaching process. The participants will be able to analyze the concept of action research process as well as its major characteristics: cyclic, participative, qualitative, and reflection-oriented. Based on the knowledge they gain, the participants will be able to identify the phases of the action research process and describe each phase. **Subtopic 2: The action research project (6 hours)** Goal. Develop the trainees competences to demonstrate openness to the innovative tendencies in professional development Objectives. Upon completing the topic, the trainees will be able to:

- identify the stages of the action research project
- explain the role of action research projects in the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment

Contents

2.1 Action research projects; collaboration among teachers to carry out action research projects
2.2 The stages of an action research project
2.3. Case studies: action research projects

Action research projects are different from regular research projects in that they are initiated and controlled by teachers who collaborate with other practitioners. Teachers' action research initiatives are a very good means of critical investigation carried out in a specific structured manner. In order to identify the features of good action research projects, the participants will be asked to analyze two action research projects; the first is a level one project (carried out by an individual teacher who tests new strategies in the classroom), while the second is a level 3 project (carried out by a group who test the introduction of department meetings).

Subtopic 3: Designing an action research project (6 hours)

Goal. Prepare teachers for the implementation of action research projects with a view to enhancing their professional development and improving their students' learning.
Objectives. Upon completion of the topic, the trainees will be able to:
- develop an action research design in order to improve their instruction and the students' learning
- reflect on the need for professional development.

Contents:

3.1 Guided practice – drafting an action research project.
3.2. Planning for implementation.

The trainee teachers will be asked to analyze their classroom activity and design an action research project that targets the improvement of their students' critical thinking skills.

In a very practical manner, the trainees will be asked to plan an action research project. So that the plan can be implemented, concrete implementation plans will be designed. This stage is essential in the training. While the beginner teachers will need a lot of support, this stage of the training has the potential to provide a rich and creative experience for all participants. Once developed, the plans will be discussed by the whole group. The group will be asked to provide feedback on the implementation plans, but also be aware to note potential traps and incomplete plans.

III. Bibliography

[1] Dick, B. (2000) A beginner's guide to action research. Available at:
http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/guide.html
[2] Golombek, E.(2006) Action Research Report on an Approach for Creating Meaningful Tefilla Experiences in Middle School. Available at:
http://www.lookstein.org/online_journal.php?id=43
[3] Johnson, B. (1993). Teacher-as-researcher. Available at:
http://www.dsea.org/teachingtips/researcher.asp
[4] Lewin, K. (1948) Resolving Social Conflicts; Selected Papers on Group Dynamics. In: G. W. Lewin (ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
[5] Nueman, W. L. (1997). Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (3rd Ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
[6] Saba, F. (2000). Research in distance education: A status report. *International review of Research in Open and Distance Learning,* 1 (1), 1-9. Available at:

http://216.239.51.100/search?q=cache:39UEJCOpqv4C:www.irrodl.org/
content/v1.1/farhad.pdf+research+in+distance+education+a+status+report
&hl=en&ie=UTF-8.
[7] Silverman D. (2004) Interpretarea Datelor Calitative; Sage, London. Polirom, Iaşi
[8] Stringer, E. T. (1999). Action research. Thousand Oaks (Calif.): Sage.

Annex 2. Guidelines for discussion during the mentoring visit

The mentoring visit starts with a brief review of the activities that the teacher researcher has carried out to date. The questions asked by the mentor will aim at clarification, but also ask for examples to illustrate the statements that the teachers make. The mentor invites the teachers to analyze their approach, then to synthesize their findings, and point out their learning, and relevant conclusions for the issue that is being examined. Also, the mentor invites the teacher to reflect on the competences that are being developed while the action research is progressing.

The mentor's attitude is mostly that of an *active listener*. Through the questions she asks, the mentor guides the teachers' reflection, so that they can identify the elements that are not yet clear, and think of ways that can improve their approach.

During the visit, the mentor will also ask questions that she could not have prepared prior to the meeting, which result from the mentor's interaction with the teacher, or from what the mentor notices about the teacher.

The questions below can guide the discussion between the mentor and the trainee teacher:

- What activities have you done and how do they compare to what you planned?
- What relevant aspects have you noticed as you are carrying out your research? Have there been any critical incidents?
- Have you discussed your decisions at specific points in the project with anyone? What suggestions have been made?
- What are the results so far? What do they tell you? How do you interpret them? What lessons have you learnt from the conclusions that you have drawn so far?
- Have you made any changes to the initial implementation plan? If so, how did you decide they were necessary? Have you encountered unexpected situations which influenced the implementation of your project?
- Have you experienced any difficulties? Please, describe them.
- Can you show me the materials you have used? Why did you decide to use them?
- Can you show me some of the products the students made? Why have you chosen these ones to share? What is their relevance to the project outcomes?
- What have you learned during the implementation of the project?
- How will the partial results influence the further implementation of your project?
- Have you thought of new issues to be investigated in other projects? Have you come across aspects that stir your professional curiosity?

Annex 3. Questionnaire for the participating teachers

The project entitled **Promoting authentic assessment in the Romanian in-service teacher training system** is implemented by the Romanian RWCT Association. It is part of the organization's effort to promote policies based on successful practice in the field of in-service teacher training. By filling in the questionnaire, you will support us to promote innovative assessment policies in the Romanian in-service teacher training system. The answers will be processed to obtain a general picture of the relevant aspects of the education system.

Please read the instructions for each section carefully before you start filling in the questionnaire.

Section 1
Please indicate the degree of difficulty for each of the components of the action research project that you have implemented by circling the adequate number. Your answer should reflect your experience during the implementation of your action research within the project entitled Promoting authentic assessment in the Romanian in-service teacher training system. The significance of the figures:
- *1 – no difficulty at all*
- *2 – low level of difficulty*
- *3 – average level of difficulty*
- *4 – high level of difficulty*
- *5 – very high level of difficulty*

1. **Definition of the problem that is at the basis of the action research project**
(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

2. **Deciding on the research lead question(s)**
(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

3. **Deciding on the activities of the action research project**
(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

4. **Developing the activities of the action research project**
(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

5. **Developing the methods and instruments of assessment to be used in the action research project**
(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

6. **Analysis of the collected data**
(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

7. Organization of writing and writing proper of the results of the action research project

(not difficult at all)   1   2   3   4   5   (very difficult)

Explain why you indicated the level of difficulty you marked.

Section 2
To what extent do you agree with the following statements? *Please respond by circling in each line the answer that best reflects what you think.*

Nr.		I disagree	I somewhat agree	I agree	I totally agree
8.	Action research is valuable for me as a teacher from the perspective of the teaching-learning process	1	2	3	4
9.	Action research is valuable for my students from the perspective of the teaching-learning process	1	2	3	4
10.	The action research project I implemented had a positive impact on learning.	1	2	3	4
11.	The action research project I implemented had a positive impact on teaching.	1	2	3	4
12.	The action research project I implemented demonstrates the competences I developed in the Action research training module.	1	2	3	4
13.	I think of myself as a teacher researcher.	1	2	3	4

Section 3
Please answer the following question in writing:

14. Describe the long term effects that you believe the action research project will have on your professional career (if you think that the project will have any long term effects).
15. What difficulties did you encounter in the implementation of the action research project and how did you overcome them?
16. How does the action research project document your classroom practices?
17. Do you believe that action research is a means of authentic assessment of the competences developed in an in-service teacher training course? Explain.

Thank you!

Bibliography

1. Annex to OM No. 5720 / 20.10.2009 – Metodologia formării continue a personalului didactic din învăţământul preuniversitar
2. Annex to O.M.Ed.C.nr. 4611/2005 – Metodologia de acreditare a programelor de formare continuă a personalului din învăţământul preuniversitar
3. Bradea, S.C., (coord.) Îndrumarul managerului şi nu numai ... – procesul de evaluare a competenţelor, RoMarketing, Oradea
4. Fullan, M. G. (1992). *Successful school improvement*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.Gulikers, J.T.M., Bastiaens, T.J., Kirschner, P.A (2004). The Five-Dimensional Framework for Authentic Assessment, ETR&D, vol 52, no. 3, p. 68
5. Johnson, Beverly (1993). Teacher-as-researcher, ERIC Digest, http://www.ericdigests.org/1993/researcher.htm (accessed on 08.06.2010)
6. Kovacs, M. (2010) Analysis of the current situation in assessing teachers' competences upon completion of accredited in-service teacher training programs in Romania. Report – material elaborated within the *Promoting authentic assessment in the Romanian in-service teacher training system,* available at http://www.alsdgc.ro/publicatii/view/id/13/menu/alte (accessed on 10.05.2010)
7. Kovacs, M., Tirca, A., Iucu, R., Ciolan, L. (2009). Ghidul furnizorului de formare continuă a personalului din învăţământul preuniversitar, produs în proicetul PHARE RO 2006/018-147. 04. 01. 02. 02. 01 project; Asistenţă Tehnică pentru sprijinirea activităţii Centrului Naţional de Formare a personalului din Învăţământul Preuniversitar
8. McDonald, R., Boud, D., Francis, J., Gonczi, A. (2006) New Perspectives on Assessment, UNEVOC: Studies in technical and vocational education, UNESCO, Paris. (unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001018/101855e.pdf)
9. OFSTED (2010). Good professional development in schools, available at *http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Good-professional-development-in-schools* (accessed on 08.05.2010)
10. *Ruth R. Chung (2008). Beyond Assessment: Performance Assessments, in Teacher Education Quarterly*
11. Sava S. and Ungureanu D., 2005, Introducere în educaţia adulţilor, Editura Mirton, Timişoara
12. Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
13. Wiggins, Grant (1990). The Case for Authentic Assessment. ERIC Digest, available at http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/22/c5/e7.pdf (accessed on 03.06.2010)