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Professional paper

OBSERVING THE WORK OF TEACHERS IN CONTEXT OF TEACHING

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Abstract

The time that we live in imposes specific requirements to the work of the school as institution, due to the complexity and dynamics of the society nowadays. Today's modern school system requires continuous improvement of the teachers in terms of teaching methodology, and in this regard numerous trainings are being conducted. Providing professional support to the teachers becomes an essential need, taking into consideration that the teachers' performance is the most important factor for increasing student outcomes in the learning process.
Professional competencies of teachers are the basis of their professional and educational work. In that line, monitoring/observation of the teachers during realization of the lessons should be planned, as part of the overall planning for teachers' professional development. The report of the monitoring should present how successfully the teaching process is carried out. For this purpose, a specific program is compiled within the Annual program of the schools, according to which the principal, the school pedagogist and psychologist perform direct observation of the lessons and provide their pedagogical-advisory recommendations to the teachers. These recommendations are intended to help the teacher to increase the quality of teaching.
This paper will provide an overview of the manner and quality of planning and implementation of monitoring in primary schools in the Republic of North Macedonia. In this respect, a research will be conducted in a total of 12 primary schools, among which: three schools in Skopje, three in Tetovo, three in Gostivar and three in Kicevo. For the realization of this research we will use the questionnaire as a measuring instrument, as the most efficient way for collecting the necessary information. A total of 12 principals, 12 pedagogists, 12 psychologists and 120 teachers (10 from each school) will be included in the survey. The data will be processed with the SPSS statistical program.

Keywords: observation, consultation, professional competence, contemporary teaching.

1. Introduction

Educational reforms are the main agenda in almost every country in the world. In the Republic of North Macedonia, we still do not have a common and unified regulation that would help school principals, pedagogists and psychologists in the process of monitoring the work of teachers. Knowing that professional and pedagogical observations are of particular importance in the work of the school, we considered it reasonable to examine the situation in the primary schools in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar and Kichevo. In the present situation of the schools it can be seen that in terms of observation/monitoring, the pedagogists and the psychologists are more involved than school principals, due to the demanding obligations of the principals and lack of time.
There are several observations types performed at schools: conservative - which to some extent contain elements of bureaucratic and administrative character and this type is rather encountered in traditional school; pedagogical-counseling – which are oriented to help teachers to advance their methodology and techniques of teaching and learning, specifically aimed at modernizing the

teaching process and this type is encountered in the contemporary schools. There are different approaches in the world regarding the monitoring of the teachers work.
The proficiency of teachers is the most important school factor for achieving better results of students in learning, and legal obligation of every teacher is maintaining permanent professional excellence. The school should provide support for professional development, but should also systematically monitor the work of teachers.
This paper will serve as guidance for school principals and professional associates (the school pedagogist and the psychologist) for the successful realization of the monitoring process in order to ensure the quality of the overall work of the school.

2. Theoretical view of the problem

Professional improvement of the teachers continues to be a fundamental goal of the schools, in order to improve teaching process. Most of the literature identifies classroom observation/ monitoring as key component in the process of professional development of the teachers. There are numerous articles and books that emphasize the importance of frequent classroom observations by the school principals and professional associates. However, there are no available empirical data which presents the relation between the classroom observations by the principals and teacher professional development. From this, the question that may arise is whether the principals are still using traditional methods for monitoring and assessment of teachers.
The monitoring of the quality of work of the educational staff in the Republic of North Macedonia is carried out in accordance with the professional competencies that the educational staff should possess and other standards for quality work at national level, as well as the professional standards set by each school. (Butleska et al., 2016, p. 6) The work of the educational staff is supervised/ monitored primarily by the school management, i.e. the principal and professional associates, as well as other teachers through open-hour visits and other types of work presentation. In order to observe the educational work, the Annual work program of the school includes a Monitoring program. According to this program the principal, pedagogist and psychologist (professional associates) should perform direct observation – classroom visits - four times a year (twice in each term) for each teacher in the school, in order to check the quality of lesson planning and implementation. The observation of the teacher's work quality covers the following three areas:

1. Observing the quality of lesson planning,
2. Monitoring the quality of teaching
3. Observation of the realization of extracurricular activities.(Butleska et al., 2016, p.6)

The lesson planning observation is done at the beginning of the school year, after the planning is submitted by the teachers. It aims to check the quality of the long-term planning and what approaches the particular teacher is using for short-term planning. After each observation, it is necessary to make consultations with the teacher, in order to examine the findings and give instructions for improvement. (Butleska et al., 2016, p.7)
The monitoring of the quality of teaching is realized in the following stages:

1. Consultation before visit
2. Observation of the lesson
3. Consultation after observation of the lesson in the classroom. (Butleska et al., 2016, p.7)

Regarding the extracurricular activities, the teachers are obliged to submit reports for the realized extracurricular activities to the principal and the professional associates of the school. At the end of the school year, the school principal checks the reports from the realized extracurricular

activities and gives his comments and recommendations. These recommendations should be taken into consideration while planning the professional development of the teachers for the next school year. (Butleska et al., 2016, p. 8)

In the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as in Kosovo, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology invests in the process of monitoring the work of teachers. In this context, trainings were conducted and numerous manuals were published. Among them is the EU-funded project - IPA 2009 "Teacher Training and Capacity Building of Municipalities and School Directors" implemented by the consortium led by GIZ. The manual "Seventh Seminar - Comprehensive Leadership" provides for mentoring of teachers, as well as meetings before and after the observation of the lesson. According to the manual, in order to serve as an effective observer of another person's teaching behaviors, one must first carefully examine own position and beliefs about effective teaching and learning. The meeting before the observation begins the process of cooperation. As in any context of classroom observation, the mentor and the mentee should discuss and agree on the purpose of the observation. (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2012, p.13)

An important factor in the collaborative approach to classroom observation is the collection of descriptive - not evaluative - data that the observer can then discuss with the teacher as they try to answer the questions posed during the pre-observation meeting. Observation data can be collected in various ways and through a number of instruments and methods described in the literature, and the same are provided in the manual at the end, following the list of used literature. (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2012, p.13)

Post-observation meeting is the last step of the monitoring / observation cycle. During this meeting, the data requested by the mentor are presented as feedback and are discussed in a manner which can help the teacher to reflect this feedback on his / her practice and to identify the next steps towards achieving his/her general goal. The final stage of the meeting after the observation is the revision of the mentoring plan and agreement on the next steps. (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2012, p.14)

A report published by McKinsey in 2007 makes an overview at the world's top-performing school systems. The McKinsey report identified three factors behind high-performing school systems, but it also states that three other things needed to happen for schools to be really effective. (Brennan, J., 2017) The report emphasizes that individual teachers need to be aware of specific weaknesses in their practice, reinforce the implementation of best practices and be motivated to make the necessary improvements. (Brennan, J., 2017)

According to Tom Good, "one of the roles of the observational research is to describe what happens in classroom in order to delineate the complex practical issues that confront practitioners." (Good, 1988).

Sirotnik examined 1,000 elementary and secondary school lessons and found that there was very little variety in teaching practices across subjects and grades. He found that the majority of class time was spent either with the teacher lecturing to the class or students working on written assignments. Waxman, Huang, and Padrón observed ninety sixth-grade and eighth-grade lessons from sixteen inner-city middle level schools and found similar results to those of Sirotnik. (https://education.stateuniversity.com/)

In their research, Elizabeth Fennema and Penelope Peterson have found that some groups or types of students are treated differently by teachers in classrooms, and that these inequitable patterns of teacher–student interaction in classrooms result in differential learning outcomes for students. (https://education.stateuniversity.com/)

Jere Brophy and Tom Good's review of the research found that consistent sex-related differences exist in the classroom in teachers' interaction patterns. Boys, for example, typically have been found to receive more praise and criticism in the classroom than girls. (https://education.stateuniversity.com/)

A major research about teacher evaluation is made including assessment for the purposes of teacher development. Therefore, Levin has concluded that research provides little support for practical actuality in teacher evaluation. Redfern found that one of the problems with teacher evaluation is their belief that evaluation has little or nothing to do with the work. Dornbusch and others, reported that principals are not satisfied with the current system. According to Redfern, "A climate that is positive and conductive for good interpersonal relationships gives a better chance to have a successful assessment". According to Mueller "If staff members are fearful or hostile to the assessment, there will be little improvement of teaching effectiveness." Oldham reported that several points repeat over and over in statements from teacher organizations about the evaluation process.

He says that, above all, the evaluation must be done constructively and in a non-critical atmosphere. No matter how good it is designed abstractly and may seem good as an evaluation program, if perceived by teachers in a negative and disciplinary way - it will not improve teaching, but it will reduce teacher effectiveness due to their fear and lowering morale. (Werner García, 1980).

3. Empirical aspect of the problem

An important question for the purposes of this study is "what are the effects of classroom observation by principals, what is the general relationship between teachers and principals during the observation, and does systematic observation affect the development of teacher performance?" - in fact, does it make a significant positive contribution to the process of teacher professional development.

For the purposes of our research we posed the hypothesis: the systematic observation of the teacher's work increases the quality of planning, teaching and student learning outcomes.

Research was conducted in 12 primary schools in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar and Kicevo. A total of 120 teachers were observed in the survey - 10 teachers from each school.

3.1 Analysis and interpretation of research results

Teachers according to the school where they work

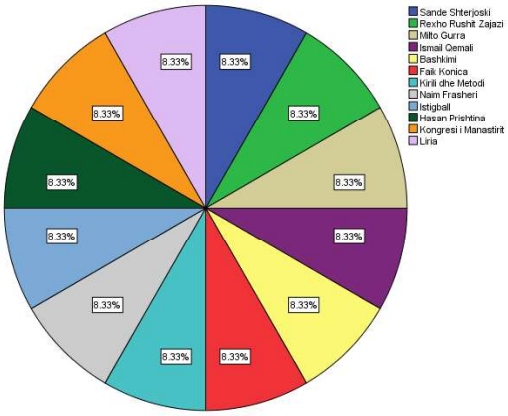

Diagram 1. Teachers according to the school where they work

Diagram 1 shows the teachers according to the school where they work. The diagram shows that the same number of teachers from all schools were included in the survey, in our case 10 (or 8.33%) teachers from each school,. The schools included in the research are: PS " Sande Shterjoski", PS "Rexho Rushit Zajazi", and PS "Milto Gurra" from Kichevo, PS "Ismail Qemali", PS "Bashkimi", and PS "Faik Konica" from Gostivar, PS "Naim Frasher", PS "Kiril dhe Metodi", and PS "Istigball" from Tetovo, as well as PS "Hasan Prishtina", PS "Kongresi I Manastirit", and PS "Liria" from Cair (Skopje).

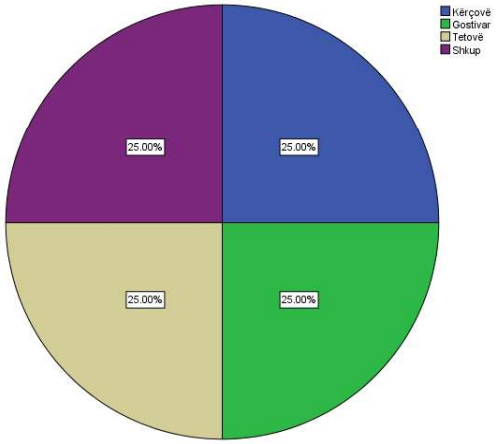

Diagram 2. Teachers according to the city where they work

Table 1. ANOVA for comparing the average of planning and observation of teachers in the educational process according to the city where they work

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
Planning	Kicevo	30	23.8000	1.88277	.34375	19.00	26.00	2.472	.065
	Gostivar	30	22.8333	1.08543	.19817	20.00	25.00		
	Tetovo	30	23.6667	1.29544	.23651	21.00	26.00		
	Skopje	30	23.5333	1.61316	.29452	20.00	27.00		
	Total:	120	23.4583	1.52787	.13947	19.00	27.00		
Observation	Kicevo	30	27.6333	1.69143	.30881	24.00	30.00	5.868	.001
	Gostivar	30	26.5667	1.19434	.21805	24.00	29.00		
	Tetovo	30	27.7333	1.99885	.36494	23.00	30.00		
	Skopje	30	26.2333	1.83234	.33454	23.00	30.00		
	Total:	120	27.0417	1.80753	.16500	23.00	30.00		

In Table No. 1 presents the ANOVA for comparing the average of planning and observation of teachers in the educational process according to the city where they work. Regarding the planning data it can be seen that there are differences in the planning and observation of teachers by city, but also by school. It is very important that there is a correlation between planning and observation, even though it is low, the connection is 20%, for us it is statistically significant, the error level is only 1% at the 0.01 level!

All this shows that there are differences because we still do not have adequate planning to monitor the work of teachers within a school year, and we still do not have a harmonized and unified instrument prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education as well as the State Inspectorate of Education - regarding the main points that should be included in the planning and instrument for monitoring the lessons by the counselors, state inspectors of education, school principals and professional associates.

Table 2. ANOVA for comparing the average of planning and observation of teachers in the educational process according to the school where they work

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
Observation	Sande Shterjoski	10	28.0000	1.56347	.49441	26.00	30.00	7.231	.000
	Rexho Rushit Zajazi	10	26.1000	1.10050	.34801	24.00	28.00		
	Milto Gurra	10	28.8000	1.13529	.35901	27.00	30.00		
	Ismail Qemali	10	26.7000	1.05935	.33500	25.00	28.00		
	Bashkimi	10	26.9000	1.19722	.37859	25.00	29.00		
	Faik Konica	10	26.1000	1.28668	.40689	24.00	28.00		
	Kirili dhe Metodi	10	29.8000	.42164	.13333	29.00	30.00		
	Naim Frasheri	10	26.3000	.94868	.30000	25.00	28.00		

	Istigball	10	27.1000	2.07900	.65744	23.00	30.00	
	Hasan Prishtina	10	26.4000	1.50555	.47610	23.00	28.00	
	Kongresi i Manastirit	10	25.7000	1.49443	.47258	24.00	28.00	
	Liria	10	26.6000	2.41293	.76303	24.00	30.00	
	Total	120	27.0417	1.80753	.16500	23.00	30.00	

In Table No. 2 presents the ANOVA for comparing the average of planning and observation of teachers in the educational process according to the school where they work. The result shows that there are differences in the average of planning the observation by cities, Kichevo differs from Gostivar. This is due to the fact that recently there has been a lack of training of directors and professional associates, but also of mentor teachers, which would be carried out by the Bureau for Development of Education; also the approach of municipalities and schools in this regard is not the same. The planning aspect in this case shows that there are no significant data and we have presented only those data that are statistically important for our research.

Table 3. Correlative analysis between variable planning and observation

		Planning	Observation
Planning	Pearson Correlation	1	.285**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	120	120
Observation	Pearson Correlation	.285**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	120	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the correlation analysis between the variable of planning and observation, in which case the analysis shows that the correlation is strong and with a positive direction as well as statistically significant (r = -. 285, p <.002). This indicates that the systematic observation of the teacher's work increases the quality of planning, teaching and student learning outcomes, which also verifies our hypothesis.

4. Recommendations

- Schools should motivate teachers to carry out their planning in accordance with the conditions and students they work with and not to use ready-made planning.
- To stimulate the work of professional associates as the main generator for teachers professional development as well as preparing qualitative and feasible plans.
- Teacher observation to be systematic and continuous in regular classes, but also in additional classes, complementary and extracurricular activities of students.
- Observing students should not tend to investigate teachers' mistakes and punishments, but should have an advisory and corrective purpose.
- During the observation of the lessons, the procedures should be respected, a meeting should be held before the observation and after the observation of the lesson and during this period we should create a positive climate so that the teachers do not feel threatened.
- Schools, in cooperation with other entities, should provide training for personal and professional development of the teacher.

- The principal should initiate establishment of school team which will prepare a plan for teacher professional development at the school level, as well as draft a form for self-assessment of the teacher's competencies.

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