

Efficient Management of School and Teachers' Professional Development – challenges and Development Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Both the external socio-economic, safety and health conditions, as well as the changes implemented by the education sector (reforms of the curriculum content and approach, the shift of educational development strategy and organizational structure paradigm, technological changes, pandemic restrictions, shortage of teachers) are changing rapidly in the world, which forces educational institutions to raise the awareness of the teachers' professional competence potential in new working conditions and move towards the training of highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers – educational institutions have encountered the need to search for the most efficient ways to improve the quality and efficiency of the teaching process. Therefore, the goal of the study has been set to identify the teachers' professional development needs and the self-assessment of competences, determining the fundamental principles of efficient school administration. The research methodology is based on the theoretical research method (scientific and methodical literature analysis); empirical research method (survey of teachers in one of the comprehensive education institutions in Latvia); data processing and analysis methods. Analysing the data obtained in the study, it can be concluded that the factors influencing the teachers' qualitative and efficient professional development are the lack of a systematic approach in the country in general and the work overload. The teacher attends courses and seminars, but is unable to implement the acquired knowledge, insights and innovations in their daily work due to the lack of time, workload and responsibilities, as a result, teachers feel demotivated and are pessimistic about their future path in the profession.

Keywords: Competence, management, professional development, school, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

For the educational institution to successfully achieve the set long-term and short-term goals in the training process improvement, there is a need to advance competitiveness and implement organizational changes that require a higher level of teachers' professional training. Therefore, the superiors of the educational institution are interested in having a highly qualified, competent, and full-fledged teaching staff. The number of teachers tends to decrease, for instance, there is a significant shortage of teachers in Latvia – there is a shortage of 1,330 vacancies in comprehensive education schools are reported, and if we include the vacancies in pre-school educational institutions, there is already a shortage of more than 2,000 teachers (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2022). One of the reasons for the decrease in the number of teachers is that a large number of senior teachers leave schools in Latvia every year, but it is becoming more and more difficult to find new ones. There may also be several reasons why teachers leave their jobs - the dominant ones are the difficulty of adapting to the new school, sadness and guilt. (Kazak, 2021). The average age of teachers in Latvia is 48 years. This indicator is higher than the average age of teachers in the OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019). This means that Latvia will have to regenerate approximately every second

teacher from the available teaching workforce in the next decade. Another reason why more and more teachers in Latvia are considering leaving or are leaving the profession already is the pressure caused by several factors such as burnout, lack of time to dedicate themselves just to teaching, lack of support, etc. (Lielvārds, 2021). The global education reforms to elevate the importance of capital – human, financial and corporate (Phelan, Pinar, Ng-A-Fook, & Kane, 2020) has reached Latvia as well and has the same destructive effects on teacher's community as elsewhere. Anxiety teachers and other profession-

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als experience in response to bureaucratic cultures of accountability and performativity (Clarke & Phelan, 2017) required by the new order, leading to more vacancies in schools.

The knowledge that employees have once received at universities is rapidly becoming outdated, their essential need for renewal is increasing, there is a growing need to restore professional competence. As Browne (2021) rightly points out, currently educational leadership is experiencing challenging times, it may be that theoretical models, which might support leaders dealing with new challenges, are sadly lacking as new unprecedented times are upon us. There is a concept of “partial-collapse period”. It is a period in which some of the acquired knowledge has become obsolete. Therefore, the creation of a continuous professional development system for teachers, transforming into a school as a training organization, becomes important. One of the solutions is to educate purposefully the existing teachers in order to create a wider range of assignments and ensure a high level of efficiency in the teaching process. Moreover, it will allow us not only to raise the employees' level of knowledge and develop the necessary professional skills, but also to create such a value system in the organization that complies with the modern needs and demand in the labour market. In order to promote a high and continuous level of professional development, a meaningfully planned, clearly organized teacher training strategy based on objective data is needed, finding a balanced approach between the existing needs and the teachers' interests.

Taking into account the above-mentioned raised scope of the problem, based on the conducted theoretical and empirical research, the aim of the study has been set: “identify the teachers' professional development needs and self-assessment of competences, determining the fundamental principles of efficient school management”.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

For the educational institution to successfully achieve the set long-term and short-term goals in the training process improvement, it is necessary to look for the most efficient and quality-oriented management processes. The literature regarding school effectiveness over the past several decades has provided evidence showing that principal leadership plays a vital role in school success (Liu, Bellibaş, & Gümüş, 2020). Concurrently, it should be mentioned that heads of educational institutions have a different level of understanding of leadership, institution administration models and quality assurance issues in comprehensive and professional education. School governance must remain flexible enough to learn different stakeholders' expectations and adapt to specific contexts that nurture the legitimacy of school policy and administration (Pang & Chan, 2022). And the most important issues to be resolved are related to such management competencies as the awareness of the organization's values, orientation

towards the result achievement, strategic vision. In order to solve this issue, one must understand the essence of management, its fundamental principles and functions. Historically, the oldest understandings relate to the concept of “management”. With this concept, management is understood as an activity that reflects the division of labour. The Explanatory Dictionary of Pedagogy Terms (2000) defines management as a leading, guiding, organizing activity, a set of activities, a system that causes, ensures and regulates (a process, action, procedure) functioning, operating in a certain intended way in order to achieve the set goals. The management of a work team can be collegial or individual, and it is related to the awareness of issues, creative cooperation with the group of people to be managed and intellectual influence on the work process, in case of a necessity, providing instructions for the elimination of shortcomings and further development of work (activity). In the management process, acting on the controllable object ensures the desired mode of its functioning. The task of management authority is to stabilize the state of the controllable object, to organize its environment in such a way that the controllable object is protected actively against external disturbances (Bejickis et al., 2000). The management can be defined as the organization of resource distribution and movement processes with a predefined goal, according to a previously developed plan, with a continuous control of the performance results (Большаков, 2001). Management is the coordination, motivation and communication of the employees' work and activities of the organization in order to accomplish the goals of the organization (Praude, 2012). Management is the process when one individual (the leader) influences other group members so that they would devote their efforts to the achievement of the group's goals. Management is the process of planning, organizing, motivating and controlling directed towards the more efficient application of organization's resources in order to achieve the objectives set by the organization (Volkova, Vėrdina, & Pildavs, 2001). Management in its essence, as simply put by Kelly, is the act of creating order and structure that would not otherwise exist (2022). The education researcher O. Zids points out that “efficient achievement of goals requires people who ensure the implementation of functions in order to achieve the set goal with the available resources. So, in this aspect, management is a process that includes resources – goals (results) as separate elements of the system” (Zids, 2019, 20). On the other hand, “management” can be described (functionally) as a management function whose task is to influence employees so that they put in as much energy as possible in the organization's goal achievement (Celma, 2006, 48). Thus, the concept of “management” can be used to describe a set of activities that focus on goals that must be realized at a given time, applying the resources that the organization has allocated for the implementation of the respective plans. In its turn, “management”

is a set of organizational management methods, principles, means and forms with the aim to increase the efficiency of their operation. Management involves solving problems and finding answers. In order to increase the efficiency of the organization, including the efficiency of the management of the educational institution, a quality management system is necessary, for instance, applying four cyclically sequential stages or the so-called “Deming Cycle”: (I) plan – set clear, precise goals, qualitative and quantitative results to be achieved, define and plan processes; (II) do/implement – launch the process or implement changes in the processes as planned; (III) check/monitor – measure by obtaining data and information, compare operational results, their compliance with the anticipated; (IV) act/improve – search and analyze the causes of non-conformities, as well as eliminate them, in order to improve the performance of the process. The “Deming Cycle” is a management method aimed at the acquisition of a continuous improvement of the process, including the management efficiency. This model can be applied for the advancement of the efficiency of management and planning of an educational institution. The “Deming Cycle” also symbolizes the principle of continuous improvement, which means that a result is never so good that it cannot be even better. The principle of continuous improvement is the base of any approach to quality management in an organization, regardless of whether the quality management system is created according to the ISO 9001:20015 standard or the management system is based on the EFQM or one of the other excellence models (Vasiļevska, 2017). In order to ensure the efficiency of the school as an educational institution, in addition to the previously analyzed management issues, it is important to highlight the planning, which is the first step in the administrative process of an educational institution. Planning is the base for the immediate and further development of the educational institution, the distribution of activities to achieve the goals set by the institution within the set deadlines – the plan is based on the analysis of the existing situation and the provision of resources necessary for the implementation of the plan (Šmite, 2004). Planning consists of the strategy identification that help achieve previously set goals. Strategic planning is a set of management activities and decisions related to the development of specific strategies and directions that contribute to the achievement of the goals set by the educational institution. The most important thing in strategic planning is the selection of goals of the educational institution. Initially, the general objectives are formulated. For the goals to contribute to the efficient functioning of the educational institution, they must comply with a certain requirement. Goals should be specific, measurable, future-oriented, planning should be systemic. There are also efficiency assessment criteria in planning implementation.

Developing positive school cultures requires leaders to both value teachers and include them in school planning and

decision-making (Zepeda, Lanoue, Shafer, & Rivera, 2023). The planning process should be as clear and precise as possible. The plan should include specific actions to be taken. Therefore, it should be as specific as possible without being diffuse or too general. It is also important that teachers, students, support staff, parents and representatives of the municipality are also involved in the planning process of the educational institution. Planning is a rational and deliberate process. It is an important tool used in an educational institution to make important decisions in order to achieve a high level of performance. When planning, the goals are adjusted according to the needs of the educational institution and the available resources. Planning defines specific actions to be taken in the present moment in order to achieve future goals.

Of course, any action must be effective. Hal G. Rainey believes that efficiency can be achieved if the organization formulates clearly its goals and mission, it has an efficient top-level management, supports and encourages entrepreneurship, actively involves employees and clients in the process, and improves the specialists' management skills who perform managerial duties. More importance is given not to the structure, but to the culture, and not to the product, but to the processes (Рэйни, 2002). P. Drucker believes that management effectiveness can be defined as the ability to reduce the use of resources to achieve the set goals (“doing things the right way”), but productivity as the ability to achieve the set goal (“the right things”) with optimal costs (Друкер, 2004). So, the efficiency can be considered as a complex concept that includes the two categories mentioned above. R. Kaplan and D. Norton (2013) developed a system of balanced indicators of organizational effectiveness, which provides a new approach to the strategic management of any organization in various sectors of activity. Taking into account that efficiency is a subjective concept, it is difficult to measure it since it is influenced by various factors, but the following factors can be distinguished that affect the effectiveness of organizations in the goals and objectives achievement: (I) the superior's ability to distribute rationally their forces; (II) subordinates' motivating; (III) impact on the psychological climate of the group; (IV) management skills and the ability to influence subordinates; (V) superior's image (Каплан & Нортон, 2013).

The human resource management plays a vital role in the provision of the educational institution's efficient operation, ensuring that teachers would be competent enough to provide quality service. If a person has an appropriate education, they have received an appropriate training and they have appropriate skills to perform a job, they can be considered as qualified. If a person demonstrates the ability to deliver the desired results, that person can be considered as competent. However, it should be noted that qualified and competent are not the same thing. Qualified personnel can also provide the required results. They may have knowledge and skills, but they

may be applied inappropriately. Competence is the ability to demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills in order to achieve the required work outcomes. It is the ability to meet the requirements not only in the classroom or an exam, but the ability to function in a real work environment with all its inherent variations, relations, conflicts, etc. Therefore, competence should be understood as a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills (Leilands, 2009). Competence is complex, its development is related to the formation of a transfer for behavior in a new situation, in a new context, it cannot be reduced to a single skill or an isolated set of knowledge (Namsone, Volkinšteine, & Lāce 2018).

As Cheng (2022) is stressing, the recent school management reforms and teacher professionalization movements have brought about a fundamental change in the role of teachers, and the new role includes being an education professional, learner of new knowledge and technology, education partner, reform initiator, decision-maker, and realizer of school ideals. Thus current ongoings are putting strains on the teachers' professional competence, which consists of knowledge, skills and beliefs that result in action. On the one hand, the teacher's competence is made up of abilities, specific knowledge and skills, on the other hand – the teacher's personality traits, beliefs, values, motivation. The teacher's competence is manifested in their actions. The teacher's activity affects the activity of their students, which in turn is the base of their emerging competence. There are lots of discussions about the teachers' professional competence in the world, different opinions are expressed about its dimensions and structure. Therefore, there are different opinions about what a teacher's competence should be and what a teacher's education should be. Analyzing the structure of the teacher's professional competence such as pedagogical knowledge, skills and attitudes, the following components can be divided into the framework of the structure of the teacher's professional competence: (I) knowledge of the professional education content and pedagogical experience; (II) students' learning achievements and results; (III) the ability to set topical learning goals for the student, promoting the self-directed learning; (IV) diagnostics of the students' individual learning development dynamics and learning needs; (V) application of balanced approaches of interdisciplinarity, individualization, differentiation, evaluation and methodological methods; (VI) holistic evaluation of the learning process, applying effectively the available resources; (VII) formation and development of students' competence by choosing more appropriate teaching and learning strategies; (VIII) systematic and purposeful use of feedback; (IX) meaningful application of information and communication technologies in the learning process; (X) proactive cooperation with students, parents and teachers; (XI) strategic planning, implementation and assessment of pedagogical work; (XII) continuous improvement of

pedagogical professionalism (Jurs & Kulberga, 2021). It can be concluded that the modern teacher's professional competence is multifaceted, and it is not possible without innovative activities, without the understanding of global and national development processes, without cooperation and media application skills. In order to promote the students' development, the teacher must continuously and purposefully improve their professional competence, skills and attitude.

Nowadays knowledge is clearly an important resource for achievements, organizational development and personal growth, it provides advantages for competitiveness. Nevertheless, knowledge as such is not enough, a crucial condition for the success achievements is its skilful and creative application, original solutions, new approaches to case studies. As the paradigm of education changes, so does the role of the teachzodern and effective teacher training, based on specific learning needs, is needed.

When creating a high-quality teacher training, depending on the target audience, training content, time, financial resources and expected level of competence, different teaching methods can be applied, which are recommended to be combined with each other, thus improving the training results. Adapting to modern needs and developing information technologies, e-learning methods take a significant place and importance in personnel training. They are a convenient and effective way of personnel training and competence assessment, which has become especially relevant during the pandemic. Concurrently, the importance of a mentor in educational institutions has also become topical. The mentor's main responsibility is the successful and high-quality training, integration and motivation of the new employee.

METHOD

Research Design

In the empirical part research used quantitative research with the type of survey research which aims to analyze obtain objective data on the teachers' competences and the needs and interests of professional development.

Participants

72 respondents make up a sample of empirical study sets, that's 84.7% of the general population - the total number of teachers in an on educational institution of Latvia. Representing the teachers of all subjects in Class 1-3 (45%), Class 4-6 (56%), Class 7-9 (49%), Class 10-12 (36%).

The Instruments for Gathering Data

A survey was organized in September 2022 in one of comprehensive educational institutions in Latvia applying the Google Survey Online tool. The conducted qualitative research with

probability samples, applying the randomization method, where every teacher working in an educational institution has an equally high probability of being included in the sample (Martinson, Pipere, & Kameråde, 2016) can help to develop recommendations for the implementation of the teachers' professional development strategy in educational institutions. In the survey, respondents gave answers to the questions on a Likert rating scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "completely disagree" and 5 is "completely agree". The structure of the basic questions includes sub-questions in which teachers have to assess their knowledge or skills in various areas, for instance, in the systematic and purposeful application of feedback.

Data Analysis

Data processing and analysis methods on the research was quantitative data processing with the Microsoft Office Excel program, data graphical representation and quantitative and qualitative data interpretation.

FINDINGS

Analysing the obtained data on the education obtained by teachers (Figure 1), it can be concluded that more than half of teachers have got a professional or academic master's degree, in addition, 7% of respondents have got two Master's Degrees, 33% of teachers have got a Bachelor's Degree and 7% of teachers are proceeding with their studies. These teachers indicate that they need the support of superiors, mentors, and other teachers in their future work.

In response to the question about what kind of professional development teachers have implemented in the last year, almost all surveyed teachers (84%) state that they have participated in some kind of training (attended courses, seminars, lectures) outside their school and 98% of respondents have stated that they have done their work self-assessment.

Continuously developing the professional development and skills required by the implementation of the curriculum and approach, such as cooperation with colleagues in their subject/field, planning jointly the implementation of the standard – 58% of respondents have devoted time to this. The same is true of cooperation with colleagues from other subjects, which has been implemented by 48% of respondents. According to the research data, teachers choose various forms of practical cooperation. The greatest cooperation can be observed in tests

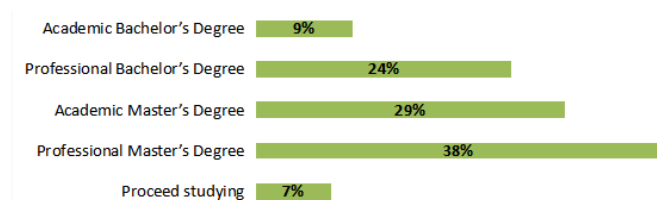


Fig. 1: Respondents' education

and work plans formation – 60%, mutual observation and analysis of lessons – 49%, one third of teachers in cooperation with a colleague, conduct interdisciplinary lessons and participate in master classes organized by the school and the city (Figure 2).

Overall, these are positive indicators. Teachers want to improve their professional competence and they do so regularly – the data show a rather wide coverage of the teachers' professional competence range. The survey data confirm that in the researched school, 80% of teachers have acquired the competence approach by attending proficiency courses organized on a national scale, 69% have acquired the IT competence improvement courses organized in the educational institution, half of the teachers (52%) have acquired the teaching and learning strategies, 41% transversal skills and 43 % courses on inclusive education (Figure 3)

According to the obtained data, it was found that 69% of respondents want to learn and cooperate in groups and 51% of teachers want to improve their knowledge and skills individually. 50% of respondents achieve their professional development by reading educational materials, 66% by observing lessons, and the majority 82% of teachers achieve their professional development in professional activities, which complies with the modern educational trends of learning in the work environment. Whereas, on average, 40% of teachers need the support of school management (Figure 4). This may indicate that this support is insufficient or that teachers do not feel confident about the quality of their work.

Summarizing the teachers' survey, 93% of teachers assess their contribution to the pedagogical professionalism improvement as very good or good, from which it can be concluded that the teachers have attended very actively the offered courses and seminars and the courses have been valuable and useful in terms of content.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Administration in an educational institution is a process that includes several stages. Some of the most important of these

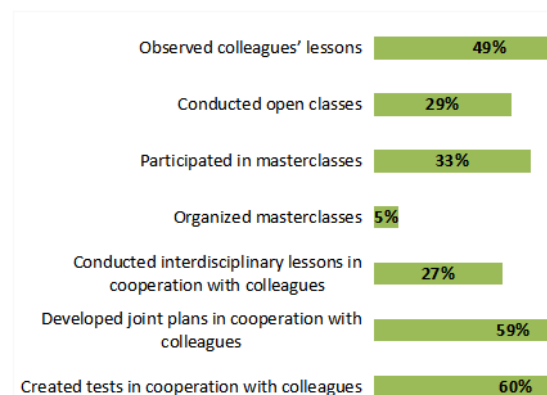


Fig. 2: Teachers' practical forms of cooperation of pedagogues

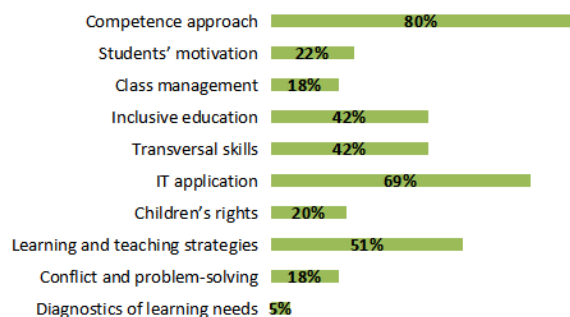


Fig. 3: Knowledge and skills acquired by teachers within 3 years

are planning and management. The efficiency of the educational institution in general depends on the efficiency of the activity at each stage, as well as on the support and cooperation, the professional capacity of the management, financial and administrative efficiency. The growth of the educational institution is facilitated by purposeful and timely teachers' professional development, as well as the management and coordination of this process, as this process is classified as an assignment of strategic personnel management.

The degree of the teacher training efficiency and compliance with training needs is one of the most outstanding indicators of the efficiency of joint personnel management. The formation of a successful professional development system in an educational institution promotes both employees' satisfaction and the development of the educational institution in compliance with modern trends.

The professional competence of a modern teacher is multifaceted and is not possible without innovative activity, without understanding of global and Latvian development processes, without cooperation and the media application ability. In order to promote the students' development, the teacher has to improve continuously and purposefully their professional competence, skills and attitude. The teacher is a regulated profession, where the principal assignments and responsibilities of the professional activity complying with the profession, professional qualification requirements, the general and professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences necessary for their fulfilment are determined by the standard of the teachers' profession.

The empirical study in the research base confirms that all teachers have attended professional development courses in compliance with the law and all teachers have carried out a self-assessment of their work, while half of the interviewed teachers are not motivated to obtain the degree of teachers' professional activity since the amount of work invested is not proportional to the financial coverage.

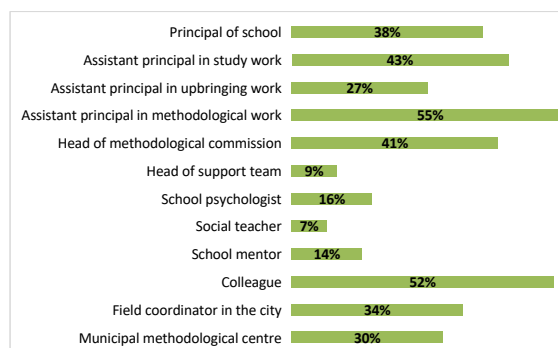


Fig. 4: Teachers want to receive support in their professional competence improvement from

Effective management provision in the country in general and in each educational institution requires a system of teachers' professional development, which would ensure the involvement of all employees in a continuous professional training. The training should take place in an educational institution applying the accumulated experience and feedback. The school culture has to promote and support professional learning. In order to achieve a continuous professional development in the educational institution, the management, based on the annual teachers' self-assessment, should provide a purposeful and individualized support for the teachers' professional performance improvement and development of

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