

## TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*Knowing what the mandatory competencies that the teacher must hold in all areas presented in the standards, they will be able to reflect on their pedagogical training, both theoretical and practical, and will be able to assess his job performance. Each field of expertise is as important and in close cross-correlation and interdependence with the others. Following their self-assessment, the teacher can make a professional development plan and seek formal or informal ways enrichment and improvement of their skills. Reflection on their own practice and the obtained results represent an important milestone in professional development. Adapting to new contexts, new change is fundamental for the educator. Professional standards offer support to teachers in this process of reflection and adaptation. Professional standards for teachers are an important milestone in the assessment and self-assessment of teachers. Each teacher assesses the acquirement of competencies according to the indicators proposed by the national professional standards. Following this evaluation the teacher may assess critically and reflexively which are the areas of competencies where better training is required, being able to conceive, along with other teachers, institutional plans for professional development which would come with ways to improve educators (exchanges, methodical work in methodical committees, training courses with specific themes etc.) aimed at improving the competencies in those areas where they registered lesser preparation. The research targets the standard of professional development containing the following professional skills: consultation of specialized materials; participation in continuous education courses; reflection on their work to improve outcomes; teamwork with teachers and other professionals in order to improve teaching activity.*

**Keywords:** *professional competencies/skills, professional development, early childhood education, self-evaluation.*

### **I. Introduction**

The development of educational standards envisages important principles based on the experience gained during the early education programs everywhere, as well as on the new acquisitions in the fields of child psychology and pedagogy in the last decades. These principles establish the place and role of the adult, especially of the educator, in the child's development. In order to support child development and learning, the adult has to alternate various roles:

- development stimulator by exposing the child to sensory and cognitive stimuli and their involvement in physical activities;
- facilitator of the child's learning through interaction,
- communication,
- organizing the physical and social environment,
- offering learning contexts (various tasks and materials);
- by encouraging curiosity and exploration,
- by causing problematic situations for finding solutions etc.;
- they mediate social relations,
- negotiations and conflicts between children and other children, and between children and adults;
- they mediate the relationship between family and nursery/ kindergarten;
- partner of the child the process of building their own learning, playing partner,
- partner of the family in ensuring optimal conditions for the child's development and learning. Also, an important role is the training and further training of teachers in early education institutions, a process of lifelong learning.

### **Literature Review**

The quality of teaching staff materialized, in essence, through student performance, is a major problem of contemporary education. It is widely accepted that the pivot of a quality education is the level of competence and involvement of teachers (Șerbănescu, L., 2011, p. 165).

The same author points out that more and more often is circulated the idea that the effectiveness of the teaching career can be determined, mainly in the context of developing basic skills and competency standards. In this sense, we illustrate several important contributions to the definition and development of professional standards:

Quality standards for the teaching profession are promoted in programmatic documents developed at each institution, based on information provided by RAQHE (Romanian Agency for Quality in Higher Education) or RAQSE (Romanian Agency for Quality in School Education).

It is also useful to specify that in the Catalogue of Occupations in Romania there is a description of the teaching profession. The objectives of this profession cover the training and development of the pupils': personality, self-awareness and social awareness, communication and effective collaboration with the educational system factors (family, school, society) and continuous personal and professional development. Achievement of these general objectives shapes the design and conduct of training programs for teachers.

Standards for the teaching profession are defined as " explicitly formulated expectations and requirements relating to knowledge, skills and attitudes that a teacher must probe a in their work with students in order to believe that they fulfill their professional duties at a level accepted by society". Therefore, the standards should specify in a clear manner what we mean by "very good teachers ", "excellent teachers" who can offer pupils and students a quality education. (Lucia Gliga, 2002).

From the perspective of early education we analyze in this paper a component of the professional standards for teachers, respectively the standard on professional development. It targets skills of self-reflection, self-assessment and career management.

The standards on this field focus on the teacher's ability to use and manage the available resources (materials and literature, training courses, expertise of other specialists, the results of their own activities) to continuously improve their professional performance.

## **II. Research Methodology**

Professional standards for teachers are an important milestone in the assessment and self-assessment of teachers. Each teacher assesses the acquirement of competencies according to the indicators proposed by the national professional standards. Following this evaluation the teacher may assess critically and reflexively which are the areas of competencies where better training is required, being able to conceive, along with other teachers, institutional plans for professional development which would come with ways to improve educators (exchanges, methodical work in methodical committees, training courses with specific themes etc.) aimed at improving

the competencies in those areas where they registered lesser preparation. With this premise, we proposed the application of a standardized assessment tool of professional skills of teachers in early education. The questionnaire targets the standard of professional development containing the following professional skills: consultation of specialized materials; participation in continuous education courses; reflection on their work to improve outcomes; teamwork with teachers and other professionals in order to improve teaching activity. This questionnaire was applied to a total of 76 teachers in the town of Alba-Iulia.

### III. Results and Interpretation

**III.1.** Standards on this area focus on the teacher's ability to use and manage available resources, materials and literature, training courses, the expertise of other specialists, the results of their own activities to continuously improve their own professional performance. Thus, consultation of specialized materials is a frequent concern (65%) of educators, as well as participation in continuous education courses (65%); a lower score is registered in their own reflection on activities in order to improve outcomes (often only 19 %).

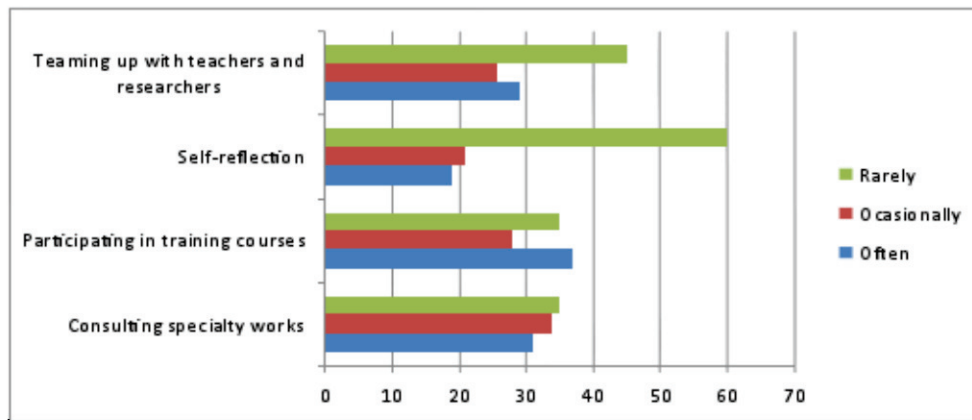


Figure 1. Professional development

**III.2.** The teacher's self-assessment component highlights the following skills: appreciating the strengths and areas needing improvement, we find a realistic attitude of the teachers (52%), in expressing their opinions they used Swat analysis after a lesson, proposing threats and opportunities arising from the strengths and weaknesses; they experience learning and development methods and strategies as appropriate as possible (36%), the slightly conservative attitude towards the introduction of new practices in

early childhood education; 38 % consult with specialists in design activities, only occasionally the majority considering as priority the national curriculum design and planning documents.

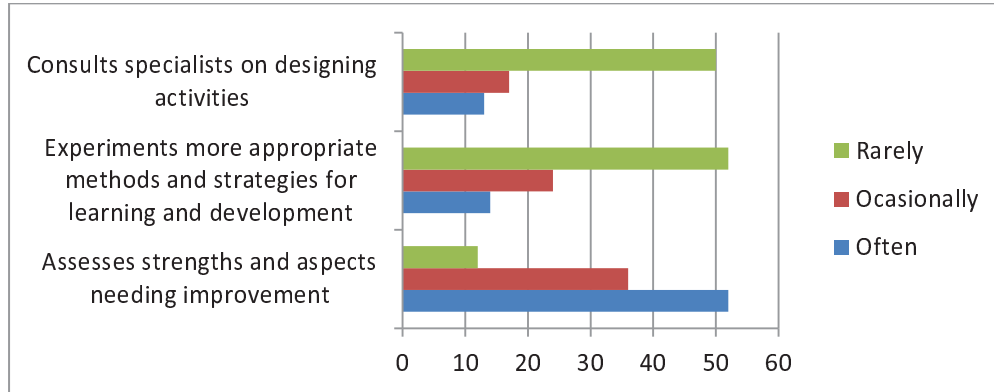


Figure 2. Teacher's self-assessment

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, providers of initial and continuous teacher training may use standards for: developing an offer for initial training to meet and fulfill the mandatory requirements specified in the standards for early education teachers; the development of various continuous training offers to meet the various necessities of teachers in the system, focusing on mandatory skills formulated in the professional standards for teachers in early education; empowering teachers in the use of professional standards as an instrument of improving the quality of their own theoretical and practical professional training.

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