

ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH THE TRAINING FIRM

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the 90s, the political, social and economic changes in Romania generated new demands in the field of the Romanian educational system.

Taking into account that the premises for a successful European integration are:

- the development of competition markets,
 - the development of democratic structures,
 - the initiation of an international dialogue,
- the education system should react by **adapting the educational offer** to the demands of a competence and competitiveness-based society.

CONCEPTS

THE TRAINING FIRM – represents a interactive learning method for the development of the entrepreneurial spirit, a modern conception of knowledge integration and its interdisciplinary application, a modern training approach, which assures the necessary conditions to practically exercise the competences students acquired during their vocational training.

The introduction of the training firm concept in the Romanian technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system was done through a project initiated within the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and developed in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Education and Culture – the ECO NET Project.

In Romania, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth took the strategic decision to disseminate at national level the training firm concept. During 2001-2004, the project was implemented in 10 schools included in the ECO NET project, by applying the method during practical training (on the basis of Order 4508/2001). The results achieved allowed the extension of the training firm concept at the level of all economic schools by including the contents in the national curriculum in the 2006 -2007 school year (on the basis of Order 3172/2006).

GENERAL OBJECTIVES :DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT
through:

- students' acquaintance with activities specific to a real firm
- simulating economic operations and processes specific to the real business environment
- improvement of the business lingo
- development of competences necessary to a dynamic entrepreneur: critical thinking, decision-making, accountability, team working, initiative, self-organization and evaluation of their own individual resources

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES :

- Facilitation of the graduates' transition from school to active life
- Development of the national TVET students' entrepreneurial spirit
- Development of the adults' entrepreneurial spirit in continuing training programmes

IMPACT/ESTIMATED TARGETS (quantitative/qualitative)

The implementation of the training firm concept aims at creating a **dynamic entrepreneur**, able to develop a new production process, to bring a new product or service into the market or to discover a new distribution method/pathway.

The estimated target groups:

❖ **Beneficiaries school year 2007/2008**

- students from TVET schools – profile: services, which train the following qualifications:

- tourism technician
- mail activities technician
- economic activities technician
- technician in administration
- technician in contracting and procurement

- hostel services technician
 - technician in trade activities
 - technician in gastronomy
 - banqueting organizer
- ❖ **Future beneficiaries**
- Students who train in other domains than the economic one
 - Adults, to keep their job or find a new one

WAYS OF INTRODUCING TRAINING FIRM-SPECIFIC APPROACHES

We can speak of applying the training firm specific approach at curricular level through specific contents and at extracurricular level through students' participation to national and international fairs.

A. THE TRAINING FIRM IN THE COMPULSORY CURRICULUM

Modules included in the compulsory curriculum, through which the necessary conditions to use the training firm method are assured.

XIth grade:

- Operational planning
- Business marketing
- Human resources

XIIth grade:

- Business negotiation
- Business financing
- Competitional environment

These modules include thematic contents which assure the development of entrepreneurship competences through the training firm. These contents refer to:

- Establishment and registration of the training firm at ROCT¹(the CRISROM² department for the coordination of pre-university education training firms) ;
- Legal and structural organization of the training firm;
- Transactions with other training firms;
- Recording of the operations carried out in the operative record;
- Use of the IT software for different applications;
- Use of foreign languages in business;
- Use of commercial correspondence.

COMPLEXITY LEVELS OF THE TRAINING FIRM

Mini training firm – Level I (*recommended before proceeding to the actual training in the training firm*)

The training will take place in a so called *learning office*, where all economic activities will be simulated on the basis of a closed model. The economic situations are initiated by the teacher, and the commercial relations with the customers, the fiscal institutions, the banks and the service enterprises are presented by teachers. This training firm organization model can be utilized within the framework of the local development curriculum for schools with profiles other than services, or in IXth and Xth grades as a stage preceding the establishment of the training firm.

Training firm features

- no relation with the external environment
- not registered at ROCT
- the simulated situations are initiated by the teacher
- action-oriented teaching-learning process. The student goes through all the office's departments and carries out his tasks either individually, or in a team.

¹ ROCT – Romanian Centre for Training Firms

² CRISROM – the Romanian Centre for Training Firms

Training firm – Level 2 (*For new firms – at the Xith grade, direct pathway, and the XIIth grade, progressive route*)

Training firm features:

- A properly endowed economic and entrepreneurial centre
- The firm is registered at the ROCT
- Business relations with national training firms
- Carrying out all necessary work within an enterprise in order to solve the current operations
- Organizing presentations of the training firm
- Opening of a bank account at the training firm bank within ROCT for the reimbursements

Training firm – Level 3 (*For more than 2 years-old firms, i.e. training firms attended by several generations of students*)

Training firm features

Besides level 2:

- contracts with at least 3 training firms from abroad
- operations also in foreign languages
- students have the status of an employee – are paid
- taxes are calculated correctly

IMPLEMENTATION

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, the training firm is included in the national curriculum at the technological route, services profile, qualification level 3.

Activity in the training firm takes place within the technologic laboratory courses, as follows:

- XIth and XIIth grades, Technologic High-school –direct route, 3 hours/week, compact session.
- XIIth and XIIIth grades, Technologic High-school –progressive route, 3 hours/week, compact session

The Implementation of the concept required the covering of several stages:

Stage I: 2001-2004

Stage II: 2004-2006

Stage III: 2007-2009

Activities during stages I and II:

-HR training through training seminars for teachers who coordinate training firms from the 10 schools involved in the project.

- HR training through training seminars for teachers who coordinate training firms from other schools than those involved in the project.

-elaboration of didactic support (“The Training firm guide” and a CD with pedagogical resources for the teaching-learning activity carried out through the training firm.

The training has been carried out in cooperation with KulturKontakt, Austria.

The next stage will strengthen and will extend the training firms network. This will be done through:

- ❑ Elaboration and implementation of the training firms’ establishment and functioning procedures at the level of the *services* schools network and of the “quality mark” methodological benchmarks
- ❑ Elaboration of the procedures of monitoring and evaluation of the training firms’ activities.
- ❑ Organization of the IVth edition of the International Training Firms Fair, RO TIFE 2008
- ❑ Participation of the training firms to national and international fairs;
- ❑ Implementation of the adult continuing training concept.

B.THE TRAINING FIRM IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular activities allow the training of the competences developed through the compulsory curriculum within national and international training firm fairs.

These activities assure optimal conditions for the competitive spirit and help recognize the added value of the *training firm* method within the vocational education and training system.

The Romanian students' competitiveness, creativity and professionalism were awarded with national and international prizes, for the following categories:

- Best catalogue
- Best training firm
- Best marketing departament
- Best stand
- Best spot video
- Best negotiation
- Best salesman

STATISTIC DATA REGARDING THE ACTIVITY OF THE TRAINING FIRMS

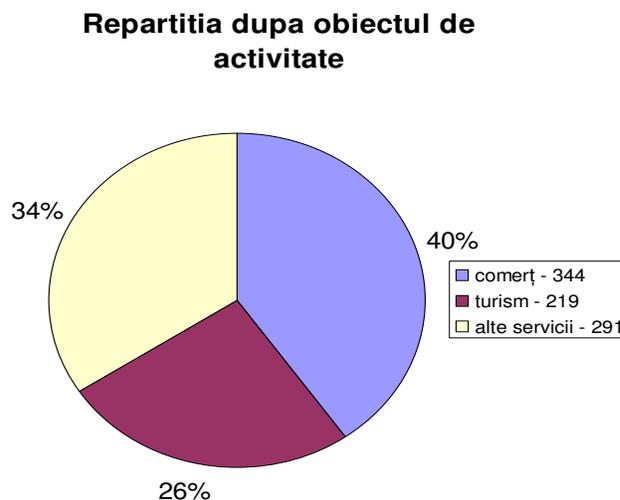
The introduction of this learning model was welcomed by both teachers and students; approximately 19530 students were involved in training firms' activities during the xxx year, compared to 1020 in 2001-2002.

1. Evolution of the training firms during 2001-2007:

Indicators	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/2008 sem I
No. of new firms	34	99	249	230	122	402	467
No. of re-registered firms	-	18	78	76	233	249	387
No. of existing firms	34	117	327	306	355	651	854

Source : ROCT site

2. Distribution –field of activity



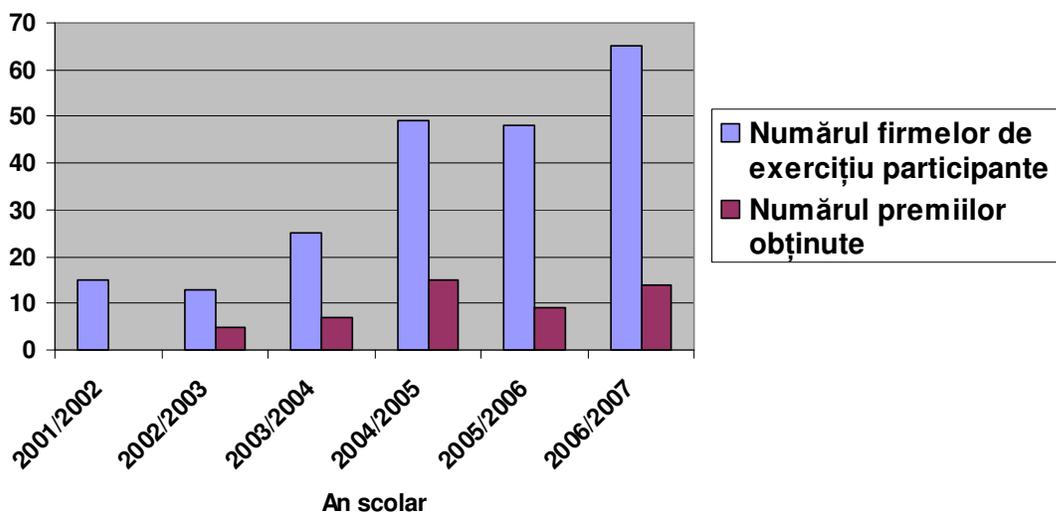
3. Evolution of the training firms related to the number of schools - national level:

Indicators	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	An școlar 2007-2008- sem. I
No. of schools	3	32	58	66	63	128	134
No. of towns	3	28	46	47	45	81	90

Source : ROCT site

4. Internațional records

Palmares international



THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE COORDINATION OF PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION TRAINING FIRMS (ROCT)

NCTVETD coordinates the ROCT.

- **ROLE:** to assure the good functioning of the training firms network at national level
- **ROCT activities:**
 - Assistance for the organization and functioning of the *training firm* at school level
 - Assistance to train training firm coordinating teachers
 - Dissemination of the *training firm* learning method and of good practices
- Certification of the *training firm* activity using the QUALITY MARK
- Organizing of the participation of the *training firms* to national and international fairs
- Monitoring of the transactions of the training firms' on national and international markets



Conclusions

WHY THE TRAINING FIRM ?

- **Attractive and interactive learning environment**
- **Freedom of decision and action for the student**
- **Opportunities to put in practice business ideas**
- **Freedom of expression and creativity**
- **Competitional spirit**
- **Promotion of leadership**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *The Training Firm Guide – From school to life through the training firm*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică
2. Order of the Minister of Education, Research and Youth no. 4508/2001 regarding the approval of the practical training school curricula for Xth and XIIth grades
3. Order of the Minister of Education, Research and Youth no. 3592/2001 regarding practical training at the technologic high school
4. Order of the Minister of Education, Research and Youth no.3172/ 2006 regarding the approval of the specialized education plans and school curricula corresponding to the curricular area *Technologies*, for the direct pathway - grades XIth and XIIth, day courses, high school upper cycle, technological pathway – and for the progressive route - grades XIIth and XIIIth, day course, through the school of arts and trades and the completion year.