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TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - SCHOOL MANAGEMENT'S PERCEPTION

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Abstract: Teachers and professional associates professional development is an important factor in improving and ensuring the quality of work of educational institutions and a significant factor in improving student learning outcomes. In order to improve the system of continuous professional development of employees in education, research was conducted on a representative sample of educational institutions in Serbia, obtained by random selection. The 103 primary schools, 22 gymnasiums and 33 secondary vocational schools participated in the research. The data were collected by questionnaires specially designed for the purposes of this research, which were filled out by the participants via the Internet. The research was carried out in two phases: in the first phase, the data were collected through a questionnaire, and in the second phase of the data collection a focus group interview was applied. The results of the research presented in this paper enable school management to see the main guidelines in which professional development should take place in the planned period, understanding of the contribution of some forms of professional development to improving the teaching process and examining the problems in applying novelties in teaching practice.

Keywords: professional development, management of educational institutions, planning, quality assurance

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a time of very intense social changes where education is exposed to various professional challenges. Scientific and informational-technological advancement sets new demands for performing professional roles. In the educational context, lifelong learning becomes one of the key characteristics of the teaching profession. Teachers' professional development becomes a process that can respond to significant social challenges and expectations. Continuing professional development (CPD) is important for improving and maintaining teacher quality as well as contributing to improving students' learning outcomes. Factors influencing the success of continuing professional development activities include the potential for workplace change, the diverse effect and understanding of learning principles, subject specificity, effective mentoring and the relevance of the presented material [4].

In Serbia, the concept of professional development of teachers is given in Law on the Basis of Education System and Rulebook on permanent professional development. According to this document, each teacher is required to have 120 hours of Professional training for a period of five years. These 120 hours include attending seminars (at least 100 hours of

training) and, up to 20 hours of other forms of training such as conferences, round tables, etc. In order to be evaluated in the context of professional development, seminars must be officially approved [5]. Approval of the seminar is carried out in the Institute for Improvement of education. All approved seminars can be found in the catalogue and are available to teachers through the website of the Institute for Improvement of education.

2. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

School management play a pivotal role in teachers' professional growth, which impacts student outcomes. Until recently the school management was often neglected in the formulation of strategies for reform. As research mounted about the significant impact of the principal, for better or for worse, on reform outcomes, policymakers began to incorporate the role of school leaders in leading change initiatives [2]. The school principal is uniquely positioned to control the form and function of CPD in schools. Principals have knowledge of their teachers' pedagogical and subject matter needs, as well as the context of their school community. Moreover, principals have positional power to influence the content and delivery of CPD [1].

The school management is regarded as significantly important to a school's performance. The quality of the teacher is the main predictor of how well students will perform academically. In turn, school administrators are the most influential variable affecting teachers. Teachers are significantly important to student learning, and school management are significantly important to teacher learning. Teachers' ongoing CPD during their in-service is ubiquitous and, because of this, the school management is uniquely positioned and qualified to inform, and even transform, CPD of the teachers in their schools [3].

The decisions regarding what is CPD are both personal and institutional. There are systemic, institutional structures that have implications on the form and function of CPD. The school-based decision making involves institutional rules, standard operating procedures and decision rules of the organization within which decisions are made.

3. RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to examine the needs for teacher's professional development, to determine the contribution of various forms of professional development and recognize the difficulties in applying learned in practice. In order to improve the system of continuous professional development of employees in education, research was conducted on a representative sample of educational institutions in Serbia, obtained by random selection. The 103 primary schools, 22 gymnasiums and 33 secondary vocational schools participated in the research. The data were collected by questionnaires specially designed for the purposes of this research, which were filled out by the participants via the Internet. The research was carried out in two phases: in the first phase, the data were collected through a questionnaire, and in the second phase of the data collection a focus group interview was applied.

Quantitative and qualitative data processing methods have been used to analyze the data obtained in this study. The data obtained from the first, questionnaire, research phase were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, depending on the type of question. Descriptive statistics were used to process the answers to closed-type questions.

3.1. RESULTS

School management has recognized that the most necessary professional development in the field of work with children / students needing additional support (63.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Needs for professional development

Training area	Schools that chose this option (%)
Work with children / students who need additional support	63,9
Preventive and intervention work in cases of violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination	57,4
Monitoring and evaluating student achievement	46,7
Didactic-methodical knowledge and skills	43,2
Collaboration with parents / guardians	37,9
Management of the department	33,7
Rough professional knowledge	27,8
Educational work	26,6
Characteristics of psychophysical development of the child	24,3
Cooperation with colleagues	14,8
Cooperation with the local community	11,8
Quality assessment and textbook selection	7,7
Something else	1,8

Also, the schools recognized the great need for the improvement of their employees in the field of preventive and intervention work in cases of violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination (57.4%), while currently they have little importance in training in the field of quality assessment and textbook selection (7.7 %) and cooperation with the local community (11.8%).

Asked, "If you have some suggestions regarding overcoming the shortcomings of the system of professional development, and in order to improve it, please write here" from 158 schools that filled out the questionnaire, 56 of them provided answers. The highest number of proposals was in the category of organization of professional training in the quality control service, 45/56 (80.03%). The respondents generally had suggestions related to improving the accreditation process, linking seminars with practice in terms of their applicability, and increasing the number of seminars that are narrowly staffed by employees. About one-third of the schools had a commentary in the funding category. Some schools suggest that compulsory seminars are funded by the Ministry and that free seminars should be introduced. A significant number of proposals 18 (32.1%) is in the category of information and technical organization.

According to the statements of the schools, the dominant forms of professional development of their employees are trainings / seminars from the Catalogue (89.9%), reputable / visiting time (88.2%), exchange with colleagues (84.0%) and professional meetings (83,4%). A small number of teachers are professionally trained in participation in research and projects outside the school (26.6%), while only 8.9% of teachers participate in

the pilot program in school, which is expected, given that in the education system a small number of institutions are covered by visits.

Nearly half of the surveyed schools stated that they did not encounter any difficulties in applying the acquired knowledge and skills to professional development in practice (Table 2).

Table 2. Difficulties in application

Difficulty	Schools that chose this option (%)
They did not encounter difficulties	49,1
Limited conditions at school	33,1
They lacked the support of the seminars	17,8
They were not supported by colleagues	12,4
They did not learn anything they could apply	10,7

The limited conditions in the schools were singled out as a category of responses within the quantitative part of the research (33.1%), as something that presents difficulties in applying the learned. Under these conditions, participants in the focus group recognized: lack of space, time, inter-menu problem, large number of students in the classroom, poor technical equipment of the schools. Some institutions state that their teachers lacked the support of the seminar's educators (17.8%), that they were not supported by colleagues (12.4%) or that they did not learn anything they could apply (10.7%).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey show that schools recognize the possibility of improving the system of continuous professional development of teachers by linking scientific institutions and practitioners (implementers of educational process), as well as by providing protocols for the planning of professional development and monitoring its implementation, providing feedback and recommendations. Involving more teachers from one institution on the same seminar and better equipped schools, can be the way of overcoming the difficulties in applying learned in practice. Analysis of teachers needs showed that it is necessary to have a larger and more diversified offer of trainings dealing with specific problems that teachers are faced with. The general recommendation of school management is establishing closer cooperation and coordination between Ministry, Institute for Improvement of Education, schools and institutions that conduct training in order to harmonize the activities of professional development.

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