

Practice and Theory in Pedagogy

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Teachers' Views about their Professional Development in Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract: The modern society is society based on knowledge and innovations. Education is the main tool that could provide these two elements required for living in modern changing world. Quality of education depends from many factors, but teachers are one of the most important and influenced one. In this regard, the quality of teacher's education as well as their preparedness for continuous life – long learning, constant improvement and investment in personal professional development are one of the segments that strongly determines the quality of education. Education and upbringing are complex and long-lasting processes and their results are not immediately visible, but are expressed after a long and continuous influence, and the factors that determine the results, are numerous and are of different intensity. However, a huge corpus of research confirms that the teacher with all his personal, professional and moral capacity has a significant influence on the quality of the outcomes of those processes. Teachers opinions are important when speaking about teachers' professional development and different aspects of their personal education, development as well as years of working experience are important. In this regard, we designed this study with aim to determine the differences in opinions of teachers with different work experience in relation to several categories of the professional development: satisfaction from their own level of professional development, forms and approaches they have used for personal professional development and the level of personal activity for personal and professional development. The study was conducted on a sample of 398 teachers, both primary and secondary school teachers from 28 schools in the Republic of Macedonia. The subsample was consisted of four subsamples based on years of working experience of the teacher. Differences between subsamples were determined using non- parametric statistics *t*- test. Statistically significant differences were obtained in mainly all examined categories mainly between the groups of novice teachers and teachers with working experience more than 25 years of work. Based on obtained results it could be concluded that attitudes and

opinions for personal development are closely related with years spend in education and working experience of the teacher as well as with elements related with new generations, for example use of technology.

Keywords: Teachers, attitudes, differences, Professional development, Republic of Macedonia

Introduction

The society we live in today is society based on knowledge. Knowledge and innovations are considered as main tools for achieving the goal established at the meeting of Council of Europe in Lisbon, 2002 according which *„Europe should become the most concurrent and dynamic economy in the world based on knowledge, able to maintain constant economic development with more places at labour market and higher social inclusion”* (Lisbon European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon 2000). Changes that occurs in all segments of living, with no exception, indicate changes in the system of knowledge and education as well. Therefore, one of the basic requirements of modern education is constant implementation of new knowledge and information's in current system of education and teaching; continuous implementation of innovations and modernization of education process and teaching as well as constant improvement of the whole educational system. Only educational system that is open and flexible for changes could keep the step with changes in modern society, can recognize its needs and can answer on its requirements. In this regard, the concept of lifelong learning as a concept of acquisition of knowledge, habits, skills and abilities after finishing the initial education and as a manner of adaptation of changes through continuous education, additional education and self-education are the Imperative of modern society. This is important for all subjects involved in educational process but especially important for teachers as a key factor for delivering the educational process. Teachers are attributed a crucial role in fulfilling quality education, based on their initial knowledge and upgraded with several important group of competences. One of the competences in this group are professional competences related with professional development of the teachers and professional cooperation (Основни..., 2016).

Professional development is one of the preconditions for effective education that follows the needs and trends of modern society. Teacher work require many different competences that cannot be acquired during initial education. Some of competences such as organizational skills, research skills, lidership, team work and others are established mainly after initial education, attending different forms of professional development of the teacher. Even the best quality initial education, cannot provide skills required for whole professional life (Hendriks et al., 2010).

This is the reason why we need professional development during the professional span.

In general, professional development refers to personal development of the teacher in frames of his/her professional role and integrates both formal and informal experience. It could be defined as *"long-lasting process that integrates different contents, experiences and possibilities that are systematically planned in order to strength the professional growth and development of the teachers"* (Pešikan, Antić & Marinković, 2010:288). Popović (2010) defines teacher professional development *"as a process of continuous acquisition, expansion and deepening of knowledge, developing skills and abilities that are relevant for successful execution of curricular and extracurricular activities, acquisition of knowledge and skills that ensure quality and successful collaboration with colleagues, and a quality relationship with parents and the local community, preparing to accept the changes, their successful application and active participation and initiative in the implementation of the reforms"* (Popović, 2010).

The summary of many studies (Velkovski, 2012; Petrovska, Sivevska & Runcheva, 2018), reports (UNESCO report, 2011) and documents (European Commission, 2012; Teacher education policy in Europe, 2008; Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2010; Quality Assurance in Teacher education in Europe, 2006; National program for professional development in Macedonia, 2005) related to professional development underline several common characteristics that define professional development as well as several issues that deprive teachers from professional development. Based on common elements, the process of professional development is established as process of continuous learning; part of everyday formal and informal work with emphasis on essential components of teaching process (planning, evaluation, effective practice); enhancing cooperation and team work by exchange of knowledge and experience, orientation on improving the effectiveness of students learning, etc. From the opposite side, factors such as lack of common relations between suggested activities, one-time effectiveness of suggested courses as well as luck of support provided by schools, school management and governmental bodies regarded teacher's professional development are determined to turn out teachers to take activities related with their personal development (OECD report, 2011:5).

In Republic of Macedonia, professional development of the teachers is obligatory and is regulated with legislative, low acts and regulative. It is provided in many different forms and all suggested forms must be approved and accredited by the Ministry of education and science (Low for primary and secondary school teachers, 2018). Beside the Ministry, another authorized institution, responsible for professional development of teachers is the Bureau for development of education. Their responsibilities are related with evaluation and quality of teaching process and in these frames, work of the teachers. Related to this, they prepare, design and propose the program for professional development of the teachers; organize courses and workshops aimed to impact on teacher's professional

development etc (Low for Bureau of education). Based on these documents and legislative, teachers are obligated to participate in activities for their professional development and to spend 60 hours in period of three years in activities for professional development.

From the point of teachers' opinions, they emphasize the work in professional activities, sharing experiences and good practices with colleagues from same and different school, informal communication as well as cooperation with state bodies responsible for professional development as essential for their personal efforts and personal development (Petrovska, Sivievska & Runcheva, 2018).

Opinions of the teachers regarded different aspects of professional development are very important. This is especially important considering the fact that teacher is directly involved in the education process and suggested changes should be answer on their real needs, possibilities and requirements. This is especially important in order to identify the weakest points of the process of professional development and to identify best solutions and possibilities for improvement. Therefore, both group of teachers, particularly their opinions regarded professional development are determined as subject of this study.

Based on previously elaborated aspects, we designed this study in order to determine whether the number of years of working experiences of the teachers is determining factor refereeing different aspects of professional development. Particularly, we were interested in three aspects related to satisfaction from personal level of professional development; manner and approaches applied in professional development and the level of personal activity and level of personal improvement.

Methods

The subject of this study are opinions and attitudes of primary and secondary school teachers from the Republic of Macedonia regarding their professional development.

The purpose of the study is to determine whether there are differences in the opinions of teachers with different work experience in relation to several categories of the professional development. In particular, whether there are differences regarding satisfaction from their own level of professional development, forms and approaches they have used for personal professional development and the level of personal activity for personal and professional development.

The study sample was comprised from totally 398 teachers (generalist teachers and subject teachers) from 28 different primary and secondary schools in Republic of Macedonia. The schools involved in the research were selected based on similar material and technical possibilities and with approximately equal social structure of students. From the total sample of respondents, 73.9% were female and 25.1% male. According to

working experience (years of work experience), most of participants in the study, particularly 38%, belongs to the group of working experience from 6 to 15 years of practice; 22% have working experience over 25 years; 19% have working experience from 16 to 25 years and 17% with experience of 1-5 years. According to the working position, 40% are departmental teachers, 35% are secondary school teachers and 25% are primary school teachers.

For the purpose of the study, we used a specially designed questionnaire. Besides the general personal information (school, gender, position of the school, current official position, years of working experience, degree of education) the questioner was comprised from several closed-type questions and assessment scale where teachers determine the level of their personal agreement or disagreement with suggested statement in the questions. The questions were related to different segment of professional development: personal satisfaction of professional development, level of personal activity and applied forms of professional development.

The obtained data were analyzed and presented using the descriptive statistics: frequencies (f), percent (%), and non-parametric procedure: F-test. The statistical package SPSS 19 was applied for data processing.

Results and discussion

Considering the structure of the questioner, the results, particularly differences between teachers with different age of working experience are analysed in three separate segments: satisfaction from personal level of professional development; manner and approaches applied in professional development and the level of personal activity and level of personal improvement.

Differences *between answer on teachers with different level of working experiences were analyses using F-test*. The years of working experience of teachers had impact on teachers' attitude considering the results from analyses of their answers. At most of the analysed questions we obtained statistically significant differences that leads to conclusion that years of working experience have significant role in estimation of level of satisfaction of their personal level of professional development and forms that they apply in order to improve this segment of their professional life. Results obtained from applied F - test are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The obtained differences are significant on both level of significance, 0,01 and 0,05.

Differences between teachers with different level of working experiences regarded their satisfaction with personal level of professional development.

In general, according the obtained results, teachers are satisfied from the level of their personal professional development. In this regard, on the question "How much are you satisfied from the level of professional

development" 66% of interviewed teachers declare satisfied while 26% declare very satisfied. These results suggest a positive attitude toward this issue.

Similar to these answers, when teachers were asked to answer what defines the quality of their professional development, from several suggested options we received different answers that were confirmed as statistically significant differences between different groups of teachers. Statistically significant differences were noted in the item related to personal interest and affinities. Namely, teachers with less years of working experience consider that their professional development depends a lot from personal interest, while for teachers with working experience more than 25 years mainly choose lesser category. Probably experience of the older teacher showed that not areas or personal improvement and development are sometimes areas in which teachers are less confident and strong and therefore they should improve that segment. In this regard, areas that we are interested in, in general are areas that we are good at and our improvement is led by interest that does not exclude the possibility to improve in other areas that are not our favorite one.

Statistically significant differences also are obtained for the conditions that schools offer in order to stimulate professional development of the teachers. In this regard, novice teachers mainly selected that depends, while more experienced teachers with experience over 25 years selected partly depends. Explanation for this could be found in awareness of more experienced teachers that personal development is a matter of personal interest and not something that obligatory should be done. Schools could offer different forms of professional development based on their estimation, financial conditions, management strategy. But this should not be the only source for participation in professional development.

Related with the quality of personal professional development in relation with requirements settled by local institutions for support in education: State education inspectorate and Bureau for development of education, statistically significant differences were obtained between novice teachers and teachers with experience more than 25 years. Novice teachers declare that their professional development depends from the support of this institution, while more experienced teachers agree that it partly depends.

Table 1. Satisfaction from personal level of professional development

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
My personal interest and commitment (affinity)	Between Groups	32,550	5	6,510	4,324	,001**
	Within Groups	588,719	391	1,506		
	Total	621,270	396			
The conditions offered by the school	Between Groups	19,481	5	3,896	2,885	,014**
	Within Groups	528,046	391	1,351		
	Total	547,526	396			
The requirements set by local institutions that support education	Between Groups	20,124	5	4,025	2,394	,037**
	Within Groups	657,307	391	1,681		
	Total	677,431	396			
Requirements / support from the State Inspectorate	Between Groups	26,055	5	5,211	2,948	,013**
	Within Groups	691,210	391	1,768		
	Total	717,264	396			
Requirements / support from the BDE	Between Groups	29,974	5	5,995	3,719	,003**
	Within Groups	630,232	391	1,612		
	Total	660,207	396			

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Regarded the personal level of satisfaction statistically significant differences were obtained between novices' teachers and experienced teachers with more than 25 years working experience. Namely, novice teachers are personally satisfied with their level of professional development, while experience teachers declare that are not satisfied. Probably enrolling in teacher profession means also enrolling in different forms of professional development, communication and cooperation with colleagues. Novice teachers learn many new things considering that they are new in the work, which gives them feeling that they learn and see many things. From the other hand, more experienced teacher had also greater expectations and the experience by itself means that they have already participated in different forms of professional development and they need something new.

Table 2. Personal satisfaction from different aspects of personal professional development

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
My personal interest and commitment (affinity)	Between Groups	15,115	5	3,023	3,652	,003**
	Within Groups	323,656	391	,828		
	Total	338,771	396			
The conditions offered by the school	Between Groups	14,443	5	2,889	3,728	,003**
	Within Groups	302,983	391	,775		
	Total	317,426	396			
The requirements set by my superiors in the school	Between Groups	19,951	5	3,990	4,736	,000**
	Within Groups	329,420	391	,843		
	Total	349,370	396			
The requirements set by local institutions that support education	Between Groups	10,210	5	2,042	2,233	,050*
	Within Groups	357,594	391	,915		
	Total	367,804	396			

*p < 0.05

**p < 0.01

Differences between teacher's opinion regarded the applied forms for their professional development.

Following questions were related with different forms that teachers use in purposes for their professional development and were asked to rank them in terms of the frequency of their use.

Analyzing the responses of teachers, it is notable that in terms of frequency of use of different forms, following were listed: self-education, as the most commonly used form of professional development, followed by shared experience with colleagues within the school, seminars, trainings and workshops as an organized form of transmission of knowledge and sharing best practices and experiences in sense of contributing to professional upgrading of teachers. Use of social media was ranked at last place or it is the less frequent applied form of professional development selected by teachers.

Regarding this question, statistically significant differences at the level 0.01 were determined among the responses of novice's teachers that prefer special internet and social networks and sharing experience with colleagues as a form for their own professional development compared with experienced teachers with more than 25 years working experience. The experienced teachers prefer workshops, seminars and trainings as a form adequate for their professional development.

This can be understandable considering that novice teachers are at the beginning of their professional and working lives so learning from

experienced colleagues is somehow a natural and expected form of learning and upgrading the experience. Selecting computer technology, particularly preferring the Internet as a form for their professional development is also understandable considering the fact that they are living in period of modern technology and are more interested in it and more confident in its application. Considering that many forms of distance learning, many materials and ideas, best practices, studies, webinars etc could be find on internet, we could justify the selection of novice teachers.

The teachers were also required to determine how often they use all of previously listed forms of continuous education for purposes of their professional development and to rang them as well. The responses indicate that as the form that contributes most to teacher professional development, self-education was chose as a most frequently chosen and applied form, followed by seminars, trainings and workshops, shared experience with colleagues, and finally special Internet networks.

At this question, statistically significant differences were noted at level of 0,01. Namely, teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience believe that their shared experience with their colleagues contributes less in their professional development than the younger ones (novices' teacher with working experience from 1to 5 year. They stated that communicating with colleagues and sharing experiences with them is very helpful for their professional development. As previously stated, differences occur between novices' teachers for which technology contributes very much in their professional development compared with their more experienced colleagues with more than 20 years of working experience for whom using the internet sources helps little in their professional development.

In this regard, we could conclude that answers to this question are expected. In the spirit of the new digitalization and implementation of technology, the availability of numerous data on the Internet and the existence of numerous portals, forums and teaching platforms, new teachers are able to expand their initial knowledge using this form as a manner to empower to their own professional development. As expected, this is not very preferred by experienced teachers who prefer the immediate way of transferring knowledge and experiences and are not so much involved in technology.

Table 3. Applied forms for professional development

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Which forms have you ever used for your professional development (workshops - teachers as active participants)	Between Groups	14,741	5	2,948	2,883	,014**
	Within Groups	373,248	365	1,023		
	Total	387,989	370			
Which forms have you ever used for your professional development (shared experience with colleagues)	Between Groups	20,486	5	4,097	3,530	,004**
	Within Groups	424,772	366	1,161		
	Total	445,258	371			
Which forms have you ever used for your professional development (internet and social network)	Between Groups	15,954	5	3,191	2,446	,034**
	Within Groups	397,891	305	1,305		
	Total	413,846	310			
According to your experience, how much each of the offered forms contributes to your professional development (shared experience with colleagues)	Between Groups	21,472	5	4,294	3,508	,004**
	Within Groups	440,747	360	1,224		
	Total	462,219	365			
According to your experience, how much each of the offered forms contributes to your professional development (internet and social network)	Between Groups	18,579	5	3,716	2,992	,012**
	Within Groups	378,804	305	1,242		
	Total	397,383	310			

*p < 0.05

**p < 0.01

Satisfaction from personal activity level related to personal professional development.

One of the issues we were interested in was the opinions of the teachers for the initiators for their involvement in different activities related to their personal development. Based on their answers, most frequent listed was own initiative, followed by initiative of the director or the suggestion of Bureau for development of education, the initiative of the expert services and most rarely on the initiative of the colleagues.

Asked about how satisfied are with the level of dissemination of the knowledge and experiences that they achieve from the colleagues in frames of their school, the highest percent of interviewed teachers or particularly 71.6% of teachers stated that they are satisfied while 10% of them declare that are very satisfied.

At the same time, teachers were asked to state their main motivation for engaging in activities related with their professional development and

From the above mentioned, we can conclude that teachers generally invest in their professional development, self-initiative including in various activities, which are often included for the exchange of experiences and knowledge with colleagues, are open for cooperation with colleagues from other schools, they make visits to other schools etc. It is positively that investments in their professional development make them most often self-initiative, and not because of the legal norms.

Table 4. Opinions of teachers for their personal activity regarded professional development

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Have you visited another school so far?	Between Groups	5,992	5	1,198	4,128	,001**
	Within Groups	113,529	391	,290		
	Total	119,521	396			
Have you ever been involved in some research?	Between Groups	4,815	5	,963	3,255	,007**
	Within Groups	115,669	391	,296		
	Total	120,484	396			

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Conclusion

Professional development is one of the important aspects of teacher's work that should be considered when speaking about teachers and educational process. It ensures quality, innovation, fresh ideas and possibility new knowledge's, educational strategies and teaching techniques to be implemented in everyday school practice. When speaking about professional development and different forms of its realization, as well as its quality and deliverability, teacher's opinions and views are the most reliable one to be considered. Yet, these aspects are variable depending from many factors related to teachers such as: initial education, personal experiences and views for teaching profession, previous experiences and practices that are closely related with years of working experiences etc. Having these differences in mind, the purpose of our paper was to determine whether there are differences in the opinions of teachers with different work experience in relation to several categories of the professional development. In particular, whether there are differences regarding satisfaction from their own level of professional development, forms and approaches they have used for personal professional development and the level of personal activity for personal and professional development.

Obtained results suggested statistically significant differences in nearly all analysed categories. These differences occur mainly between novice teachers with maximum 5 years working experience and experienced

teachers with more than 25 years working experience. These results were expected considering the time gap between these two groups, different possibility that they have during their working period, experience that they have participating in many different activities, as well as differences in experience in contacts and communication with colleagues, representatives, responsible institutions etc. In this regard, we must pay attention on variety of forms for professional development, creation of mixed teams that will join energy and enthusiasm of novice teachers with experience of the older one.

The efforts on people responsible for professional development of teachers should be pointed toward proposing and supporting different forms of professional development as well as to follow the feedback from its implementation. The research effort in this segment should be pointed on investigating not just the effectiveness of different forms of professional development but also teachers' real needs for this segment, their attitudes and opinions for different aspect of professional development important for their personal and professional growth.

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