

## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

### CONTENTS

Introduction ..... 2

Professional Competencies  
of Teachers - Why Are  
They Important  
to Teachers ..... 3

Professional Competencies  
and Standards for  
Professional Associates  
- Personal Aspect ..... 6

For the First Time Ever -  
Professional Competencies  
for School Principals in  
Our Country ..... 8

Reflections on Professional  
Competence and Career  
Development of Teachers  
in Initial Teacher  
Education ..... 9

Piloting the Professional  
Development Processes  
and Tools in Primary School  
“Manchu Matak”  
- Krivogashtani ..... 11

# NEWSLETTER number 3

## December 2015

The USAID Teacher Professional and Career Development Project is funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the Macedonian Civic Education Center (MCEC), in cooperation with the Step by Step Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives, which is involved in the activities related to the preparation of teacher standards and competencies.

The aim of the project is to upgrade and improve the system for professional and career development of teachers and thus contribute to a better quality of teacher performance and higher student achievements in the Republic of Macedonia.

The project implementation started in December 2012 and will last until June 2015.



The Teacher Professional and Career Development Project is implemented with the support of the Bureau for Development of Education.

## INTRODUCTION

*Dear readers,*

In this third issue of our Newsletter, a central place is given to the experiences of teachers and professional associates in schools regarding the piloting of the draft solutions for professional development prepared by the Project Working Groups. In addition, you will have the opportunity to read about the novelties introduced into the system for schools' educational staff professional and career development.

During this period, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development of Education have, through their preparation and adoption of laws and bylaws, regulated part of the solutions arising from Working Groups' proposals. With the beginning of the school year 2015/2016 and under the Law on Teachers, teachers should already prepare their Personal Professional Development Plans based on Teachers' Core Professional Competencies and identify their professional development needs. In determining the form and content of the Plan, the experience and feedback of about 150 teachers and professional associates from 14 primary and secondary schools piloting

the process, procedures, tools and Guidelines on Professional Development Planning were taken in consideration.



Under the new approach to professional development, each individual shall, in a systematic way, identify their personal needs and take responsibility for their further development of competencies using different forms of learning. Competencies represent a pillar of the system for professional development of entire educational staff and serve as a basis for evaluation and self-evaluation of teaching staff. Some personal views of Working Groups' Members involved in the development and piloting of such competencies are presented in this issue.

At the same time, the Project took an important step forward in linking

teacher professional development with the process for teachers' promotion to a higher title. Teachers from 23 primary and secondary schools in the country that piloted the process of advancement in rank, developed electronic portfolios that will be used to test the tools and evaluation procedures produced in order to establish a functioning career advancement system.

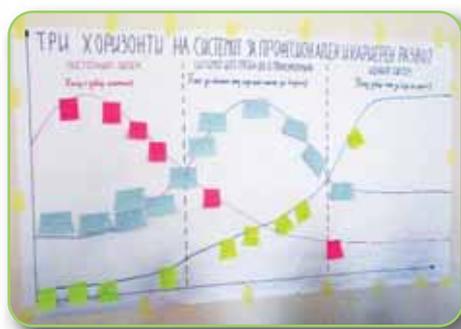
This issue includes and focuses on the linkage between the new solutions for the professional and career development system and the preparation of future teachers at pre-service teacher faculties.

Also, an overview of activities completed in the period since the publication of the previous issue of this Newsletter is provided.

We hope that the contents of this issue will inform you and keep your attention.

Sincerely,

**Vera Kondic Mitkovska,**  
Project Chief of Party



## PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS - WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT TO TEACHERS

Following the global trends, in recent years, a number of reforms in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia have been taken seeking to provide teaching and learning that would prepare students for life in the 21st century and develop their lifelong learning skills. These changes often confused teachers, because it seems that they are constantly required to do something new and different. On the other hand, numerous studies show that the quality of teaching and student achievement largely depends on the knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers. Only a teacher who is willing to change themselves can contribute to students developing their skills and attitudes essential for lifelong learning. Formal education, especially basic education only, is no longer enough to keep up with the large number of changes and their successful implementation in educational work. Hence, the necessity of continuing professional development of teachers through various forms of non-formal and informal education arises.



We all agree that quality education undoubtedly requires quality teachers. But, do we all mean the same when we talk about teacher quality? What are the characteristics of a quality teacher? What is the knowledge and skills to be possessed by a teacher, what should be the teaching like, how should the teacher cooperate with students, parents and the wider community, to what extent and in which direction should a teacher advance professionally in order to be called a quality teacher?

Although the answers to these questions are necessary to achieve the desired quality of education, up until now there has been no common understanding of the term “quality teacher”, which has led to different interpretations even by teachers themselves, so they are trying to achieve the quality that they have defined somewhat on their own depending on their current potential, experiences and work environment. Further, each teacher seeks to improve according to their own vision and observations about what a quality teacher is, upon their individual initiative, without any established policy for professional development of teachers and in the absence of standards and criteria for professional development and career advancement.

The Program for Professional Development of Teaching Staff, which is part of the 2005-2015 National Program for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia, emphasizes the need for professional and career development of teachers as a major factor that would motivate education staff to embrace lifelong learning and professional development, and thus, realize quality instruction and increase student achievement. Nevertheless, although teacher professional and career development is legislated, up until now, it has not been prescribed by secondary laws and procedures on its implementation.

For the first time ever, the Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools adopted in 2015 regulates the way of teacher professional and career development. Under this Law, in order to perform instruction, a teacher shall possess basic professional competencies for teachers and may progress to titles such as Teacher Mentor and Teacher Advisor, if they achieve the prescribed standards for such titles.

The existence of documents such as Basic Professional Competencies of Teachers and Professional Standards for Teacher Mentors and Teacher Advisors is the first step towards identification of the knowledge and skills to be possessed by a teacher for successful implementation of upbringing and educational work, as well as for their ability to advance in terms of their titles.

Professional competencies are actually something that has been long needed for teachers in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. a description of what the teacher is expected to know and be able to do, as well as the values by which they should be guided in their profession, that is to say a description of the term “quality teacher”.



Standards, on the other hand, describe the expectations about what every teacher should possess to be able to acquire the titles of Teacher Mentor and Teacher Advisor, i.e. to advance in their career.

Basic Professional Competencies of Teachers are an important document that is expected to contribute to better regulation of the teaching profession. They are quite detailed in terms of what the teacher should know and be able to do in order to successfully realize upbringing and educational work.

Competencies are defined as a set of acquired knowledge, skills and professional values, i.e. proven ability to use knowledge and skills in learning situations and implement upbringing and educational work. They refer to the overall professional engagements in both classroom and extracurricular teaching work with students, colleagues and the wider community, encompassing professional knowledge, skills and values of the 21st century teacher, which also incorporate the competencies developed in teachers within various innovative projects implemented in the last 15 years in the Republic of Macedonia. They include examples of teacher’s professional practice activities that will help the teacher in their teaching practice self-assessment, and can also be used by other entities that monitor and evaluate the work of the teacher.



**НАМЕНА НА КОМПЕТЕНЦИИТЕ ЗА НАСТАВНИЦИ**

- Планирање на професионалниот развој на сите нивоа;
- Поставување стандарди за повисоките звања за наставници (наставник-ментор и наставник-советник);
- Изготвување на процедури и инструменти за следење на работата на наставниците;
- Изготвување компетенции за одделни профили на наставници;
- Подобрување на законската регулатива и актите кои се однесуваат на професијата наставник.

The existence and use of such competencies is expected to encourage teachers to improve their professional practice and support activities for the creation of quality teaching. According to these competencies, every teacher can easily plan their professional development, identifying the competencies they have achieved and the ones that should be improved. For this purpose, every teacher should be able to plan their professional development by drafting a Personal Professional Development Plan for each school year (in line with the Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools). The planning of professional development shall be primarily based on self-evaluation in terms of professional competencies through which each individual shall identify their strengths, professional aspirations and plan how to reach them.

Standards for Teacher Mentors and Teacher Advisors represent the framework for teachers' career development and explain which competencies should be developed by the teacher in order for them to progress with their titles. They contribute to the professionalization and raising the teaching profes-

sion status. To achieve a certain level of career development teachers will have to demonstrate their achievement of certain competencies. The standards represent a framework that clearly describes the knowledge, practical work and professional engagement of teachers at different levels of their careers. Using these standards, teachers themselves will be able to identify which levels of career development they have reached and what they should yet do to meet the requirements for advancement into their next title.

If we take into account the fact that the Catalog of Core Professional Competencies was developed in 2014 and that the Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools was adopted in 2015, it is obvious that we are at the beginning of the journey called "quality teacher professional development and teacher career advancement". Still, the preparation of basic professional competencies and standards for advancement laid the foundations for a better and uniform understanding of what teachers need to accomplish in order to become quality teachers, how to self-evaluate and improve professionally, which competencies they should reach in order to advance. Competencies provide an accurate and specific description of the kind of work towards which teachers should strive in order to ensure higher quality instruction and improve achievement among students.

Keeping up with all changes and providing quality education requires well-educated and skilled teachers who continuously develop and advance professionally, and competencies and professional standards for teachers are a good road map on this path.

**Maja Videnovik,**  
teacher, PS „Krste Misirkov“, Skopje

## PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES AND STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES - PERSONAL ASPECT

In addition to teachers, professional associates also work in schools as part of educational staff. Their involvement in the school system began several years ago by employing either a pedagogue or psychologist in schools, and in rare cases, both profiles at the same school, so that today, schools can operate with teams staffed with professional associates (a psychologist, pedagogue, special education teacher, and somewhere, a sociologist, social worker ...).

In the years back, it was often not realized what exactly professional associates were doing, and we oftentimes had no idea of what to focus on: individual work with students, or actions to improve the entire school. Today, in

most schools, the professional associate is recognized as someone who is well informed and involved in the overall operation of the school - its organization, development and evaluation, as well as the creation of its policies and programs, and as an initiator of innovative approaches to the overall educational work. Professional associates have a key position in connecting psychological, educational and social sectors in school circumstances. Our work does not stop at the classroom level only, but it takes place at the school level; not only with a given number of students, but with all students, parents and teachers, and it also includes prevention, counseling, evaluation, intervention, education and research. Part of our work is the analysis of the situation in the school and general educational system, research and proposition of possible solutions.

Therefore, in parallel with the preparation of Teachers' Core Professional Competencies, it was also important to draw up a similar document regarding professional associates. The importance of Basic Professional Competencies is that they finally showed the role of professional associates in schools, so that it became clearer to other educational staff, and ultimately to all users of our services. In addition, they guide professional associates to what they are sup-

posed to possess in terms of knowledge and skills in order to be able to provide quality in their work, and develop and advance such knowledge and skills.

Basic Professional Competencies cover areas within which the work of professional associates takes place, such as: work with students, teachers, parents, cooperation with the community, professional development and professional collaboration, analytical and research work, and school organization, culture and climate. Although the work of all profiles of professional associates takes place within these areas, each profile has its own specifics. Significant about these competencies is that they recognize such specifics and



## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



are expected to be used in certain situations. In addition, the importance of teamwork is emphasized, thus putting the competencies of various profiles into operation for the purpose of optimal contribution to building a school that shall be a friendly and stimulating environment for all.

Given the fact that professional associates are the ones that should, with their knowledge and skills, and their example, contribute to the school climate and culture, I believe that of special importance are the values described and which should guide every professional associate in their work. This will contribute to a greater respect and integrity of the professional associate.

Basic professional competencies are important in several respects, including:

- they will help professional associates, especially the younger ones, to plan their own work and their own professional and career development;
- for the public, competencies mean a source of information and recognition of the role of professional associates in schools;
- professionally, competencies present the basis for setting standards for higher ranks of professional associates (Professional Associate Mentor and Professional Associate Advisor).

For all professional associates, and at present, especially for those that have reached a higher professional development level, of particular interest is that Standards for Titles of Associate Professional Mentor and Professional Associate Advisor have been developed. In fact, these standards indicate the direction in which professional development of associates should evolve and which competencies they should have developed to advance their career. Finally, those whose work contributed to the professional development of their fellow teachers and development of the profession and schools in general, got an opportunity to progress both professionally and in terms of their career. These standards verify the work of professional associates involved in all important processes and changes at both school and national levels and actively contribute to the promotion of education in general.

The one who loves their profession surely knows what needs to be done, knows how to do it and continually refines and upgrades it. Nevertheless, documents such as Basic Professional Competencies and Standards for higher ranks of professional associates will certainly be a good guide.

**Andrijana Tasevska,**  
psychologist,  
PS „Krumе Kеpеski“, Skopje

## FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER - PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN OUR COUNTRY

The position of Primary School Principal is increasingly regulated and professionalized. In this context, within the Teacher Professional and Career Development Project and in cooperation with the State Examination Center, which is responsible for the training and examination of Directors, professional competencies for directors were developed.

Candidates for directors of primary and secondary schools should, among other requirements, attend and complete a training course and pass an exam for directors. Training is regulated by Rules of Training and Examination of Directors, and as of 2016, the new Law on Training for Directors shall start to apply. The regulation of this matter by law entails obligations to review the training program for directors, as well as draft a Program for Advanced Training of current directors, which will serve the purpose of their continuing professional development. Hence, the need for preparation of a document, which according to the increasing complexity of School Director's position, shall clearly define the competencies necessary to successfully perform this function.

A Working Group composed of primary and secondary school principals, university professors, representatives of MES and NEC and other experts has, after numerous meetings and consultations, developed a Draft of Professional Competencies for Directors. During its work, the Group took into consideration similar documents from other countries and the already prepared competencies for teachers and professional associates in our country.

Draft Competencies were discussed at a round table, where a wider circle of professional community representatives were invited to participate, such as: school principals, representatives from the Minis-

try of Education and Science, the State Examination Center, the Bureau for Development of Education, the World Bank, the private school NOVA, USAID, university representatives, the authorized education inspector in the Municipality and others. Also, a public debate was organized and Draft Professional Competencies were delivered to all primary and secondary school principals, and opinions were given by 50 current directors. This approach to the document preparation enabled a transparent way that involved all stakeholders. Opinions and suggestions received were taken into account in the process of document finalization.



Professional knowledge and understanding, competencies and skills, as well as examples of possible activities were included in the following areas of principals' work: Leadership; Human Resource Management; Pedagogical School Management; Financial Management; and Legal and Administrative Operations of the School. These competencies address the entire school life, both within the school and outside of it.

With its substantial impact on the programs for basic and advanced director training, this document is included both in the system for training of directors and the system for their continuous professional development.

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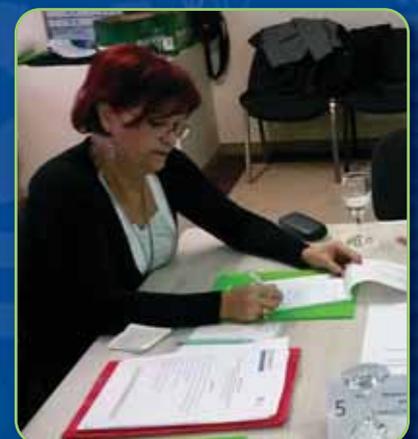
**Violeta Naumovska,**  
head of sector,  
National Examinations Centre

## REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Initial teacher education is “still” the initial and only requirement for entry into the teaching profession<sup>1</sup>. It is an integral part of the subsystem of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia and it produces teaching staff for preschool education, primary and secondary education. As such, the system of initial education of teachers is subject to legal effects, new institutional solutions, impacts of technical and technological advances and the needs of today's modern families and children/students.

Certainly, significant changes in the system of initial teacher education are expected even upon the establishment and adoption of core teachers' professional competencies that are the product of project activities under the USAID's *Teacher Professional and Career Development Project*. On this occasion we would single out a few assumptions about its possible impacts on the current structure of initial teacher education.

- **Preparation based on competence (Competence based learning) instead of preparation oriented to the process (Process oriented learning).** Current teacher education focused on the success in the implementation of teacher training process, duration of both theoretical and practical parts of teacher education, respect of ECTS standards and principles, etc. is directed to an organization based on the principle of developing teacher competencies (highly structured and organized) that would be subject to further development through other forms of professional lifelong learning.
- **Professionalization of the teaching profession rather than personalization of subject teacher initial education programs.** Certain conditions are created for personalized solutions arising from the presence of university professors engaged in initial teacher education and the good positioning of management structures to be replaced with staff that will implement subject course programs in accordance with teacher competencies and teaching profession needs.
- **Evenly dispersed, inclusive and equally thorough approach to the development of teacher competencies instead of selective, favored and dominant selection of competencies developed in institutions for initial teacher education.** In the current program structure of initial teacher education, there are differences in initial teacher education curricula showing that some institutions put more emphasis on the



<sup>1</sup> Iliev D. (2001). *Initial teacher education for primary education in Macedonia and England*, Bitola: Faculty of Teachers and Educators Bitola

development of competencies in the area of subject knowledge or substrate fundamentals of teaching in a given subject, while others put the focus on the teaching and learning area in their study programs. Unfortunately, the number of initial teacher education institutions where competencies in the areas of professional development, professional collaboration and social and educational inclusion take a significant part is small. The catalog of teachers' professional competencies can change such situation by balanced distribution of subject course programs in terms of initial development of all teacher competencies specified.

- **Instead of a profession developed on the basis of theoretical knowledge, initial teacher education focused on visible and measurable actions.** There is a possibility for many of the subject courses at teaching universities in the area of practical activities and exercises to be realized in the direction of design, production and implementation of the “Activities” category incorporated in the structure of teacher professional competencies, which are described in detail by appropriate descriptors.
- Under the influence of teachers' core professional competencies established, **professional and career development of teachers is increasingly becoming a field of interest for initial teacher education institutions.** In fact, the description of competencies ensures the awareness of teachers about their possession of the said competencies or lack thereof, encouraging their involvement in the permanent professional development process. Here lies the chance for teacher training faculties, which they should use by designing training courses, accreditation thereof and active work with teachers. To this end, in addition to the subject programs for initial teacher education, it is necessary to design programs for supplementing the knowledge in terms of competencies, i.e. programs for advanced courses on teacher professional development.
- The existence of a catalog of teacher professional competencies initiates, and also describes and defines **the need to determine the unique teacher competencies to be possessed by anyone who wants to deal with teaching.** It is particularly important to review the format of realization of further pedagogical training, the presence of teacher professional competencies in study and subject course programs of teacher training faculties etc.

These are only some of the presumed secondary impacts of USAID's *Teacher Professional and Career Development Project* on the system and institutions for initial teacher education in the Republic of Macedonia.

**Prof. Dr. Dean Iliev,**  
“St. Kliment Ohridski” University, Bitola  
Faculty of Pedagogy



## PILOTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND TOOLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL “MANCHU MATAK” - KRIVOGASHTANI

Our school was one of the 14 primary and secondary schools in Macedonia that have piloted the professional development processes and tools in accordance with the Guidelines for this purpose. This was a great honor and commitment for our teachers and the Pedagogue.

Even during the first focus meeting with the Advisor Natalija Aceska from the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) and without knowing what to expect, a large number of teachers applied to participate in the piloting (12 teachers or 40% of the teachers employed at the school, the Pedagogue and School Principal).

We have never had the opportunity before to participate in piloting of something that is so important for our work (usually, anything that is being introduced is given ready-made), so the feeling of significance and importance that teachers had when they got a chance to make their contribution fully motivated them to commit and give their maximum contribution in the piloting.

During the piloting, all envisaged processes and tools were simulated, which has led to a number of suggestions on our part, as well as long discussions, constructive contributions for improving the Guidelines themselves and even identification of some flaws therein.

During the piloting with the teachers under the coordination of the Pedagogue, several meetings were

held as learning communities in which the processes of the Guidelines were explained, some of the tools were jointly filled in, proposals were noted down and corrections that we thought necessary were made. This way of work was nothing unknown to us - even before we continuously worked as learning communities.

The biggest challenge for all teachers was filling out the Personal Professional Development Plan, the manner in which they were supposed to define their competencies as priorities, and to implement them under the current conditions. Therefore, there was a proposal made to reduce the number of competencies and/or limit them more precisely, which was then taken into account in the final version thereafter.

In the meeting simulation of the Professional Development Team at the school, a conclusion was made that we needed an additional tool that would define competencies as priorities in accordance with teachers' Personal Professional Development Plans, so we also suggested this as a possibility and as a Form.

As regards the process of piloting we went through, all teachers think that is very similar to what is usually done in our school, certainly including a few new tools/forms, especially the Personal Professional Development Plan, since up until now we have identified priorities at the school level through teachers' questionnaires.

Most of the teachers agreed that the Guidelines for planning the professional development were comprehensible, and that the tools and procedures recommended were useful with minor modifications and additions.

After this experience we had in our school, and then, after the piloting of career development, we can conclude that:

- this type of piloting is useful and should be mandatory for every new program, reform and/or innovation in the educational process;
- most of our teaching staff are competent enough to give their contribution to the piloting of such important processes;
- the practice of collaboration and work in learning communities proved to be useful and productive even for this way of working;
- coordination and guidance is required by someone in the school, and the most prepared and competent persons for this are the Pedagogue and Psychologist;
- during such processes, support from school leadership and creators of novelties is necessary.

**Ubavka Butleska,**  
pedagogue, PS „Manchu Matak“,  
Krivogashtani, Prilep

