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NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN TEACHERS FROM PRIMARY EDUCATION – AS A COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: In different school contexts, there is a discontinuity between teachers' initial education and the needs of school practice. In order to overcome this discontinuity in education, it is necessary for the teachers themselves to become aware of the necessity for continuous professional development as an opportunity for their own development. Vocational training is part of the professional development of teachers that takes place through various activities aimed at developing professional knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The paper presents results obtained from an empirical test of teachers' readiness for professional development. The results were obtained by applying the SPR-N, 5 point Likert scale, from Beara (Beara & Okanović, 2010) which consists of 17 items that refer to: awareness of the importance of improving the teaching profession, external motivation for professional development and self-motivation for improvement.

The research was conducted on 120 teachers of grade and subject teaching in 30 primary schools, which differ in several demographic characteristics (gender, age). In order to test the hypotheses that assume differences between teachers in the readiness for professional development in terms of gender and age, descriptive and inference statistics procedures (t-test and ANOVA) were applied. No differences were identified in terms of awareness of the importance of improving the teaching profession for any of the demographic characteristics of teachers.

Keywords: Professional development, Teaching profession, Motivation, Self-motivation.

„... we cannot have students who continuously learn and collaborate effectively, without teachers who have the same characteristics...”

Michael Fullan

Introduction

The continuous reforms in the educational systems, which have taken place in the previous decades in the world, impose changes in the education and practice of teachers, imposing many roles on them. They are expected to be highly sensitive to issues related to the individual and cultural differences of students, to promote tolerance, to respond adequately and promptly to numerous unpredictable situations that they face on a daily basis, to actively apply new information technologies, to be aware of new knowledge in the field of their work, understanding the needs of society, children and young people, identifying competencies and skills that students need for life in modern conditions and finding ways to develop them in the students.

In order to respond to these challenges, the knowledge and skills that teachers have acquired within the framework of formal education are not enough, that is, the need for professional development is necessarily imposed before them. Professional development implies the acquisition of new professional knowledge and certain pedagogical-psychological, didactic-methodical and sociological knowledge and skills that are necessary to be able to successfully carry out teaching and education. (Avramovic, Vujacic, 2010, 157).

Continuous professional development is an indivisible whole of the concept of the professional development of teachers and is a significant prerequisite for professional advancement and for ensuring the quality of educational work. Professional development implies a one-time activity, i.e. programs that are implemented in a short period of time and from which long-term effects are expected (Lieberman, 1996; Pesikan, 2002). The process of professional development of teachers is very complex and in the literature it is usually defined through four of its components: 1. *continuity of the process* – which indicates its duration from the beginning of professional work until retirement; 2. *adoption, enrichment and monitoring of new knowledge* from the narrower professional area in which the teacher works; 3. *improvement of the abilities and skills* that are necessary and important for realizing the modern roles of the teacher; 4. *personal growth and development* of the teacher and his professional advancement (Stamatović, 2006, 28).

On the other hand, the activities for professional development take place continuously over a longer period of time, and in the ideal case, during the entire professional life. They represent a key component for building and maintaining quality, that is, for the professionalism of teachers and are an integral part of individual and organizational plans. In the context of the goals and tasks of their professional development, there is a unique attitude of the educational policy makers across Europe that the system of professional development of teachers has as its ultimate goal the development and improvement of professional competences, and not the raising of formal qualifications to a higher level (Alibabić, Šegrt, 2010; Marušić, Pejatović, 2013; Stanković, Vujačić, 2011).

For a better understanding of the motivation for professional development of teachers, the Theory of Self-Determination is particularly significant (Self –determination Theory, Deci, Ryan, 2000). By introducing normative standards as an extrinsic motivator, teachers' intrinsic motivation that contributes to higher levels of work efficiency is reduced. Such an effect can be interpreted as a consequence of the reduced feeling of autonomy when performing certain tasks and activities. In order to check the practical application and value of the obtained knowledge, Deci and Ryan (2000) conducted a series of researches, based on which a continuum of self-determination was created (Deci, Ryan, 2000; Šarčević, 2017). On the left side of that continuum is a motivation (complete absence of motivation). When teachers are motivated for their own professional improvement, they have a feeling of incompetence, and they detect external factors as reasons for their own behavior or for the absence of reactions and opportunities to control the current situation. These teachers wonder why professional development would be important for them after initial education, and that is why it is very difficult for them to respond to the challenges in their daily work (Vallerand, 1991, според Šarčević, 2017).

Extrinsic motivation explains an individual's behavior that is not self-determined, but is supported by external factors. Depending on the degree of self-determination and the perceived locus of control, there are several types of extrinsic motivation. (Velki, 2011): 1. *external regulation*-indicates the absence of self-determined behavior (for example, I participate in various forms of professional development because it is in accordance with the rules and I have to); 2. *introjected regulation* – involves a low level of self-regulation, (eg, I participate in various forms of professional development because I feel guilty if I don't); 3. *identification*-indicates the presence of a high level of self-determination (for example, I participate in various forms of professional development because it is my priority); 4. *integration*-full self-determination (eg, I participate in various forms of professional development because I enjoy it and feel very good).

Internal, intrinsic motivation represents the innate tendency of a person to engage, guided by his own interests, seeking challenges and overcoming them Deci (1975, according to Vuković, 2016, 16) says that people who are intrinsically motivated perform an activity because they are satisfied with the performance of the activity itself. They are interested in what they do, express curiosity, explore new stimuli and work to meet new challenges. Intrinsic motivation is based on the need for autonomy and competence. In the context of *satisfying the need for autonomy*, it is important to allow teachers a choice when it comes to different types of professional learning and development, to avoid competition, mutual comparisons, to encourage the development of intrinsic motivation for realizing the personal plan for professional development. *Satisfying the need for competence* implies opening opportunities for teachers to apply what they will adopt during various training programs in practice (reflective practitioner) and to improve the quality of their own educational work; to create more different activities in which the competence of the teacher would be manifested and further developed (teacher forums); giving feedback to teachers about the ways in which the performance of certain teaching activities can be improved. And finally, *meeting the need for connectedness* would refer to developing and maintaining teachers' needs for horizontal learning. Showing collegiality and mutual encouragement of teachers, respecting different levels of competences and opportunities for their advancement.

Method

Problem

Do primary school teachers have positive attitudes towards professional development needs and do teachers of different genders and ages differ in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development, motivation for professional development and self-initiative for professional development. We assumed that: **Hypothesis 1**-Teachers have a positive attitude towards professional development. **Hypothesis 2**- Female teachers and younger teachers have a more pronounced need for professional development compared to male teachers and older teachers.

Sample

The sample consists of 120 teachers from class and subject teaching from the region of Kumanovo. Out of the total number of teachers, 65 are from primary education (45 are female and 20 are male), and 55 are from subject teaching (38 are male and 17 are female).

Instruments

The SRP-N scale, authored by Beara (Beara, Okanović, 2010), was used to measure the readiness of teachers for professional development and it consists of 17 statements that are divided into five subscales: 1. External motivation for improvement (4 statements) . claims). Statements are answered by expressing agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). According to the author of the instrument, its reliability expressed through Crombach's alpha is 0.83.

Results

When tabulating the results related to teachers' answers about their attitudes towards the need for professional development, the answers are reduced to three categories: I don't agree (this category includes the answers I don't agree at all and I don't agree), I can't to decide, I agree (this category includes the answers completely agree and agree) and they are shown through percentages.

Table 1

Attitudes of teachers towards the need for professional development

Attitude towards the motivation for professional development expressed in percentages			
	Do not agree %	Not decisive %	Agree %
1. I am only interested in the mandatory seminars.	66.67	12.50	20.83
2. The reason for attending seminars is the number of hours I get in return.	75.00	16.67	8.33
3. I participate in seminars because the director expects it from me.	57.50	5.00	37.50
4. Professional development takes my time.	45.00	11.67	43.33
Attitude towards self-initiative for professional improvement expressed in percentage			
1. I independently identify the skills in which I need to improve.	41.67	17.49	40.84
2. I have a personal plan for professional development.	15.00	0.00	85.00
3. I independently try to find opportunities and ways to improve my skills and knowledge.	36.67	17.50	45.83
Attitude towards the importance of professional development for the teaching profession expressed in percentages			
1. The teaching profession requires continuous professional development	20.82	4.18	75.00
2. In the teaching profession, compared to other professions, constant professional development is important.	8.33	16.67	75.00
3. The teacher needs to improve professionally, regardless of whether someone else asks him to do so.	37.50	5.00	57.50
4. Every year I try to get involved in some organized type of professional development.	43.33	11.67	45.00
Attitude towards the importance of professional development for quality assurance in teaching, expressed in percentages			
1. The work can be performed successfully even without additional professional training.	33.34	25.00	41.66
2. I do not need additional professional training.	30.83	19.17	50.00
3. I would be a successful teacher without further training.	75.00	8.34	16.66
Attitude towards following up-to-date achievements expressed in percentages			
1. I keep up with the development of the subject area I teach.	40.84	14.16	45.00
2. I keep up with the development of modern teaching methods.	45.83	34.17	20.00
3. On my own initiative, I talk to colleagues and the director about career development.	12.50	1.66	85.84

Regarding the motivation for professional development for the largest number of teachers (75%), the reason for attending seminars is not the number of lessons they would receive in return. They are not only interested in mandatory seminars (66.67%), nor do they get involved in them because of the director's expectations (57.50%) and they do not agree that professional development takes their time (45.00%). The largest number of teachers (85%) have a personal plan for professional development and independently strive to find opportunities and ways to improve their skills and knowledge (45.83%). The largest number of teachers believe that the teaching profession requires constant professional development (75%). The largest number of teachers do not agree that they can be successful even without additional training (75%). Also, the largest number of teachers (85.84%) talk on their own initiative with their colleagues and the director regarding career development. These findings support Hypothesis 1 which postulated that-Teachers have a positive attitude towards professional development.

To test the hypotheses, the responses from the subscales are grouped into three categories: *awareness of the importance of professional development* (with a theoretical range of scores from 9 to 45), *motivation for improvement* (with a theoretical range of scores from 4 to 20) and *self-initiative for improvement* (with a theoretical range of scores from 4 to 20). By applying t-test and ANOVA, the significance of the differences in the attitudes of the teachers in terms of their gender and age was tested.

Table 2

Significance of differences between teachers of different genders in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development, motivation for improvement and self-initiative for improvement

Awareness of the importance of professional development					
gender	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
male	67	31.13	5.89	0.201	0.347
female	53	31.11	5.29		
Motivation for professional development					
gender	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
male	67	7.96	3.56	-0.151	0.890
female	53	8.06	3.63		
Self-initiative for professional development					
gender	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
male	67	13.22	4.42	1.807	0.437
female	53	11.64	4.62		

Teachers of different genders do not differ significantly in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development ($t=0.201$, $p>0.05$), motivation for improvement ($t=0.151$, $p>0.05$) and self-initiative for improvement ($t=1.807$, $p>0.05$).

Table 3

Significance of differences between teachers of different ages in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development, motivation for improvement and self-initiative for improvement

Awareness of the importance of professional development – ANOVA								
Age	N	M	Source of variation	SS	df	Middle square	F	p
25-34	32	30.19	Between the groups	10.311	15	0.687	0.732	0.779
35-44	34	31.50	In the groups	102.056	104	0.981		
45-54	42	30.76	Total	112.367	119			
55-62/64	12	30.33						

Awareness of the importance of motivation for professional development – ANOVA								
Age	N	M	Source of variation	SS	df	Middle square	F	p
25-34	32	9.08	Between the groups	8.891	11	0.808	0.494	0.903
35-44	34	6.88	In the groups	176.576	108	1.635		
45-54	42	8.19	Total	185.476	119			
55-62/64	12	7.58						

Self-initiative professional development ANOVA								
Age	N	M	Source of variation	SS	df	Middle square	F	p
25-34	32	13.00	Between the groups	8.907	13	0.685	0.702	0.758
35-44	34	11.26	In the groups	103.460	106	0.976		
45-54.	42	13.26	Total	112.367	119			
55-62/64	12	12.25						

The values of the F-test show that in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development ($F=0.732$, $p>0.05$), motivation for improvement ($F=0.494$, $p>0.05$) and self-initiative for improvement ($F=0.702$, $p>0.05$) no statistically significant differences were determined between teachers of different ages. However, it can be concluded that the awareness of the importance of motivation for professional development is greatest among employees aged 25-34, the awareness of the importance of professional development is greatest among teachers aged 35-44, and the self-initiative for improvement is the largest among teachers aged 45-54. These findings do not support Hypothesis 2—which postulated that: Female teachers and younger teachers have a more pronounced need for professional development compared to male teachers and older teachers.

Conclusion

Most educational reforms recognize that teachers are the most important agent in those reforms. The role of the teacher in educational reforms – as a subject and as an object of change – contributes to the professional development of teachers being a challenge for research. In this context, Kostović and Oljača (2012) indicate that the management of changes in the school in modern conditions is the most important strategy for professional development and for achieving

quality at all levels of the educational system. If the introduction of changes is a priority for the school, then the entire team must be activated to identify the needs for changes, the pressures and resistances that will appear in relation to the changes, the content of the changes and the implementation process in their own work and in the work of everyone a member of the collective.

In addition to the mentioned changes in the macro context (institutional and personal changes), requests for changes in the approach to education and for teacher training are also being initiated. Since the teacher's roles are changing and expanding it is necessary that he be ready to become familiar with those roles and accept them. Considering that the quality of the school is imperative to the reforms in education, it is necessary through the policy of education, as well as through the improvement of the specific conditions in the schools, to enable the teachers to develop professionally, learn and improve.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CAREER GUIDANCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Abstract: The process of career guidance helps the individual to know the requirements of the market (society) and includes awareness of student's interests, abilities and competencies. In Croatia, career guidance is also known as professional orientation and the importance of it is