

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BASIC PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES AND STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

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### Abstract

This study investigates the core professional competencies and standards required of teachers in North Macedonia, aiming to clarify their significance in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The objective of the study is to analyze how these competencies are defined and implemented in national policy documents and how they influence teaching effectiveness. A quantitative research methodology was employed, involving a survey conducted with 284 primary school teachers from various regions. The findings confirm the hypothesis that continuous professional support significantly affects the success of teaching and learning processes. Results show that a majority of respondents strongly agree with the need for sustained professional development opportunities. This study highlights key areas of teacher competencies, including planning, instruction, assessment, and responsiveness to student needs. The paper concludes with recommendations for enhancing teacher development policies to align better with both national standards and international best practices.

Keywords: assessment, competence, knowledge, learning, planning, skills, teachers, teaching process

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### 1. Introduction

Teacher professionalism has been a focus of pedagogical research due to its critical role in educational quality. Competence in this context refers to an integrated set of professional values, knowledge, and skills applied in specific teaching and learning situations. In North Macedonia, teacher competencies and standards are defined by national educational legislation, including the Law on Primary and Secondary Education (Official Newspaper of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 10/15). This framework facilitates career development (e.g., mentor and counselor roles) and provides criteria for objective performance evaluation. Professional values underpin these competencies and evolve through teachers' engagement, experiences, and social context. These values influence relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and the broader community.

### 2. Literature Review

Research on teacher competencies emphasizes their foundational role in effective education. Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of pedagogical content knowledge as crucial for teaching. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) highlighted the link between teacher preparation and student outcomes. In the context of North Macedonia, MCGO (2016) offers a structured framework of core competencies, but a broader theoretical integration is needed. Studies by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) and Qosja (2017) support the idea that continuous professional development enhances teaching efficacy. However, local studies often lack depth in comparative analysis and critical engagement with international standards.

### 3. Methodology

*3.1 Research Aim and Hypothesis:* The aim of the study is to explore how continuous professional support for teachers affects the quality of teaching and learning. Hypothesis: Continuous professional support for teachers positively influences the success of teaching and learning.

*3.2 Sample and Instrument:* The study involved 284 teachers from the first cycle of primary education across urban and rural schools in North Macedonia. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, focusing on teacher opinions regarding the impact of professional development on teaching quality. Reliability testing of the instrument yielded a Cronbach alpha value of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

*3.3 Limitations:* Limitations include potential response bias and the generalizability of results beyond the surveyed regions.

### 4. Findings

In the presentation of the results obtained from the survey carried out with teachers of the first cycle of primary schools, where a total of 284 teachers were included, located in several cities in the Republic of North Macedonia, including teachers from the first grade to the fifth grade, who answered the question regarding successful implementation of teaching and learning in the educational process, about whether continuous professional support of teachers is necessary. The independent variables are the teachers' experience, and the school's location, whereas the dependent variables are the data on the opinions and attitudes of the teachers for the categories included in the research, since they are related to whether the quality of teaching and learning among students depends on the competencies acquired in higher (initial) education. The proposed hypothesis is: Teachers are of the opinion and attitude that the existence of continuous professional support for teachers influences the success of teaching and learning during the learning process.

Table 1. Work experience of participants

Alternatives	f	%	valid %	cumulative %
0-5 y	46	16.2	16.2	16.2
6-15 y	90	31.7	31.7	47.9
16-30 y	113	39.8	39.8	87.7
Up to 30 y	35	12.3	12.3	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

M=2,48 SD=0,90

Statistical data were obtained in terms of the length of the work experience (0-5 years, 6-15 years, 16-30 and over 30 years), from a total of 284 teachers involved in the research, (46 or 16.2%) were teachers with experience from 0-5 years, (90 or 31.7%) from 6-15 years, (113 or 39.8%) from 16-30 years, and (35 or 12.3%) over 30 years of experience. From the obtained statistical values, it resulted with an average of M=2.48. SD=0.90, while the minimum value is 1, the maximum value is 4, while based on the expected average ( $1+4=5$ ,  $5/2=2.5$ ) it shows that the obtained result is lower than expected.

Table 2. Influence of Continuous Professional Support on Teaching and Learning Success: Teachers' Opinions

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	Alternatives		I don't agree	I partially agree	I agree	I totally agree	Total
1.School location	City	f	4	5	56	93	160
		%	50,0%	50,0%	55,4%	56,4%	56,3 %
	Village	f	4	5	45	72	124
		%	50,0%	50,0%	44,6%	43,6%	43,7 %
Total		f	8	10	101	165	284
		%	3,0%	3,5%	35,5%	58,0%	100,0 %
2.Work experience	0-5 y	f	2	0	13	31	46
		%	25%	0,0%	12,9%	18,8%	16,2 %
	6-15 y	f	2	2	28	59	90
		%	25%	20,0%	27,7%	35,8%	31,7 %
	16-30 y	f	3	7	50	54	115
		%	37,5%	70,0%	49,5%	32,7%	40,5 %
	over 30 y	f	1	1	10	21	33
		%	12,5%	10,0%	9,9%	12,7%	11,6 %
Total		f	8	10	101	165	284
		%	3,0%	3,5%	35,5%	58,0%	100,0 %

1.  $\chi^2 = 2,006$  df=4 p>0.735 Phi=0,084 V=0,084 C=0,084 r= -0,019

2.  $\chi^2 = 15,941$  df=12 p>0.194 Phi=0,237 V=0,137 C=0,231 r= -0,123

The data obtained regarding the question that for the successful implementation of teaching and learning in the learning process, continuous professional support of teachers is also important, based on the location of the school (city and village) show that teachers in most of the cases chose the alternative "I completely agree", an estimate of (93 teachers or 56.4%) from city schools and an estimate of (72 teachers or 43.6%) from village schools. While the alternative "I agree", was chosen by (56 teachers or 55.4%) from city schools, and teachers from village schools (45 or 44.6%). The alternative "I partially agree" was chosen by (5 teachers or 50.0%) from city schools, but also by the same number from the village schools. The alternative "I disagree" was chosen by (4 teachers or 50.0%) from city schools and (4 teachers or 50.0%) from the village schools. The total number of teachers who chose the alternative "strongly agree" is 165 or 58.0%.

The results obtained from the variable of the duration of teachers' work experience also show that more of the surveyed teachers chose the alternative "I completely agree", from 0-5 years of work experience (31 teachers or 18.8%), from 6-15 years (59 teachers or 35.8%), from 16-30 years (54 teachers or 32.7%), and over 30 years of work experience (21 teachers or 12.7%).

The data indicate that a large majority of teachers perceive continuous professional development as essential to effective teaching and learning. There is no significant difference based on years of experience or school location ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## **5. Discussion**

The findings reinforce the hypothesis that sustained professional support enhances teaching effectiveness. This supports previous research (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Policy makers should consider these insights in designing teacher development programs. The lack of statistically significant differences across subgroups suggests broad-based support for professional learning.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study confirms the importance of continuous professional support for teachers in improving teaching and learning processes. It also highlights the relevance of defining and implementing clear professional standards. Future research should include longitudinal studies and qualitative approaches to further explore these dynamics.

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