

Key Aspects of Teacher Quality – National and International Documents

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Abstract

Positive correlations between quality of teachers, their professional training and students' accomplishments are revealed by a large body of pedagogic scientific evidence. The European Union, national educational policies, practitioners and scientists focus on teaching as pivotal prerequisite for quality education.

They strongly promote schools' duties in developing student competencies necessary for adaptation to globalization processes and complex community conditions, where creativity, initiative, innovation and dedication in the continuing education process are as important as obtaining factual knowledge in a certain area. These strategic debates explicitly show that teacher quality unequivocally depends on quality of teacher education, which is why numerous European and national documents address the quality of education of teachers.

The aim of this paper is to review the level of compatibility of standards and criteria used to determine teacher quality in the Republic of Macedonia with standards and criteria used in nine countries members of EU via analysis of information presented at ATEE conference, 2009, Mallorca in the comparative study "Teacher quality in Europe: comparing formal descriptions" and Macedonian documents that regulate teacher education and determine the quality of teacher professionalism. Although a trend towards creation of European teacher model exists, unified documents and common designating framework that would define teacher quality are nonexistent.

Keywords: teacher, quality, competences.

Introduction

Education is long-lasting and complex process. The results from this process become apparent after a long and continuous influence of set of factor for whom is difficult precisely to define which factor, in which time and with which intensity had its influence. However, the opinions and evidences that teachers play the key role insuring the quality of educational process are more obvious and suggest of the role of teacher in qualifying each child to realize it's highest potential for life and work in contemporary social context [1], [2], [4], [6], [10]. Therefore, in the last twenty years all people (politicians, scientists, teachers, parents, and businessman) which based on different interests are included in children's education, more intensively discuss about the quality of the teacher and try to define/unify the common characteristics of a good teacher. Unfortunately, there is not yet a consensual opinion regarded this question, especially in a sense of its language definition.

Differences when defining the sintagma – teacher's competences, mainly depends from the researcher perspective or the perspective of the theoretician that study this problem. The huge number of publications upon for this issue, leads to the conclusion that the quality of teachers could be determined only if we manage to find answers to following questions: If and how well do the teachers know and understand the contents from the subject they teach? How do they plan and organize the teaching process and process of learning (on a daily, monthly and early level)? How high expectations do teachers set for their students? If and how do the teachers adapt the didactic – methodic approach toward student's different interests, abilities and knowledge's and consequently do they achieve a proper feedback information from them? How much and how really they take care and give a support for complete development of students personality? How often do teachers use open and clear communication with parents, colleagues and the environment in the process of creation of conditions for successful education?

„Definitions may be grouped broadly according to whether they focus on the qualifications of the teacher as a reflection of competence (e.g., degree, quality of college, exam scores, certify cation, subject-matter credential, experience), the personal or psychological qualities of a teacher (such as love of children, honesty,

compassion, fairness), the pedagogical standards that a teacher exhibits (use of certain teaching strategies, classroom management skills, establishment of a positive classroom climate), or the teacher's demonstrated ability to raise student learning (successful or effective teaching)" [9]. It seems like that the study **Teacher quality in Europe: comparing formal descriptions** [8] provides wide opportunities for defining and unification of teaching quality and consequently to determine the relevant methodologic approaches for its evaluation.

1 Macedonian Legislative and Regulations That Refers to Teachers Quality

This description reveals to legislative and regulations that identify the teaching quality. The following three documents are included in the analyses: 1) National programme for development of education in the Republic of Macedonia - 2005-2015 – Program for professional improvement of teaching staff; 2) Low for teachers in primary and secondary schools in Republic of Macedonia; and 3) Regulations for basic professional competences of teachers in primary and secondary schools (Ministry for education and science of Republic of Macedonia). The implementation of the last two documents started at the beginning of the school year 2015/2016. We will specifically analyse their implementation considering that they have an obligatory meaning.

1.1. *National Program for Development of Education in Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015 – Programme for Professional Improvement of Teaching Staff*

The Programme for professional improvement of teaching staff as a part of National program for development of education in Republic of Macedonia (future in the text used as NPED) is created by university professors and assistants, representatives from state administration and representatives from the Bureau for Development of Education. It is based on the analyses of conditions and trends related to teaching staff (primary and secondary education) with special emphasis of initial and continuous education, as well as the need for development of system of professional development of the teachers.

In NPED special emphasis is made for the need from evaluation and improvement of curricula for teacher's initial education in following four key segments: Qualifications/ expertise - innovations of subject contents; Pedagogical work – innovations and adaptations of pedagogic approaches in the work with students and children; Implementation of ICT – following of contemporary informatics technologies and Leadership and team work. The creators of this program suggest designing a study programs for education of teachers that will develop unified competences (totally 20) [5]. They include knowledges, abilities, skills, attitudes and values that follow the tendencies in creating a contemporary European teacher. However, our analyses of accredited study curricula for initial education of the teachers that are realized at the Faculties in Republic of Macedonia, reveals that there is a differences in definition (formulation) of the competences although there is a high level of essential compatibility between subject curricula.

1.2. *Low for Teachers in Primary and Secondary School in Republic of Macedonia*

This low assume only six basic professional area of competences and obligates Teaching Faculties to design curricula considering the requirements for quality. They incorporate professional values, knowledge and understanding, as well as abilities and skills in following areas [3]:

1. Knowledge for the specific subject and educational system;
2. Teaching (planning and preparation of teaching process, realization of the teaching process, evaluation of students, getting familiarized with the students and their needs and possibilities);
3. Creating a stimulate environment for learning;
4. Social and educational inclusion;
5. Communication and cooperation with the families and the community; Professional development and professional cooperation.

Suggested areas represent the first level of determination of teaching quality and mainly suggested on specific competences that represent description of the work of the teacher (what and with whom is working) as well as knowledges, abilities and skills needed for realization of the work.

1.3. *Regulations for Basic Professional Competences of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools*

This Regulations represent an operationalization of the six basic professional areas of competences suggested by the low. All six basic professional areas of competences are structured in subareas (total 12). Key competences for each subareas were defined (total 142).

Following competences are determined as: 1) Knowledge and understanding; 2) Abilities and skills. The definition of competences is made in a form of expected outcomes [7].

Example: Area 2 - Teaching and learning

A. Professional knowledge and understanding	B. Professional abilities and skills
Subarea: Planning and preparation of teaching process	
1. Knows the components of successfully planning of the teaching and learning process; 2. Knows and understand different types of planning of the teaching process;	3. Planes the teaching and learning process according prescribed curricula and standards in accordance with student's needs; 4. Makes a selection and prepares activities, teaching and working materials and instruments for following of students according planned goals; 5. Planes based on a reflection for personal work and feedback information from students.

2 *Teacher Quality in Europe: Comparing Formal Descriptions Versus Macedonian Legislative and Regulations that Refers to Teacher's Quality*

In the study *Teacher quality in Europe: comparing formal descriptions*, the main question that authors try to answer is: How do formal documents on teacher quality in Europe identify teacher quality? The operationalization of this question is realized based on following four sub questions: What is the formal status and impact of those formal documents? Which stakeholders were involved in the development (formulation & validation) of the document? Which level of detail is used in defining teacher quality? What main headings for teacher quality are used? [8].

Obtained results point out that regarded the first level of description, different countries use different concepts to define teacher's quality. In analyses of the study, authors distinguished three types of categories for structuring teacher qualities:

1. A structure based on teacher functions or main areas of expertise. Examples are Belgium, which refers explicitly to teacher roles (teacher as a researcher, organizer, and culture participant) and The Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, ETUCE and the EC document *Improving the Q of TE*, which all refer to specific domains of expertise.
2. A structure based on the different context in which a teacher has to operate: within the classroom/with pupils, within the school/with colleagues, within society, with himself/professional development, with knowledge. Examples are Belgium, Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Slovenia, OECD, *EC Improving the Quality of TE*, *EC Common European Principles*.
3. A structure which is based on the more abstract categories of knowledge, skills and attitudes/personal attributes. Examples are England, Sweden, Poland (only skills) and Belgium (attitudes) [8].

In Republic of Macedonia the first level of description of teaching quality is regulated with the *Low for teachers in primary and secondary school in Republic of Macedonia*. This structure composed from six areas in which teachers competences should be define, is based on different context in which the teacher works, who is working with and what does he/she works? This means that criteria for composing the structure of competences is similar with the structure in countries suggested in Category 1 and Category 2.

3 *Level of Detail and Category Types Used In Defining Teacher Quality (European Countries versus Macedonia)*

The analyses of the documents for teaching quality presented in the study *Teacher quality in Europe: comparing formal descriptions* reveals that between nine countries included in analyses, there is differences in the structure for description. In order to determine the level of details used for description of teaching qualities in different European countries, researchers have analyzed the number of levels of description. It is concluded that the description of teaching quality is mainly realized on three levels: main level, subcategories and sub – subcategories. In Republic of Macedonia mainly three levels of details for description of teaching quality were used. In the *Low for teachers in primary and secondary school* the first level is dominant, while in the document *Regulations for basic professional competences of teachers in primary and secondary schools* the second and third level are represented. The comparison between EU countries and Macedonia toward the representation and formulation of concrete teaching qualities expressed as descriptors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of descriptors for TQ in national documents (European countries versus Macedonia)

Country: Quality area	Be	Cz	En	Gr	Ne	No	Po	Sl	Sw	MKD
Educator–Ped/did comp – effective teaching	1				1	1	1	1	1	1
Understanding of the learning process			1						1	1

Planning/organisation of the T-/L-process	1	1	1				1	1	1
Performing of teaching – skills of practice	1	1					1		1
Assessing teaching-learning + grading			1					1	1
Monitoring and giving feedback on learning			1					1	
Reflection on teaching/-learning process		1							1
Methodological competence					1				
Development of the teaching process								1	1
<i>Number of appearances</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>
Cooperation/Partnership	1								1
Cooperation/Partner w. colleagues – Teamwork	1	1	1	1			1		1
Cooperation/Partner with parents/carers	1	1	1					1	1
Cooperation/Partner with external parties	1	1	1	1			1		
<i>Number of appearances</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>			<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>
Refl. + prof. development/lifelong learning	1		1	1			1	1	
Development of professional knowledge		1							1
Development of professional skills		1							1
Professional development of attitudes		1							
Professional development of values		1							
<i>Number of appearances</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>			<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	
Interpersonal/social competence					1	1	1		
Self-knowledge and empathy								1	
<i>Number of appearances</i>					<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>
Eval. and contribution to school development		1				1			1
Competence for change, innovator - researcher						1			
<i>Number of appearances</i>		<i>1</i>				<i>2</i>			<i>1</i>
Positive attitude									
Positive attitude to learning			1						1
Positive attitude to discipline			1						
Positive attitude to safe learning environments			1						1
<i>Number of appearances</i>			<i>3</i>						<i>2</i>
Communicative skills							1		
Language skills							1		
<i>Number of appearances</i>							<i>2</i>		<i>0</i>
Subject knowledge	1		1		1	1		1	1
Leadership						1		1	1
Organiser of a learning environment	1				1				1
Human rights and ethical competence						1		1	1
ICT-skills							1	1	1
Promoting well-being/-development of pupils			1						1
Understand relevant legal frameworks			1						1
Cultural participant	1								1
Able to take decisions	1								
Critical reflection	1								
Responsibility	1								
Flexibility	1								
Creativity							1		
Knowledge of gender equality								1	1
Mediate & establish core values of democracy								1	
Work against discrimination and abuse								1	1

Conclusions

The results from comparison analyses conducted at descriptions for teaching quality presented in the study **Teacher quality in Europe: comparing formal description** [8] and the both Macedonian documents: Low for teachers in primary and secondary schools in Republic of Macedonia and Regulations for basic professional competences of teachers in primary and secondary school, reveals that there is a high level of compatibility regarded the areas used as a starting point for designing the structure and meaning suggested for certain areas. In the first level in all analyzed documents, a general description of the most important qualities is used. This principle of work is maintained in designing Macedonian documents as well. The comparison between Macedonia and EU counties is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison Macedonian and EU countries

MK area	EU – study area
Knowledge for the specific subject and educational system;	Subject knowledge
Knowledge for educational system	Eval. and contribution to school development
Planning and preparation of teaching process	Educator–Ped/did comp – effective teaching
Teaching (planning and preparation of teaching process, realization of the teaching process, evaluation of students, getting familiarized with the students and their needs and possibilities);	Educator–Ped/did comp – effective teaching
Teaching (planning and preparation of teaching process, realization of the teaching process, evaluation of students, getting familiarized with the students and their needs and possibilities);	Educator–Ped/did comp – effective teaching
Knowledge for children's development characteristics, their needs and abilities	
Creation of safe and simulative environment for learning	Organiser of a learning environment
School climate	Eval. and contribution to school development
Social and educational inclusion	Interpersonal/social competence
Communication and cooperation with the families and the community;	Cooperation/Partnership
Professional development and professional cooperation.	Refl. + prof. development/lifelong learning
Professional development and professional cooperation.	Cooperation/Partnership

The quality of the teacher in Macedonia is defined in only one Low and it's operationalized in the Regulations for basic professional competences of teachers in primary and secondary schools. Most of the competences noted in other European countries, are covered by 142 competences defined in the Regulations for professional competences (MKD). Differences are noted in the structuring and naming of subareas of the competences. Compared with the EU countries, the definition of competences in Macedonia is made as a learning outcomes, structured in two subcategories: Professional knowledge's and understanding, Professional abilities and skills. Attitudes and values are missing and are not included in the descriptions. As presented in the documents of EU countries, in Macedonian documents as well „The most common qualities are the *teaching competence* (pedagogical/didactical competence), the *competence of cooperation* and the *competence of (further) professional development*“ [8].

In Regulations for basic professional competences of teachers in primary and secondary schools, a total 142 competences were defined. The Macedonian document is written at fourteen pages according to the classification suggested in analyzed study¹ which was used as our guideline. The description presented in Macedonian document was categorized in the group named as *detailed description*. In Macedonia as well as in the EU countries, this could suggest on differences in national perception and the role of Governments in determination of the manners for ensuring the quality of the teachers. The purpose of this paper is not to give a detailed analyses of the problem, neither to discuss for implications of defining and formulation of descriptors or indicators for quality based on their applicability and measurement. We tried only to detect and discover the directions based on relationsF for moving forward regarded the education and measurement. We only tried to reveal the directions for moving forward regarded the relations of educational systems in some of highly developed European countries.

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¹ Global descriptions: in two countries, the descriptions of teacher qualities were formulated on a maximum of 2 pages (Poland, Slovenia, Sweden). Intermediate descriptions: in four countries, descriptions of teacher quality are formulated on 5 to 8 pages (Czech Republic, England, Norway). Detailed description: in two countries, detailed descriptions are included in the formal documents. In Belgium, teacher qualities are described in 16 pages, in The Netherlands even 21 pages are needed to formulate on a formal level the teacher qualities that are expected of teach

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