

GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' INITIAL TRAINING IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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ABSTRACT

The present paper approaches some aspects of geography teachers' initial (pre-service) training in various state universities in the Republic of Moldova, a special focus being set to the programme for future geography teachers studying at the State University of Tiraspol. Emphasis is laid on the characteristics of the instructional process in accordance with the specifications of the Bologna Process and the National Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education and the main characteristics for the specialization in Geography, in as far as the domain of Education Sciences is concerned, are presented.

Keywords: *bachelor level (first cycle), Master level (second cycle), full-time education, part-time education, professional competences*

INTRODUCTION

Geography as a school subject is taught in secondary school and high school. The Geography teacher is responsible for the quality of studying Geography. The initial training of school teachers in the field of Geography is realised during university education, at the first cycle for gymnasium and at the second cycle for high school and college. In the Republic of Moldova, there are no pedagogical high schools where to ensure an initial training for educators and teachers. The initial educators training for preschool institutions and teachers for primary education is realised in secondary (specialized) education institutions, called colleges. Initial teacher training (for all the categories of pedagogical staff) is realised in higher education institutions – in universities. In the Republic of Moldova, there are 46 colleges, 8 of them being pedagogical. Graduates with a college diploma are

employed as kindergarten teachers in preschool institutions or as teachers in primary schools. In addition, they can continue their studies in universities.

THE GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' INITIAL TRAINING IN DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES

The Geography teachers' initial training for all general secondary institutions is realised in higher education institutions. Nowadays, pedagogical staff is trained in four double specialties. At the same time, for general secondary institutions and high schools, the framework plan is organized into six curricular areas, so each curricular area contains from one-two to five school subjects. The reconsidering of pedagogical education is realised by the Ministry of Education that stipulates specialists' (experts) training in curricular areas in order to meet instructional needs in more subjects, but on the other hand, they themselves will be in greater demand on the labour market, having a larger range of professional competences. Therefore, pedagogical training in curricular areas will involve major changes in initial professional training in universities. For example, the students at the Faculty of Geography will not study deep research methods and scientific analyses in the studied field, but they will study the curriculum content standards to be achieved in pre-university education not only for Geography, but also for History, as this subject is part of the same curricular area. Obviously, undergraduate-teachers will have courses in psycho-pedagogical training in the first year of study and will have the possibility to do pre-service teaching practice stages in schools, in this way achieving the teaching skills from the start of their professional training. The Diploma they will obtain will give them the combined credentials to qualify as teachers of a specific curricular area for a certain level of education.

The main universities where the initial training for Geography teachers is realised are:

- The Tiraspol State University, the Faculty of Geography;
- The Pedagogical State University "Ion Creangă", the Faculty of History;
- The State University of Moldova, the Faculty of Biology and Pedology;
- The Science Academy University, the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

In the Republic of Moldova, the school teacher training in the field of Geography takes place in many higher education institutions, but in the entire country, there is a single Faculty of Geography at the Tiraspol State University (with the headquarters in Kishinev). The specializations on the greatest demand are Geography and English language, Geography and Informatics (Table 1).

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Table 1. The evolution of graduates' number at the Faculty of Geography (The Tiraspol State University), Study Field Sciences of Education

	Geography and Biology	Geography and Informatics	Geography and History	Geography and English Language	Geography and Informatics, <i>Russian language</i>	Geography and English Language, <i>Russian language</i>
2005	20	16	-	-	8	-
2006	17	15	-	7	9	-
2007	14	10	8	19	-	-
2008	14	6	13	14	-	-
2009	7	9	9	18	-	-
2010	12	20	16	17	7	-
2011	16	21	15	29	-	6
2012	16	19	13	15	-	8
2013	16	16	8	14	-	-

Geography is also included in the study programme offers of other higher education institutions, for example, Geography and History/History and Geography at Faculty of History of the "Ion Creangă" Pedagogical State University. Both universities are pedagogical and train students in becoming geography teachers, the general field of study being that of Education Sciences, with a mandatory psychopedagogical module in the first cycle.

The study in the higher education system at the 14th field "Education Sciences", according to the Bologna Process to which the Republic of Moldova adhered, the undergraduate study of geography lasts 3 years (180 credits) and the Geography and Biology, Geography and Informatics, Geography and History, Geography and English language specialties last 4 years (240 credits). Studies are finalized with the licence exam and the licence thesis. Graduates can continue their studies at a master's degree level. The licence diploma gives graduates the possibility to be employed as geography teachers in middle school education (1st cycle of secondary education).

The specialization in Geography is also on offer in the study programmes at the Moldova State University (Faculty of Biology and Pedology) and at the Academy of Science University (Faculty of Natural Sciences), but the general field of study is Natural Sciences, the psychopedagogical module is optional and studies last for 3 years.

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' TRAINING WITHIN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The pedagogical higher education institutions include in their study programme curriculum for the first cycle a psychopedagogical training compulsory module, of 60 credits, with 30 credits – theoretical training, and

30 credits for a compulsory pre-service teaching practice stage in order to offer the graduates the possibility to be employed in pre-university education, especially, as pedagogical staff for middle school establishments. The psychopedagogical training module completion offers also the possibility to accede to the second cycle to obtain a master's degree in Science Education.

One ECTS credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours course workload according to the European recommendations. At national level, the credit point equals 30 hours course workload. The credit point worth reduction is determined by the degree of modernization of the technical-material basis of the university, by the logistic and didactical supply of the education process. The reduction in the number of direct contact hours is calculated in parallel with an increase in student's individual work hours and the control of the quality of these activities.

Till 2005, concrete measures were adopted to implement programmes to combine the best educational practices developed in Western European countries with the educational practices in the Republic of Moldova and which should guarantee the basic training of future specialists, avoiding the division between future teacher's subject specialist and pedagogical training. In European countries, the curriculum standards are set by national ministries of education or by professional boards in subject-specific and curricular areas, such as teachers' national councils, which ensure the necessary level of homogeneity of school curricula. In other countries, where universities have a higher degree of autonomy, these undertake the initiative in diminishing the differences between studies programmes in different institutions. Generally, future school teachers are trained in knowledge, values and skills necessary to attain pre-university and university education standards in the field of geography.

There is the possibility to study at a master's degree and doctoral school level for all 1st cycle graduates willing to further their education. The National Framework of Qualifications for higher education in the Republic of Moldova has been elaborated and approved, following the model of the European Union countries, and it is going to expand to other professional fields of training, such as educational sciences, arts, etc. All the projects are going to be updated in accordance with the new provisions of the European Frame of Qualifications and the latest changes in national economy structure (Ministerul Educației al Republicii Moldova, 2013, pp. 17-18). The outcomes of education and training at different levels, as well as lifelong learning programmes for a certain qualification are described, grouped and classified and the link with the competences requested on the labour market is provided in the National Framework of Qualifications.

OBSERVATIONS ON GEOGRAPHY TEACHER TRAINING AT THE TIRASPOL STATE UNIVERSITY

The study can be organized through full-time, part-time and distance learning courses. The academic year starts on the 1st of September and

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ends on the 1st of July, except the last year of studies. The academic year consists of about 42 weeks. It is divided into 2 semesters, of about the same duration, 2 exam sessions, pre-service teaching practice stages and 2 holidays. Each semester lasts about 15 weeks (Ministerul Educației al Republicii Moldova, 2010).

Table 2. The structure of the academic year, the Faculty of Geography, the Tiraspol State University (Universitatea de Stat din Tiraspol, 2005, p. 121)

Year of study	Didactic activities		Exam sessions		Practice
	Winter semester	Summer semester	Winter	Summer	
First year	September-December (15 weeks)	January-May (15 weeks)	December-January (4 weeks)	May-June (4 weeks)	-
Second year	September-December (15 weeks)	January-May (15 weeks)	December-January (4 weeks)	May-June (4 weeks)	-
Third year	September-December (14 weeks)	January-May (10 weeks)	December-January (4 weeks)	May-June (4 weeks)	Initial teaching practice (the 5 th semester) (1 week) The first teaching practice stage (the 6 th semester) (5 weeks)
Fourth year	September-November (10 weeks)	January-April (13 weeks)	December-January (4 weeks)	April-June (2 weeks) + Licence exam	The second teaching practice stage (the 7 th semester) (5 weeks) Licence preparation practice (the 8 th semester) (4 weeks)

Full-time studies involve the personal participation of the student to all training activities, organized in the higher school institution. The full-time study programme involves at least 80% attendance of course classes and 100% attendance of practice classes.

Part-time studies consist of independent activity performed by the student, with direct contact attendance in a limited number of training activities, organized during the study and examination sessions. Part-time studies are organized for the specialist training fields for which full-time study programmes are run by the higher education institution. At the Faculty of Geography (the Tiraspol State University) examination and study sessions are organized twice per year, in December (winter session of 4

weeks) and in June (summer session of 5 weeks). During these weeks, students attend daily courses from Monday to Sunday, according to the curriculum (the plan of study) for their specialization. Studies completed in the part-time university education system finish with two tests for the licence exam (a test in General Physical Geography and another one in Regional Human Geography and Geography Didactics) and Licence thesis presentation. The successful passing of these exams earns the graduate the Bachelor of Science Diploma (Licence Diploma).

Distance studies consist of independent training activities done by students and are characterized by training programmes completed within a tutoring support system and using a distance communications system. Distance studies could be organized in higher educational institutions running courses for full-time studies programmes. In higher educational institutions where geography teachers' initial training is done distance studies are missing.

Table 3. The Geography specialist studies key features, the study domain of Sciences of Education

Level	License (first cycle)	Master (second cycle)	Doctorate (third cycle)
The study length	Four years – combined studies in two related subjects: Geography and Biology, Geography and Informatics, Geography and History, Geography and English language – full-time studies; Four years – Geography, part-time studies.	Two years	Three (Four) years
Study credits ECTS	180 credits – mono-specialization 240 credits – simultaneous courses of study in two related specialties	120 credits	It does not apply
Organisation form	Full time studies programme Part-time studies programme	Full time courses	Full time courses Part-time courses
Conditions	BAC Diploma College Diploma Higher Education Diploma	Licence Diploma (Bachelor of Science Diploma)	Master's Diploma
Practice period	With compulsory title: 1. Initial teaching practice 2. Pre-service teaching practice module	Specialised practice at master (internship at specialty at department)	Experiment practice: 1. In school 2. Field study

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	3. Licence preparation practice		
Evaluation and examination rules	<p>Continuous assessment of work during practice classes, laboratory classes, control classes, etc.</p> <p>Intermediate evaluations: testing and assessing individual work (60% - 6 p.)</p> <p>Final evaluations: exams (40% - 4 p.)</p> <p>Evaluation of practice stages and module activities</p>	<p>Evaluation of reports, summaries, project work presentations;</p> <p>Evaluation of the independent work of the master's student;</p> <p>- Final evaluation exams.</p>	<p>- Evaluation of Scientific Report</p> <p>- Specialist exams</p>
Final evaluation	<p>- Final examination tests for a Licence Diploma (Bachelor of Science Degree)</p> <p>Licence Diploma thesis presentation (dissertation)</p>	Master's thesis	Doctorate's thesis
Certification	Licence Diploma	Master's Degree Diploma	Doctorate diploma
Given title	Licensed in Education Sciences	Master in Education Sciences	PhD
Rights for graduates	<p>Teaching in pre-university institutions;</p> <p>Activity in environmental protection and land-use planning;</p> <p>Possibility to continue studies at master's degree level</p>	<p>Teaching in colleges;</p> <p>Teaching in higher education institutions;</p> <p>Possibilities to continue studies at the doctorate level;</p> <p>Participation in research work for projects carried on in scientific laboratories.</p>	<p>Lecturer;</p> <p>Teaching in higher education institutions;</p> <p>Specialists in independent research institutions in the field of sustainable development;</p> <p>Service provider in local, municipal, national, international administration.</p>
Authorization of training programs	<p>The 141.07 Geography field is authorised under the provisions of the <i>Law of the nomenclature of professional training fields and specialisations at tertiary level education</i>. The education plan is sanctioned by the University Senate and by the Ministry of Education. The analytical syllabi of the subject courses are</p>	<p>The field is authorized under the provisions of the <i>Law of the nomenclature of professional training fields & specialisations at tertiary level education</i>. The education plan is sanctioned by the University Senate and by the Ministry of Education. The analytical syllabi of</p>	<p>The National Council of Accreditation and Certification</p>

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The analysis of the quality of university studies programmes in the Republic of Moldova, under the provisions of the Bologna Process, poses a basic problem: the absence of a higher education institution external evaluation mechanism parallel with the institution-based self-evaluation mechanisms for quality assurance. Beginning with 2008, the Ministry of Education does not assess and accredit higher education institutions and fields of study because of the lack of an appropriate body to carry out such activities, although the law stipulates the creation of The Quality Assurance National Agency expressly. According to existing data at the Ministry of Education and because of the fact that there is no National Agency for Quality Assurance, a significant number of universities activate with an expired accreditation or their accreditation about to expire. This fact leads to considering the activity in these institutions illegal, because the Evaluation and Accreditation Regulations for Educational Institutions require the accreditation to be re-gained every 5 years. In 2011, 17 tertiary education institutions had an expired accreditation (Ciurea *et al.*, 2012, p. 22). The Quality Assurance National Agency is to be created at the beginning of 2014. In addition, the New Education Code (Education Law) is going to be voted and come in force at the beginning of 2014 (<http://particip.gov.md/public/documente/137/ro1242ProiectCodulEducatieiNov2013.pdf>).

Observations about the curriculum

The combined studies process in two related specialties is organized in 8 terms (four years), in a 30-hour-per-week regime. For the first cycle, credits are distributed as follows: Geography subjects: 90 credits, Biology subjects/Informatics/English Language/History – 52 credits, the Psychopedagogical module subjects – 60 credits, General and Social Sciences subjects – 38 credits. The Didactics of Geography is taught in the third year, the fifth term with a 180 total number of hours, including 90 hours – direct contact (45 hours – lectures and 45 hours – seminars) and 90 hours – individual work (table 4). Individual work contains extra hours of study of course materials and is part of student’s workload (for the course). The individual work is done in order to acquire an integrated knowledge system, namely for consolidation, recovery and thorough studying; intellectual and practical skills training; enhancement of analytical and critical thinking skills; development of scientific research competence. Each faculty member establishes requirements for individual work of the student in the course delivered by him/her (reports, portfolio, project or other tasks) and assesses it. During the study semester, the student obtains three marks, included in the assessment tally-sheet at the exam (a mark for each test paper and a mark for individual work). The final mark in the exam is weighted as follows: 0.3 the average-mark for continuous

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evaluation tasks, 0.3 the quality of individual work of the student during course activities and 0.4 for the mark for the exam.

Table 4. The Psychopedagogical module subjects taught in the first cycle (Universitatea de Stat din Tiraspol, 2005, pp. 122-124)

	Course unit title	Total hours			No. of hours			Evaluation form	Number of credits
		Total	Direct contact	Individual work	C*	S*	L*		
<i>First year, first term</i>	Psychology	180	60	120	30	30	0	Exam	6
<i>First year, second term</i>	Pedagogy	180	60	120	30	30	0	Exam	6
<i>Second year, third term</i> <i>Optional discipline</i>	1. Personality psychology 2. Pedagogical and psychological counselling	60	30	30	16	14	0	Exam	2
<i>Second year, fourth term</i>	Inclusive education	60	30	30	30	0	0	Exam	2
<i>Third year, fifth term</i>	Didactics of Geography	180	90	90	46	44	0	Exam	6
<i>Third year, fifth term</i>	Didactics of Biology	120	60	60	30	30	0	Exam	4
<i>Third year, fifth term</i> <i>Optional discipline</i>	1. Education technology 2. The evaluation theory and methodology	60	30	30	16	14	0	Exam	2
<i>Third year, fifth term</i>	Initial pedagogical practice	60	30	30	0	0	30	Exam	2
<i>Third year, sixth term</i>	Pedagogical practice I	300	60	240	0	0	60	Exam	10
<i>Fourth year, seventh term</i>	Pedagogical practice II	300	60	240	0	0	60	Exam	10

*- C – course; S- seminar; L – practical work (laboratory)

According to the curriculum, the practice stages are didactic applied activities in the framework of the psychopedagogical training module and ensure, together with other psychopedagogical and methodologic subjects, the training of teacher competences, compatible with the standards for a performant education shaped by the paradigm of effective educative-instructive knowledge achievement and learning. The types of pre-service practice activities are specified in the curriculum, in strict accordance to the

goals of education for the specialist trainee in a certain field of study. The practice stages are a compulsory part of the professional initial training program and are oriented to the general and specific competences attainment in the field of specialization. The length of pre-service teaching practice stage(s), as well as its scheduling, is included in the curriculum of the institution approved and implemented as settled.

Table 5. Practice stages specified in the curriculum for Geography, the first cycle, the Psychopedagogical module (Universitatea de Stat din Tiraspol, 2005, p. 125)

Practice stages	Semester	No. of hours/week	Period	Number of credits
The practice of specialisation • introductory teaching	V	2 weeks/60 hours	October – November	2
Pre-service teaching practice stage in the major specialization (compulsory for students who complete the Psychopedagogical module) • Geography • Biology/Informatics/History/English Language	VI	5 weeks/300 hours	February – March	10
Pre-service teaching practice stage in the minor specialization (compulsory for students who complete the Psychopedagogical module) • Geography • Biology/Informatics/History/English Language	VII	5 weeks/300 hours	September - October	10
Licence preparation practice stage (investigatory/research work, documentation, writing the final thesis)	VIII	4 weeks/180 hours	May - June	6

The introductory pre-service teaching practice stage is undertaken in application schools for a week during the process of study for a semester as indicated in the curriculum. During this stage of practice, students familiarize with basics of their future teaching specialist subject, gaining some primary skills for their future profession. The introductory pre-service teaching practice is carried out in a pre-university education institution (middle school or high school), groups of trainees attending and observing a number of classes and demonstrative activities performed by experienced Geography teacher-mentors. This type of activities gives students the opportunity to get to know and observe concrete classroom contexts in which they are going to perform teaching on their own in future practice stages. The participation in such activities will also give students the

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opportunity to familiarize with problems of the educational process and to develop themselves as well-prepared teachers in terms of specialized and methodological training.

In the pre-service teaching practice activities, the following professionals are involved: the pre-service teaching practice university coordinator, the methodologist, the experienced teacher-mentor, and the trained students. The pre-service teaching practice coordinator provides the pedagogical and methodological documentation for the practice stage, approves the lesson projects created by trainees for their final lessons, keeps a record of students whose lessons were analyzed and accepted, enters the mark(s) obtained by trainees in the tally-sheet for the teaching practice module, ensures the link between the specialist department of the university with the pre-university institution where the teaching practice stage is performed. The methodologist has the following responsibilities: plans students' observation activities, individual teaching lessons and final teaching lesson activities; monitors students' practice weekly; guides students' scientific and methodological approach to lesson planning during their practice; approves trainees' lesson projects for their final lesson teaching; attends trainees' experimental teaching and final teaching classes. The mentor schedules and assigns trainees the experimental and final lesson's themes; attends experimental and final lessons of the training students; guides students in the organization and implementation of lesson teaching; presents model lesson-plans for students. Experimental lesson teaching of students is performed with the mentor attending trainee's classes, and the final lesson is performed in the presence of the Methodologist – or university coordinator of pre-service teaching practice. Students build a portfolio of evidence with a set of requested documents (teaching practice notebook, lesson-plans: six lesson-plans for Geography and four lesson-plans for the minor specialization, the model lesson-plan designed by the teacher mentor, other colleagues lesson's analyses observation sheets, self-evaluation of lessons taught, etc.).

In the 6th and 7th semesters in the first cycle, pre-service teaching practice periods in the major and minor subjects are completed by students training for double specialization. These stages last for 5 weeks each. The pre-service teaching practice is performed in application schools with view to enhance the acquisitions of theoretical knowledge and apply in practice the competences developed following successful completion of the psychopedagogical module.

Pre-university institutions where specialist subjects of students' domain of studies are taught in an optimum number are identified, in partnership with the Direction of General Education, considering the assumption that pre-service teaching practice is organized for groups of 8-12 students or subgroups of 3-4 students assigned per teacher-mentor, according to space conditions and needs for practice supervision teaching staff availability. Teaching practice activities period is preceded by students' guidance sessions about the responsibilities they have during this period, sessions run by pedagogical staff of the university department, during the classes in Pedagogy and Didactics. For each group of students, a document

for teaching practice assignment to a teacher-mentor in a particular institution is issued; it specifies the name of the school for practice activities, the pre-service teaching practice coordinator's name, the names of students in the group, the subject in which the training will be undertaken. The school manager nominates the teacher-mentor for each group of students in the subject for which the practice is undertaken.

In as far as content is concerned, the pre-service teaching practice period consists in the development of specific activities, differentiated by their type as follows: familiarization of students with the pre-university institution; instructional activities of observation; acquiring knowledge of applied didactics; simulation and feedback-analyses of lessons taught in classrooms, specialist department offices and laboratories; teaching experimental lessons; attending and observing mentor's and peers' lessons; lesson-planning and writing; teaching a tutorial lesson; completion of a report on a pupil's psycho-pedagogical profile (during the first practice period) and completion of a psycho-pedagogical report for a class (during the second pedagogical practice period). These activities are realised on the bases of the knowledge acquired during the theoretical-methodological training and the observation of demonstrative activities in application schools.

The licence preparation practice period. The period of licence preparation practice has as purpose the development of practice skills necessary and appropriate to theoretical training for independent professional activity in socio-economic real contexts; research accomplishment, the documentation and collection of information for License Thesis realization. License practice of 6 weeks is organized at subject-area specialist departments, in institutions of research according to the topic of research chosen for one's licence thesis.

Observations about the instructional process

In the first cycle, the future specialist studies a set of foundation subjects, in order to develop skills and general competences of social sciences orientation, of own specialization orientation, and of psycho-pedagogical training as well, of orientation towards another field of studies in the second cycle (Master's). The courses provided aim at equipping undergraduates with a set of competences that express what they will know, understand, or be able to do upon completion.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualification Framework – EQF – for lifelong learning, suggests the following comprehensive definition of competence: "Competence means the proven ability (of the diploma's holder) to select, combine and use knowledge, skills and other learning acquisitions (values attitudes) in order to successfully solve a certain category of work or study situations, as well as for professional or personal development effectively and efficiently. In the context of the European Qualification Framework, competence is described from the perspective of responsibility and autonomy" (Năstase, 2012, p. 17).

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Depending on the area covered, the learning outcomes are grouped into two broad categories of competences, which interweave in building up occupation-specific professional competences: specialist specific and cross competences.

Specialist specific competences are a body of unitary and dynamic knowledge and skills circumscribed to a profession or a cluster of related professions.

Cross competences (called also generic competences) are value and attitude acquisitions transcending the study program or field of study approached by a student and are expressed through the following three descriptors: autonomy and responsibility; social interaction; personal and professional continuous development.

The instructional process in universities is focused on educational goals, key-competences/general cross-curricular and specific, curricular and professional standards for each subject (or/and module). An important component for geography teachers' training is the critical thinking analysis and synthesis of the interaction between phenomena and processes in the environment. Teaching aids, the whole set of material resources, tools, equipment, technologies, techniques are selected and used with the aim of achieving the objectives of various tasks of comprehension and knowledge fixation of these interactions by practising the appropriate skills.

Quality increase in the ***level of achieving key instrumental/cross-curricular competences*** involves:

- in the *cognitive domain*: course of studies improvement and knowledge adjustment and updating through systemic reviewing of curricular content for each subject taught;

- in the *methodological domain*: carrying out individual or group investigation projects, through the application of current strategies and methodologies in the research area;

- in the *technological domain*: the wide-scale practice of using performant education technologies in the teaching-learning process in all subjects (courses) taught in the university;

- in the *linguistic domain*: the development of linguistic competences through the realization and presentation of different types of texts studied in all subjects.

At the ***level of interpersonal competences*** achievement:

- on the *personal skills level*: the development of training all personal intelligences, through creating optimal contexts for the capitalization on student's intellectual potential, completion of individual tasks;

- on the *social skills level*: the development of communication and co-operation competences, through setting group work tasks, involvement of students in the solving of some social problems and activities.

At the ***level of achieving systemic key/cross-curricular competences***:

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- coordination of training plans with the national and European Union educational policies and performant teaching practices of different school subjects in the Republic of Moldova and abroad;
- launching and experimenting pedagogical (educational) innovations in the Didactics of Geography.

Table 6. Description of learning outcomes and competences for the first cycle (Ministerul Educației al Republicii Moldova, 2011)

Characteristic key-competences	Keys-competences
Gnoseological competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - suitable identification of information in the field of geographical sciences; - manage theoretical knowledge and practical geographical skills; - acquire new knowledge within a new knowledge mastery paradigm; - consolidate and expand geographical knowledge acquisitions in the light of the ongoing process of research broadening and information development in the field of study.
Prognostic competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify possible directions of geographical science advancement; - establish the role/place of historical science within the context of socio-economic and cultural evolution of society; - prospectively identify problems and possible solutions in the framework of geography as a science and as a school subject; - design lesson projects from various choices of activities.
Praxiological competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify contexts to which geography theories apply; - select theoretical geographical knowledge for practice activities; - select information from various media sources necessary for specialism-specific activities; - establish correlations between different elements of the historical process to achieve professional activity effectiveness; - use scientific research outcomes to improve professional activity efficiency.
Managerial competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitor own professional activity; - solve professional activity issues through collaboration.
The competence of assessing professional activity outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set criteria for evaluation and self-evaluation of professional performance; - design assessment strategies; - correlate assessment results with future activity plans; - establish correlation between evaluation results and prospective further developments in the field of activity.

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Communicative and social insertion competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use different communicative forms in organizing/monitoring professional activity; - adjust behaviour to a variety of communicative situations with a geographical content; - identify consensus/collaboration contexts involving a geographical content; - demonstrate negotiation skills in decision making processes; - demonstrate skills/capabilities of externalization /communication of theoretical knowledge.
Research/investigational competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be knowledgeable in scientific research methodology within the domain of geography sciences; - identify scientific research problems of geographical nature; - prioritize issues in geographical scientific research; - carry out scientific research projects in the domain of Geography; - establish functionality of geographical research studies; - use research results with the aim to increase professional activity efficiency.
Continuous professional training (lifelong learning) competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have knowledge of and use continuous professional training methods in the field of Geography; - identify professional training needs in the specialist subject - establish priorities in continuing professional training in the specialist subject; - demonstrate flexibility to changes in the field of activity.

CONCLUSIONS

The initial training system of the pedagogical staff in the field of Education Sciences is not sufficiently connected to European practices and measures are necessary to adjust the education system in our country to the generally accepted standards.

The professional training institutions for pedagogical staff, Geography teachers included, are many and all benefit from state budget funding.

Since pedagogical training tertiary institutions are in too large a number, and all are interested in enrolling as many students as possible, they tend to accept applicants with low academic performances.

It is difficult to determine objectively the quality of courses of studies and to compare higher education institutions among them, in the absence of a system of external quality evaluation and accreditation. Therefore, it is high time for a structural and qualitative reform to take place.

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