Chapter 4
Teachers’ Survival Kit in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Education is characterized by volatility (V), uncertainty (U), complexity (C), and ambiguity (A). The reality of classroom practice shows that change management skills are highly important for both novice and experienced teachers to survive professionally in this context. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a new set of skills that teachers need to develop during their ITE in order to overcome the constant change when working with a generation that is transforming rapidly the way to build relationships, work, and transfer knowledge. In terms of methodological approach, this chapter seeks theoretical entailment, analyzing teacher education from a new perspective and suggesting possible customized solutions from around the world.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses an approach to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in the context of the fast changing requirements of the nowadays society, dictating changes at personal level as more important and relevant in overcoming external systemic changes. It starts by clarifying several concepts instrumental in the presentation of the problem matter, namely the VUCA concept (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Bolman and Deal, 2015; Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015), a business concept which labels a state characterizing all
domains of activity nowadays, including education, and Generation Z - students of ITE, the future teachers surviving in the classroom, having certain particularities that education needs to take into consideration when designing its approach. In this context it is also discussed the way the participants to and the focus of education, are affected by changes determined by technological advancement, the source of VUCA in today’s society. ITE bears great responsibility in preparing student teachers to manage classrooms in this world, working with pupils from different digital generations. The author argues that redefined change management skills are highly important for both novice and experienced teachers to survive professionally (Calderhead and Shorrock, 2003; Avalos, 2011; Kim and Tan 2011). Change management skills in an educational context include not only teacher knowledge, as literature largely defines it, but also reflective skills connected to problem solving skills and creativity, critical thinking skills, as well as emotional intelligence abilities. The discussion in this chapter will focus mainly on these skills, as a core set of skills, part of the teachers’ survival kit in the classroom, although the debate about other issues important in a teacher’s activity can be extended. The chapter ends by presenting a possible customizable solution.

**VUCA IN EDUCATION**

VUCA, short for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Bolman and Deal, 2015; Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015) conflates four distinct types of challenges that demand different educational types of responses. The challenges can be external (political top-down decision, change in management approach, new educational strategy, children with special educational needs, etc.) or internal (teacher’s personality, ability to adapt, stage in career development, level of emotional intelligence abilities, etc.)

- **Volatility**
  - Challenge in the classroom— the changes are unexpected or unstable and may be of unknown duration, but knowledge about it is often available. There are permanent attempts to improve. In education this might be translated as reformation measures in an attempt to modernize or align educational systems in a region, based on research data or political agreements/acts.
  - Expected response: teachers endowed with problem-solving skills and self-regulation will know how to approach any change process, use their knowledge or look for information that could assist them with managing the process.
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Nicoleta Duta (2020). Analyzing Paradigms Used in Education and Educational Psychology (pp. 22-48).
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