

## MANAGING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This research focuses on the management of teachers' professional development by the school principal of a primary school. The study involved teachers and principals from several primary schools within the Skopje region. The research examines the subject from the perspective of the quality of principals' management of teachers' professional development, focusing on their effectiveness in the processes of planning, communication, coordination, organization, and evaluation of teachers' professional growth.

Furthermore, the research examined the extent to which principals support the continuous professional development of teachers, the preparation of annual professional development programs, and the implementation and realization of activities aimed at improving teaching competencies.

The findings confirmed the **specific hypothesis** that both teachers and principals believe that school principals actively support the continuous professional development of teachers.

**Keywords:** *management, school principal, pedagogical leader, human resources, teachers, professional development, training*

### **Introduction**

The management of a school plays a crucial role in the development of the educational process by fostering communication and collaboration with teachers, professional associates, other staff members, students, parents, local authorities, central government, and all partners. A school principal needs to understand the individuality and uniqueness of each person, accept individuals with all their characteristics, and adopt a subtle approach to supporting their development in order to achieve better performance and enhance the educational process. With every action taken, the principal should strive to cultivate positive interpersonal relationships and a constructive school climate.

The majority of employees are qualified according to the requirements of their positions; however, at the beginning, they need to receive training for the tasks they will perform in order to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. When an employee achieves significant results in their work, they should be rewarded to enhance their motivation for future performance. Otherwise, there is a risk of decreased motivation, which could hinder the growth and development of the organization and that is precisely what we do not aim to achieve.

The principal, as a pedagogical leader in a primary school, must remain up to date with changes and adapt to the new demands and requirements of the contemporary era. They should be attentive to the beliefs and judgement of the staff, which can sometimes vary widely, and find ways, through encouragement and a positive approach, to instill the values they advocate—values that will remain a lasting asset to the organization. The advancement of a school depends fundamentally on the establishment of a structured and disciplined environment, which serves as the basis for the effective implementation of all subsequent activities outlined in the curriculum and educational programs. The principal holds a pivotal role in this regard, as they are responsible for defining and enforcing these expectations for all members of the school community.

### **Theoretical approach to the research problem**

Since ancient times, people have organized themselves and worked within structured systems, developing methods for selecting their leaders and implementing training programs. This indicates the necessity of having a leader to manage people and enhance the skills of workers. Management refers to the act of leading and directing people toward the fulfillment of tasks and objectives within an organizational system. A manager is an individual who holds operational responsibilities, supervises the work and activities of others, and provides leadership. Human beings, with their innate abilities, gifts, and talents, represent an invaluable resource for any organization in which they are employed. Therefore, it is particularly important for a leader—or head of an organization—to recognize and value these qualities in employees, so that they are motivated and willing to remain committed to the organization. High-quality human potential presents the foundation for the success and advancement of an organization. It serves as a driving force for the development and learning of students, shaping them into capable individuals who can progress through all levels of education, acquire professional skills, and in the future contribute to the development of their communities as responsible citizens building the nation.

A school should function as a community in which all members are committed to the advancement of the educational process, realized through continuous learning and the ongoing enhancement of knowledge. Learning is a lifelong process, and the principal plays a crucial role in this by ensuring a climate that supports the development of both students and professional staff (teachers). Through their work, the principal provides a model for teachers with regard to effective practices. Similarly, teachers, through their own actions, represent a model for students how to work and learn responsibly, demonstrating that success is achieved only through dedicated and conscientious effort. As a pedagogical leader, the principal is responsible for planning, organizing, and evaluating the work within the educational institution. In this regard, the principal fulfills multiple roles, including those of organizer, planner, innovator, evaluator, instructor, and advisor.

Teaching staff should be well-educated and committed to the concept of lifelong learning, not only during their professional careers, but after their retirement, thereby serving as a model

for their students in demonstrating how they should conduct themselves in relation to their own profession.

The environment plays a crucial role in the professional development of teachers. If a significant number of teachers are focused on their professional improvement, others are likely to develop interest and motivation to continuously enhance their own skills. All members should strive to raise the level of significant progress, foster professionalism within school teams, and establish an atmosphere in which employees contribute to the cultural and educational advancement of the school environment. An important factor in this process is the level of students' education, as well as, their willingness and readiness to learn and develop, which is strongly influenced by their home upbringing. In our country, emphasis must be placed on the professional and vocational development of teachers, as it constitutes the foundation of an effective educational system—one capable of producing competent personnel across all sectors of society. Recent international studies have shown that students often struggle to apply their knowledge in practice. Without well-trained teachers, success cannot be expected. Only an expansion and deepening of teachers' knowledge can lead to meaningful educational outcomes and overall success.

## **Research methodology**

### **Subject of the research**

The subject of this research is the management of teachers' professional development by school principals in primary education. The study involved teachers and principals from several primary schools in the Skopje area. A total of 220 teachers participated, including 103 class teachers and 117 subject teachers, along with 12 principals of the primary schools in the Skopje region. The research examined the subject from the perspective of the quality of principals' management of teachers' professional development, focusing on their effectiveness in planning, informing, coordinating, organizing, and evaluating the professional growth of teachers.

### **Methods, techniques, and research instruments**

From a methodological perspective, the preparation of this study—including data collection, systematization, analysis, and presentation—employed several procedures within a logically justified, coherent, and scientifically grounded approach. Multiple methods were utilized to obtain relevant empirical data on the research problem. Specifically, the descriptive method was applied to explain and describe the subject of the research. The analytical method was employed in the sections of the study dealing with the systematization and processing of the collected research data.

The necessary information for the preparation of the study was obtained through searches of relevant online databases, available literature, and empirical data collected during the research.

Among the techniques applied for collecting empirical data, the survey (questionnaire) technique and the interview technique were used. These techniques aimed to gather insights into

the opinions and perspectives of teachers and principals on various aspects of the management of teachers’ professional development in primary schools.

As research instruments, a questionnaire scale for teachers and an interview protocol for principals of the primary schools included in the research sample were employed to collect the required empirical data.

**General Hypothesis**

In relation to the research problem and objective, the general hypothesis formulated for this study is as follows: Principals successfully manage the professional development of teachers in primary schools.

Based on the results obtained from the research involving teachers and principals, as previously presented, it can be concluded that **the general hypothesis is confirmed**: principals effectively manage the professional development of teachers.

**Analysis and interpretation of results**

The aim of this research was to describe and demonstrate how effectively principals manage the professional development of teachers in primary schools. In this context, attention is given to each specific hypothesis, examined in light of the empirical data obtained from the teachers’ surveys and the interviews conducted with principals from the primary schools included in the research sample.

Regarding the formulated hypotheses, the following conclusion can be drawn:

**Specific Hypothesis 1:** Teachers believe that principals support their continuous professional development.

Regarding this statement, among subject teachers, 55.55% agree or strongly agree that principals support continuous professional development, while among class teachers, a higher proportion, 75.72%, agree or strongly agree. The majority of teachers (65%) believe that principals in primary schools support the continuous professional development of teachers, whereas a smaller proportion (35%) do not agree with this statement.

**Table 1.**

• Category	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Stronlgy Agree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Class teachers	10	9.71	15	14.56	51	49.51	27	26.21	103	46.82
Subject teachers	23	19.66	29	24.79	47	40.17	18	15.38	117	53.18
Total	33	15.00	44	20.00	98	44.55	45	20.45	220	100.00

According to the principals’ responses, they believe that they support the professional development of teachers because this contributes to a positive change in the school environment, encourages students to become active participants in the learning process, and ensures that teachers are motivated to pursue continuous professional development, thereby influencing the growth and progress of their students. Based on these research results, it can be concluded that the **specific hypothesis** is confirmed: both teachers and principals believe that principals support the continuous professional development of teachers.

**Specific Hypothesis 2:** Principals actively participate in the preparation of the annual professional development program for teachers.

A large majority of teachers believe that principals in primary schools actively participate in the preparation of the annual professional development program for teachers, accounting for 74.10%, while a much smaller proportion, 25.90%, disagree or strongly disagree. A higher percentage of subject teachers expressed a negative opinion (29.91%) compared to class teachers (21.36%). Overall, the majority of teachers consider that principals actively engage in the preparation of the annual professional development program, whereas only a small proportion disagree. The most notable difference is observed in the category of teachers who strongly disagree, with a slightly higher proportion of subject teachers than class teachers, representing an insignificant 3.5%.

**Table 2.**

Category	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Class	8	7.77	14	13.59	55	53.40	26	25.24	103	46.82
Subject	15	12.82	20	17.09	55	47.01	27	23.08	117	53.18
Total	23	10.45	34	15.45	110	50.00	53	24.10	220	100.00

The principals, in turn, stated that they participate in the preparation of the annual professional development program for teachers in order to ensure its successful implementation and to enhance the quality of work. A well-prepared annual professional development program contributes to its effective realization, thereby supporting the achievement of the objectives of the educational process. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the specific hypothesis is confirmed: principals actively participate in the preparation of the annual work program.

**Specific Hypothesis 3:** Principals plan activities in a timely manner to support the professional development of teachers.

The majority of teachers responded that principals implement organized activities aimed at professional development, which are always in accordance with the school’s professional development program, accounting for 68.63%, while a much smaller proportion expressed a negative view, 32.37%. Among class teachers, 70.87% responded positively, whereas 66.66% of subject teachers reported positive responses.

Table 3.

Category	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Class	13	12.62	17	16.50	48	46.60	25	24.27	103	46.82
Subject	16	13.68	23	19.66	52	44.44	26	22.22	117	53.18
Total	29	13.18	40	18.18	100	45.45	51	23.18	220	100.00

The majority of interviewed principals stated that they plan activities in a timely manner to support the professional development of teachers. All necessary steps taken by the principals enable the teaching staff to gain substantial benefits in their professional growth, as any work that is planned in advance is more likely to be implemented effectively and comprehensively. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that **the specific hypothesis is confirmed**: principals participate in the timely planning, preparation, and implementation of activities aimed at teachers' professional development, which is a crucial factor in enhancing the quality of work within the school.

## Conclusions

In the context of managing the professional development of teachers in primary schools, it can be concluded that the most important goal is to ensure quality in teaching. This can be achieved when all educational staff actively participate in the teaching and learning process; however, teachers, as the primary representatives of teaching, are of central importance in primary education. It can be stated with certainty that the principal, as a manager, plays a key role in the learning outcomes and achievements of students within the school. The principal of a primary school has a significant role in achieving educational goals. This is accomplished through effective work and dedication, which consistently yield results. A comprehensive understanding of the teaching staff's work is necessary, including recognition of their skills and aptitudes, in order to influence their professional development. The principal should foster a positive spirit within the school, promote openness to new learning, and encourage a modern perspective that aligns with ongoing changes and current educational challenges. The education obtained by teachers at educational colleges is particularly important, yet it is essential for teachers to continue expanding their knowledge, stay updated on innovations in education, and maintain the ability to perform their work competently throughout their professional careers. Considering the results of numerous relevant international studies, it can be concluded that the current level is insufficient, and substantial changes in the educational system are necessary. Special attention must be given to the professional development of teaching staff, as it represents a key factor for achieving success in educating students.

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