

## The importance of the continuous professional development of educators for the improvement of the quality of the educational work

By

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### Abstract

The professional development of teachers is necessary not only for themselves and their personal development but also for the upgrading of the educational process, something that also benefits the students. This period is important because it is the first time that the teacher is confronted with the real working conditions that he will face for many years. But these first years are considered crucial for the attitude he will maintain both towards his profession and his professional development. This is also the topic that will be addressed in this paper. That is, how the newly appointed teachers are received and how this may affect their professional development.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, Life-long learning, Professional development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is an area that in recent years has faced many changes and challenges due to the new conditions that exist more widely. Teachers are now faced not only with changes to which they have to adapt but also with the expansion of their subject matter since modern challenges have made the need for lifelong learning imperative. It is now considered a given that the work of teachers is valuable not only because of its educational dimension but also its social since they are largely responsible for shaping attitudes, views and perceptions for students who will be citizens tomorrow. In order to be able to cope with their complex and multidimensional work, they must also have the appropriate education and training throughout their professional career in order to obtain the appropriate supplies. However, in order for there to be an expansion and development of teachers' knowledge, it is a prerequisite for the existence of a correct base and this is done during the first entrance to the school

### 1. The professional development of teachers and its necessity

Professional development is a concept that is not only related to the teacher personally but also to the whole educational project. Through professional development, the teacher acquires the knowledge, the views, and the attitudes that will help him in the whole of his work. It should be noted that professional development is a special process for two reasons. The first is the complexity of education in general and of the educational project in particular. The second reason is that each teacher has his own, special characteristics and therefore, it is not possible to have a single process and practice for everyone since everyone shapes and follows what he thinks suits him best (King, 1999) . There are a number of definitions for professional development. One definition is given by Fullan and Hargreaves (1993) according to which professional development is the knowledge and skills one acquires in matters one did not know before as well as the additional knowledge one may acquire in a subject whose knowledge was past or limited. The breadth of the concept is demonstrated by the fact that in this definition Fullan and Hargreaves (1993) consider as professional development and the promotion of teaching ability, as well as the development of the ability to work with others and the greater awareness of the teaching profession. Darling - Hammond (1994) considers that professional development has two dimensions to which it refers.

The first is that of the educational act which is upgraded while the second is the transition from employment to the profession which is governed by specific professional principles, standards which are common and widely accepted but also common practices with a greater focus to be observed in research. Professional development also includes the concept of vocational learning at an extended level in the sense that the learning resources that a teacher must have must be large and learning as a process should not stop but have a continuous duration. (Susi, 1997). From the above perspective, professional development is a process that is not short but lasts for the whole life of the teacher and that is why it includes a fairly wide range of activities for learning. Thus, the learning that the teacher receives during his professional development may not be directed and is created through the experience he acquires in his workplace, ie it is a non-formal learning, but it can also be formal learning which is created through the systematic activities provided for education and training (Papanau, 2003).

Definitions can vary considerably. But there is one common point that remains unchanged in them which is the identification of professional development with the overall improvement of the teacher in the practice of the profession, ie professional development in this sense means that the teacher seeks it in order to be better and more effective in his work (Fokiali et al., 2005). Despite their differences, everyone focuses on acquiring teaching knowledge and skills (Hoyle, 1980). This does not mean, however, that professional development is limited to this point alone. Professional development is a complex process that will help the teacher to acquire knowledge and skills but at the same time will guide him in the right way in order to have not only good teaching practice but also healthy professional and social relationships with his students and colleagues. of (Dimitropoulos, 1998). At the same time, in addition to teaching, through professional development the teacher will be able to acquire knowledge and skills in subjects that were unknown to him, to upgrade what he already has, to maximize his ability to teach and finally, to be able to work as a team and to fully understand the multidimensional nature of his profession (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1993).

According to Griffin (1983), there is a relationship between the expectation of professional development and that of changes in the practices of the profession but also in the creation of an educational climate with understanding by both teachers and students and finally, in student performance. For Grossman (1994), not only professional development but also its processes are of particular importance, which aim at the development of ideas related to the responsibility of the profession, the culture that is created within the school and communication. Eraut (1996) in turn argues that professional development is an ongoing process that attributes quality and effectiveness to the work of teachers due to the upgrading of their professional knowledge. It should be noted that there is often a trade-off between professional and personal development. Despite the fact that they are not the same, there is a mutual identification between them. Clearly, professional development mainly concerns the educational practice and process, but there are also procedures in the personality of the teacher since internal action is required in order to harmonize on the one hand the expectations of the profession and on the other the personal views and priorities (Matsagouras, 1999).

According to the broader view of professional development (Lieberman, 1996), professional development includes learning that does not result from the above processes but is a derivative of teachers' experience. In this case, teachers learn from experience their survival and development within the school. Thus, in addition to the formal training and development opportunities in the above view, informal opportunities are also included. Undoubtedly, teachers are expected to have the opportunity to participate in their improvement activities, formal or informal, during their professional careers. These goals may vary and range from personal to professional. The launch of these activities is usually driven by existing research findings on teacher needs (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Raising these needs is one of the reasons why the European Union in recent years has focused on policies that highlight the importance and necessity of adult education and lifelong learning. Corresponding policies have begun and are being implemented in Greece as well. At the same time, there are changes in the pedagogical schools in order to upgrade the educational profession. The first steps were taken in Greece when the Pedagogical Academies were abolished and corresponding departments were established in the Universities with the aim of upgrading

and modernizing the pedagogical studies, thus giving a more professional dimension to the educational function.

The establishment of postgraduate courses and a series of other movements gave the educational profession greater prestige through elements such as its social dimension, the specialized vocational education required, the internal knowledge that must exist, the professional autonomy as well as the continuous training (Mavrogiorgos, 2005; Xochellis, 1991). There has also been a change in the approach and perception that exists towards the educational profession (Matsagouras, 2005). This approach refers to the combination of technical, knowledge and social control of the educational process as a professional. Similar approaches exist for other professions. Their focus is on teachers as professionals, through the knowledge they continuously acquire, they are able to make their own decisions in a changeable environment that requires immediate adaptation and flexibility. But the theoretical background of adult education supports the need for professional development. It supports the necessity of the evolutionary process both with the passage of time and the longer stay in the profession. Both lead to some changes in the teacher and the evolutionary process will help them become smoother. In short, it can be said that the factors that influence development, through interaction with each other, are age, experience, personality and environmental conditions (Gotovos, 1982).

The fact that professional development is a long-term process is confirmed by the existence of the stages it has, as they emerge from various researches that have been done. Some of them are by Huberman (1995), made to secondary school teachers from Switzerland, who proposes a five-stage professional development model. The researcher of course clarifies that these stages do not correspond to all cases of teachers because there are unpredictable factors that must be taken into account and that are different in each case (Huberman, 1995). The five steps that Huberman proposes are the following:

- A. Survival and Discovery (1-3 years of teaching)
- B. Stabilization (4-6 years of teaching)
- C. Experimentation / Differentiation - Review / Research (7-18 years teaching)
- D. Galini - Conservatism (19-30 years of teaching)
- E. Release (31-40 years of teaching (Huberman, 1995: 204).

There are five stages involved in Bolam's model regarding the teacher's progress in his work. These are:

- The preparatory
- The stage of appointment
- The stage of formal accession
- The stage within the service
- The transitional stage (Day, 2003).

Other surveys of teachers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland have identified five stages in their professional development:

1. The beginning of their career (1-3 years of service). This stage is considered particularly important because it is during which the young teacher understands that he must behave like

a professional now. This stage in turn is divided into three phases. The first of these is that of the "retreat strategy" during which the young teacher, while still retaining his reservations, complies with the regulations in force in his work. The second phase is that of "internal adaptation" in which the restrictions placed on the teacher now seem right and inappropriate and he complies with them. The third phase is that of "strategic redefinition" in which the teacher now believes that the only change can now be made by people who have no power of any kind (Lacey, 1977).

2. The stabilization. At this stage the teacher has now established himself in his profession and has become emancipated while at the same time he has now managed to integrate into the team of other teachers since he is no longer the young and the beginner (Day, 2003).

3. New challenges and new concerns. At this stage and the previous one, the teacher now has the experience of 4-18 years of service. This can lead to two directions. The first of these is to feel competent and experienced enough to take initiatives. The second is to consider this level to be the highest one can reach and remain stationary for the rest of his career (Day, 2003).

4. Orientation or continued development. At this stage the teacher has 19-30 years of service. At this stage the majority of teachers have reached such a level of personal and professional maturity that sets new goals and motivations for their professional development (Day, 2003).

5. The final phase. This happens during the last decade of the teacher where he is waiting for his pension. At this stage the teacher shows no signs of growth because he knows that his career is coming to an end and has no motivation to continue his development (Day, 2003).

## **2. The reception of newly appointed teachers at the school**

As already mentioned, the first period of a teacher's professional career in school is very important. It is the period when the teacher is now called to realize that he is no longer the same pupil or student but is in the position of teacher (Gotovos&Mavrogiorgos, 1992).

A series of research findings have demonstrated the great importance of the correct start of a teacher's profession as well as the great degree of difficulty it involves to the point of being the most difficult point it has to go through on the path to pedagogical competence. One the first contact of a young teacher with the school unit is not good, and then his professional career will start with trauma, discouragement and support. Otherwise, teachers will gain confidence and security from an early age. The fact that a teacher completes his / her studies successfully and is appointed to a school fairly without any intervention in his favor, does not mean that he will automatically join this school. The ability of the teacher is not an acquired process but on the contrary it is a long process that has as a starting point the study at the university and continues while in the profession for several years. Even when there is a long period in the profession, training will be required to renew his knowledge. However, the beginning of their professional career is the ideal period to combine all the necessary factors that will gradually lead to teaching adequacy (Katsoulakis, 1999).

The reception period of the newly appointed teacher starts from the moment he is hired and can last up to months (Anthopoulou, 1999). Reception is the process in which the teacher seeks to integrate smoothly into his new environment. What skills and abilities a new teacher has when entering a new school does not know basic information about it such as for example what social groups his students come from and what peculiarities may exist, what is the school policy and what perceptions are brought by the teachers who serve in it. He obtains the first information with his access to the school unit and most of them mainly concern the teaching process. The principal of the school unit also plays an important role in this process, as will be discussed in more detail below. During the reception process the teacher will receive the necessary information, will get to know his colleagues, the administration and the students of the school, will receive help and support, will feel that he belongs to the team of the school, will feel that his presence is acceptable and she will understand what requirements exist for her. At the same time, the management of the school unit should take care in the context of support, guide the newcomer, advise him, evaluate him, show camaraderie, determine the goals he expects to achieve and finally take care of his training (Anthopoulou, 1999).

According to research, the needs of newly appointed teachers are support, practice and ethics, guidance, gaining professional autonomy, a sense of equality in relation to their colleagues, eliminating their stress and gaining experience. If there is no process of welcoming the newly appointed teacher, it does not mean that they will not move to the educational process and his new position, but this will be done in a violent way that will probably have consequences (Gotovos&Mavrogiorgos, 1992).

### **3. The role of the principal in the reception of newly appointed teachers**

In order for a new teacher to be socialized, the school in which he / she attend plays an important role. In it are all the elements needed to be strengthened at all levels. When a new teacher enters the school unit, it is reasonable to be influenced and to have as a model his colleagues who are older than him and have more experience. He compares whatever experience and ability he acquires with them, considering that they have reached the level of competence. It is therefore reasonable for the school principal, due to his position, to be considered a role model for new colleagues and as the person with the greatest prestige because he is the main axis of school life and activity (Katsoulakis, 1999).

A principal, who wants to effectively support a newly appointed teacher, must take care of all his other responsibilities, support him and be constantly by his side. The principal is the one who will provide the most information to the teacher regarding the culture and the operation of the school unit. The manager himself acts towards his colleagues as a model of personal and professional behavior. In addition, he is the one who has the right to take initiatives and thus it is easier to create security and trust, especially for new colleagues. So if the manager behaves fairly and provides support to a new teacher, then it makes sense and easier for the new colleague to show confidence in his person (Bakas, 2006).

It follows from the above that the main person responsible for the reception of a new appointee should be the director. He must ensure that young teachers clearly understand his requirements, plan to find the time and way to meet the learning needs of newly appointed



teachers, help them set their goals, supervise them, helps them and of course tries to be a role model for them at all levels (Anthopoulou, 1999).

The relationship that must be developed between the newly appointed and the teacher must be governed by specific characteristics such as duty, respect, flexibility, imagination, etc. The manager can not avoid the position of the role model and therefore should perform this role as best he can. Even if he does not seek it, it is reasonable that the new teacher will monitor what he does and how he behaves and may even imitate him, considering, due to his experience, position and prestige, that this is the most appropriate behavior that a teacher must demonstrate (Bakas, 2006).

## **Epilogue**

Professional development is a multidimensional process and its foundations are created from the first moment of starting the educational profession. The newly appointed teacher needs support and guidance as he enters the school in order to set his goals, to create the visions and ideas that will follow him throughout his professional career. The teaching profession today is governed by many problems and even greater challenges. It is therefore a vital issue for the teacher to be able to set the motivations that will motivate him to constantly evolve professionally. It is considered important to set these motivations from the first moment of contact with his professional environment, otherwise otherwise, a first disappointment may lead the new teacher to create misconceptions and views that are not easy to change later.

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