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## TEACHER VIEWS ABOUT ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONALITY OF THE SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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***Abstract:** The skills and knowledge that teachers acquire during their initial education are basis for enabling them to enter the world of the teaching profession. They must be constantly expanded, deepened and innovated according to the changes and needs imposed by the intensive technical, technological, and scientific development, as well as the expressed tendencies for democratization and humanization of school education. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary for teachers to possess competences for quality educational work and to have the opportunity to continuously professionalize and advance during their careers. The paper is part of the project "Professional Development of Teachers in the Republic of Macedonia - Situations and Challenges" (2016-2018). The survey covers 398 teachers (primary school teachers from I till V grade and subject teachers) from 28 primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Macedonia. The survey's purpose is to study the attitudes and opinions of teachers about the position and functionality of the system of professional development of teachers in the Republic of Macedonia, in order to improve it. In this context, we tried to answer the following questions: who should determine the aims and contents of the teachers' professional development; who should perform the organized trainings, and what are the factors that can contribute to the promotion of the professional development of teachers. The obtained results point to the need for changes in the pedagogical-organizational setup of the system for professional development of teachers in the Republic of Macedonia.*

***Keywords:** teachers, professional development, Republic of Macedonia*

### INTRODUCTION

Education does not remain immune to the changes that occur in society. All social changes directly or indirectly affect and influence at the education. In such a dynamic time and society, the changes do not go by the teacher either. Today, in Macedonian schools, there are experienced teachers who completed their initial education in 1980s. The education in the 80s has prepared these teachers for work in a classroom that seriously differs from today's classroom. We will refer to the teachers who completed their initial education more than 30 years ago as. Today, these teachers (teachers who completed their initial education more than 30 years ago) are required to work in a multicultural environment, to respect inclusive education, to successfully include children with special educational needs in regular classes, to use modern information technology, and to keep electronic documentation. Of course, the initial education of these teachers (the education completed many years ago) can not cover the requirements and tasks that teachers have today, but here it has been seen the

power and the value of the lifelong learning. Teachers work continuously on their professional development, either self-initiated or regulated by the system. Only through continuous investment in their professional development will teachers be able to respond to new challenges. Namely, "Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better." Dylan Wiliam (as cited in Standard for teachers' professional development).

The development of teachers after completing their initial education may be aimed at achieving several goals (according to OECD, 1998, as cited in OECD 2009, p. 49): "*To update individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area; To update individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research; To enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice; To enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice; To exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, e.g. academics, industrialists; and to help weaker teachers become more effective*".

One general definition of the term professional development says: "Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher." OECD 2009, p. 49

Regarding the status of the continuing professional development of teachers, the compared data from the countries in our neighborhood shows can generally be noted that (Eurydice, Continuing professional development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education in: Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia) the professional development of teachers in the region has a mandatory status.

Regarding the organizational aspect of the continuous professional development of the teachers in the Republic of Macedonia (according to the report from the Republic of Macedonia for Eurydice), "*The Minister of Education and Science, in cooperation with the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) and the State Examination Centre adopts an annual programme for professional development and advancement of teachers and professional support service member*".

The Bureau for the Development of Education (BDE) as a state body within the Ministry of Education and Science performs professional duties essential to the development and improvement of education in Republic of Macedonia (Law on the Bureau for the Development of Education). Within the scope of his tasks (BDE) is to prepare and propose professional development programs according to which the Minister of Education adopts an annual program for trainings for professional development of teachers (Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools).

## METHODS

The subject of this research are the opinions and attitudes of the teachers from primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Macedonia regarding the establishment and functionality of the system of teacher's professional development in the Republic of Macedonia.

The purpose of the research is to determine whether there are differences in the opinions of teachers with different work experience in terms of: who should determine the goals and contents of the teacher's professional development; who should perform organized trainings for the professional development of teachers; factors that can contribute to professional development of the teachers.

The sample is composed of 398 teachers (primary school and subject teachers) from 28 city primary and secondary schools with roughly equal material-working conditions and with approximately equal social structure of students. Of these teachers, 73.9% are female and 25.1% male. According to work experience, 16.8% have 1-5 years teaching experience, 37.7% of the sample has 6-15 years teaching experience, 19% have 16-25 years, and 21.6% have over 25 years work experience. According to the working position, 40.2% are primary school teachers, 34.2% are subject teachers in secondary school and 24.6% are subject teachers in primary school. Of the total number of respondents, 39.5% of them were mentors of novice teachers.

A specially constructed survey questionnaire was used. In addition to the basic data (school, gender, position of the school, current official position, working experience, education level), it also

contains closed-type questions - an assessment scale where teachers determine the level of agreement and satisfaction in the offered claims.

The obtained results are analyzed and presented using the descriptive statistics: frequencies (f), percent (%), and non-parametric procedure: F-test. The data obtained from the survey were processed using the statistical package SPSS 19.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSION

### *Differences in opinions and attitudes between teachers with different work experience from primary and secondary school*

The initial education that teachers acquire at their faculties is the basis for working in the teaching profession. But it must constantly expand and deepen in line with changes that occur as a result of intense technical and technological development, novelties that are constantly taking place in curricula and programs, as well as new knowledge about the psychological development of the young generation. To this end, teachers must be constantly involved (self-initiated or organized) in the various programs offered to promote their professional and career development.

Hence, the dilemma has raised the question of, who is in charge for the professional development of teachers and what are the opinions of teachers about how it should be organized. Having in mind the complexity of the professional development system of teachers in the Republic of Macedonia we present some of the research results that relate to this problem.

Differences in the responses of the teachers with different work experience on the questions / assertion posed in the questionnaire were analyzed using the F-test. The obtained results showed statistically significant differences in more of the analyzed answers, which leads to the conclusion that the work experience of teachers plays an important role in their opinion about the position and functionality of the system of professional development of teachers in the Republic of Macedonia. Statistically significant differences are at the level of 0.01. (Table 1)

In arguing that *the BDE should determine the goals and contents under which the professional development of the teachers will be realized*, we noticed differences in the responses of novice teachers who claim that they *agree* that the BDE should determine the goals and the contents for the realization of their professional development and teachers who have work experience of more than 16 years who *partly agree* with this. The statistically derived difference to this question is at the level of 0.01.

According to the previous assertion, teachers were asked to express their opinion for the assertion *that teachers should determine the goals and contents according to which the professional development of teachers will be realized*. The static-derived difference of this assertion is at the level of 0.01. The biggest differences were noted among the responses of the teachers with work experience over 15 years who *agree* that the teachers should determine the goals and the contents according to which their PD should be realized, in contrast to the younger teachers (with working experience of 1-5 years and less) that *partly agree* with the view that they should determine the goals and the contents under which their professional development would take place.

The answers to the both questions are an indication that, except the BDE as a state institution that is one of the institutions that in its jurisdiction takes care of professional and career development of teachers, the teachers themselves should play a bigger role in the process of the pedagogical-organizational designing of the teachers' professional development.

A particular problem of ensuring the quality of the teaching work is the period of induction / inclusion of new teachers in the profession. According to our legal provisions, graduates have one year of internships before being employed. So we asked the teachers *how do you assess the current system of internships?* 64.3% of them think that it *partially satisfies and there is space for improvement*, and 20.4% of them consider the system *is good*. A small percentage (9.5%) of those who think it should *be completely changed*.

In the same context, we asked teachers to evaluate the quality of the professional development of novice teachers. In general, they consider that the *professional development of novice teachers has deficiencies* (47%), which *occur in certain situations*, such as: the needs are not analyzed, but the

activity is imposed; have no experience; in keeping pedagogical records, have very superficial knowledge.

In the realization of the trainings for the professional development of the teachers, in the Republic of Macedonia mainly are included experts, professors from the teaching faculties, experienced teachers, expert associates, advisers. In that context, we asked the respondents for an opinion on who should perform the trainings for the professional development of the teachers-. 76% of respondents noted all offered answers. But in 96% there is a choice of: BDE, teachers and professional associates, especially when it comes to sharing good practices (inside-school and inter-school) and teaching faculties.

Inner school professional development is one of the most successful forms for advancing teacher's quality. This is confirmed by our respondents. Statistically significant differences were also observed in the issue in which teachers were asked to state their consent regarding the stated factors that could contribute to the professional development of teachers.

Regarding the statement, *the work in the professional bodies can contribute to the teachers' professional development*, greatest differences are observed among the responses of the novice teachers who *agree* with the statement and the teachers with work experience of 16-25 who *partly agree* that the work in the professional bodies can contribute to their professional development.

Novice teacher *agree* that informal communication among colleagues can contribute to their professional development, in contrast to older teachers (over 25) who *partially agree* with this assertion.

Statistically significant differences were noted in the statement *How much the cooperation with the teaching faculties can contribute to your professional development*. From the answers we can conclude that novice teachers *agree* with this attitude, while older teachers (over 25) *partially agree* that co-operation with the teaching faculties can contribute to their professional development.

On the proposition, *cooperation with the BDE can contribute to your professional development*, the largest percentage (51%) of teachers answered that they *agree*. Statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01 on the answers to this question were observed among the responses of novice teacher teachers who *agree* with this, and teachers with work experience over 25 years who *partly agree* that cooperation with the BDE can contribute to their professional development.

Teachers generally *agree* (54%) that *co-operation with other schools can contribute to their professional development*. Statistically significant differences are found in the responses of novice teachers who *agree* with this and teachers with work experience over 25 years who *partly agree* that co-operation with other schools can contribute to their professional development.

A large percentage (51%) of teachers *partly agree* that the *Envisaged career development in the Laws for Primary and Secondary, Motivates Teachers for Lifelong Learning*. Teachers with the largest work experience (over 25 years) *disagree* with what is offered as a legal solution for their professional development and consider that it does not motivate them to invest in their professional development, unlike novice teachers who *partly agree* with this statement. The reason may be in the experience of these teachers in terms of what is prescribed as a legal obligation and what is actually implemented in practice.

At the end, we asked the teachers to declare how much they agree that *the dissemination of the good practices from colleagues can contribute to their professional development*. The statistically significant differences in teachers' responses are at the level of 0.01. Novice teacher *agree* that the dissemination of good practices among colleagues can contribute to their professional development, unlike older teachers (work experience over 25 years) who *partially agree* with this claim.

**Table 1. F-тест: Differences between teachers with different work experience regarding all questions**

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BDE should determine the goals and contents according to which the professional development of teachers will be realized	Between Groups	5,559	5	1,112	2,435	,034**
	Within Groups	178,546	391	,457		
	Total	184,106	396			
Teachers should determine the goals and the contents under which the professional development of teachers will be realized	Between Groups	7,360	5	1,472	2,990	,012**
	Within Groups	192,499	391	,492		
	Total	199,859	396			
Work in professional bodies can contribute to teachers' professional development	Between Groups	12,297	5	2,459	4,770	,000**
	Within Groups	201,597	391	,516		
	Total	213,894	396			
Informal communication among colleagues can contribute to professional development	Between Groups	12,468	5	2,494	3,758	,002**
	Within Groups	259,466	391	,664		
	Total	271,935	396			
How much cooperation with teaching faculties can contribute to your professional development	Between Groups	12,959	5	2,592	4,171	,001**
	Within Groups	242,975	391	,621		
	Total	255,935	396			
Collaboration with BDE can contribute to your professional development	Between Groups	8,610	5	1,722	3,139	,009**
	Within Groups	214,508	391	,549		
	Total	223,118	396			
Collaboration with other schools can contribute to your professional development	Between Groups	8,082	5	1,616	2,888	,014*
	Within Groups	218,825	391	,560		
	Total	226,907	396			
The envisaged career development in the Laws for Primary and Secondary Motivates Teachers for Lifelong Learning	Between Groups	10,863	5	2,173	3,417	,005**
	Within Groups	248,643	391	,636		
	Total	259,506	396			
Dissemination of colleagues 'good practices can contribute to teachers' professional development	Between Groups	12,120	5	2,424	4,305	,001**
	Within Groups	220,142	391	,563		
	Total	232,262	396			

\*p< 0.05

\*\*p<0.01

## CONCLUSION

There is no initial education that will give all the necessary knowledge and skills to the teachers that are needed for work throughout the entire teaching life. The acquired knowledge and skills through the teacher's initial education are not the last step of the teachers' educational process. Their acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities are a base that complements and improves throughout the entire teaching life.

Through their professional development, teachers contribute not only to improve their knowledge, skills, abilities and teaching practices, but at the same time they are acting to improve the quality of teaching, to provide higher quality teaching and create opportunities for improving the students' achievements.

The results of the conducted research of the teachers from the primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Macedonia generally showed that there are differences in the opinions of teachers

with different work experience in terms of: who should determine the goals and contents of the teachers' professional development; who should perform organized trainings for the professional development of teachers; factors that can contribute to the professional development of teachers.

Differences in the responses of teachers with different work experience indicate that teachers with less work experience mainly rely fully on the state in terms of planning and organizing their professional development, while more experienced teachers (teachers with more work experience) need and require their greater involvement in the process of pedagogical-organizational design of teachers' professional development

The results of this research confirm that the successful professional development of teachers, except that includes a plan, continuity, it is also needed to be carried out inside and outside the school, through professional partnerships (international, state, local, intra-school) and with a high level of respect for the professional needs of each teacher.

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