



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS TEACHERS FROM TELEORMAN COUNTY

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### Abstract

**Purpose.** At the European level, there were identified some general objectives for the implementation of practical actions into education and training: encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge, school approaching to the economic sector, combating social exclusion, equally treating capital investment and training. The purpose of this paper is to identify which objectives of the professional development are characteristic to our occupational domain and can be transferred to the adult training programs permanently tailored to the social requirements.

**Methods.** As research methods, we used the study of specialty bibliography, the survey (questionnaire) and statistical-mathematical processing. The global questionnaire was made up of 17 items, but for this research we processed only the item concerning the objectives for professional development. The sample consisted of 102 physical education and sports teachers from Teleorman county.

**Results.** A high quality professional development is essential to increase educators' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, so that they could assure an educational process to the requested level. In all the categories of investigated subjects, we identified a priority able to improve the teaching skills. We consider that this option is a characteristic of physical education and sports teachers who want to be well informed about the latest methodical and psychopedagogical approaches. For each category of teachers, we identified a dominant option, even if this one wasn't significantly different from the others.

**Conclusions.** In order to design attractive educational continuing programs, the promoter must be informed about the particularities of the professional development process in different categories of specialists. As we shall see, each category has a specific way to approach the lifelong learning process. To draw up consistent programs and provide an attractive educational offer, institutions have to take into account all the professional and social aspects that can influence the continuing educational process achievement in physical education and sports area.

**Keywords:** professional development, physical education and sports, initial training, continuing education, teachers.

### Introduction

This paper is part of the POSDRU project 19/1.3/G/13096 *Professionalization of the teaching career in physical education and sports from the lifelong learning perspective*, co-financed by FSE through POSDRU 2007-2013, its beneficiary being UNEFS and its implementation being achieved in partnership with the Teaching Staff Houses of Giurgiu, Teleorman, Olt and Dambovită, but also with the Bucharest Municipal School Inspectorate, over a 2-year period (2010-2011).

Through the program topic, the project contributes to the professional identity consolidation in physical education and sports, by emphasizing the specific competencies of this profession and by creating the feeling of belonging to a strong professional group precisely delimited from other didactic specialties (M. Stănescu, M. Stoicescu, 2010).

Professionalization of the teaching career represents a priority of the Romanian higher education system, in order to get it aligned to the European quality standards, in all the domains (N. Vințanu, M. Stănescu, R. Bejan, 2003).

Investing in the development of human

resources and valorizing their superior skills both contributes to competitiveness in the field of physical education and sports and increases the education quality.

The term "professional development" means a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to the improvement of teachers' effectiveness in physical education and sports instruction.

Professional development generally refers to continuing learning opportunities for teachers and other education staff, provided by their schools and counties. Effective professional development is usually seen as vital to school success and teacher satisfaction, but it has also been criticized for its cost, its often unclearly determined goals and the lack of data about the teacher and school resulting improvement that characterizes many efforts.

"Strategies for improving effective access to learning and training throughout life, in order to eliminate the deficit of competence, must ensure the coordination of shared responsibilities of the public authorities, social partners and individuals with a relevant contribution in the civil society. Social partners are requested to negotiate measures, in order to improve education and continuing training and

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increase their flexibility". (A. Modrescu, 2002) There is a growing recognition that teacher learning and the effective policies and structures to support it should be at the core of government policies that aim at improving the educational standards.

The professional development process can include activities such as courses, workshops, networks and conferences focused on completing the learning goals and objectives settled by educators at the school level and improving the school-based continuing professional development. These activities can be provided by profit and non-profit entities outside the school, for instance by universities, education service agencies, technical assistance providers, specialists in the content area and other education organizations and associations.

Professional development is an extensive and collaborative process; upon completion, an evaluation of progress is usually performed (S.A. Westfal, 2007).

Since the nineties, a qualitative literature has started supporting a roughly consistent alternative to the workshop model of professional development. This preferred approach holds that for teacher learning to truly matter, it needs to take place in a more active and coherent intellectual environment, in which ideas can be exchanged and an explicit connection to the bigger picture of school improvement is made. This vision holds that professional development should be sustained and coherent, take place during the school day, become part of the teacher's professional responsibilities and focus on student's results (R.C. Wei et al, 2009).

Trainers should provide new opportunities in terms of professional development. Education and training, if conducted in a formal or informal education system, represent the necessary key that controls the future career and personal development. The investigations carried out over the years by the National Council for Adult Education led to the identification of three major factors crucial to the society transformation, namely: the impact of informational society, the impact of scientific and technical knowledge and the impact of internationalization.

At the European level, there were identified five general objectives for the implementation of practical actions into education and training: encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge, school approaching to the economic sector, combating social exclusion, developing communication skills in three community languages and equally treating capital investment and training (A. Modrescu, 2002; J. Varlejs, 2007; R. Tudorică, 2007).

Training and professional development refers to different concepts and definitions. Training is a learning process during which learners acquire the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to carry out their daily work; professional development

is a more complex process, its objective being the acquisition of the theoretical and practical knowledge required by the learners' current but also future position (anticipated employment). Training aims at developing new competencies, while professional development aims at improving the existing capabilities, it being considered as a training stage, as an accumulation of professional knowledge additional to the basic training (C. Ticu, 2004, K.M. Armour, R. Duncombe, 2004).

From this perspective, competence involves the existence of the following components: acquired knowledge, according to the nature of the tasks to be fulfilled within the respective profession/ job; practical experience in task-solving; a set of skills needed to achieve on an appropriate level the tasks required by the respective profession/ job; a set of attitudes leading to the person's mobilization toward goals related to the effective implementation of the required tasks (O. Sinelnikov, 2012).

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to identify which objectives of the professional development are characteristic to our occupational domain and can be transferred to the adult training programs permanently tailored to the social requirements.

#### **Methods**

As research methods, we used the study of specialty bibliography, the survey (questionnaire) and statistical-mathematical processing (results are expressed either in percents or by the mean of the answer ranks). The global questionnaire was made up of 17 items, but for this research we processed only the item concerning the objectives for professional development. Thus, we analyzed the relationship between the objectives and the teaching staff from the following categories: beginner teachers, permanently appointed teachers and teachers holding the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> degrees. At the same time, we correlated the obtained information with their years of experience in physical education teaching. Subjects assessed on a scale from 1 to 5 the importance of the objectives to their professional development. The six objectives covered by the questionnaire were: improving the teaching performance (1), encouraging and maintaining the professional enthusiasm (2), improving skills in the teaching discipline (3), developing professional relationships with other colleagues (4); improving the networking with colleagues (5); professional advance (6).

#### **Subjects**

The research was conducted on 102 school and high school physical education and sports teachers from Teleorman county, who had attended the continuing education courses within the above-mentioned grant *Professionalization of the teaching career in physical education and sports from the lifelong learning perspective*.

#### **Results and interpretation**

The sample consisted of 102 teachers. As to their distribution by gender, we found out that most of the respondents were female teachers (65.68%), while the percentage of male subjects was lower by more than twice (30.39%).

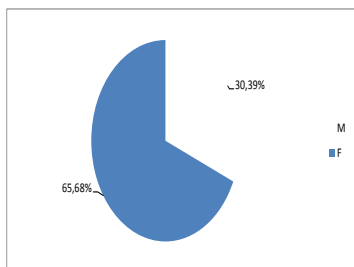


Figure no. 1. Sample distribution by gender

Teachers were classified according to their teaching experience measured in years. Their distribution is showed in figure no. 2, where we can notice that the highest percentage (29.41%) comes to the teachers with an average teaching experience (11 to 15 years).

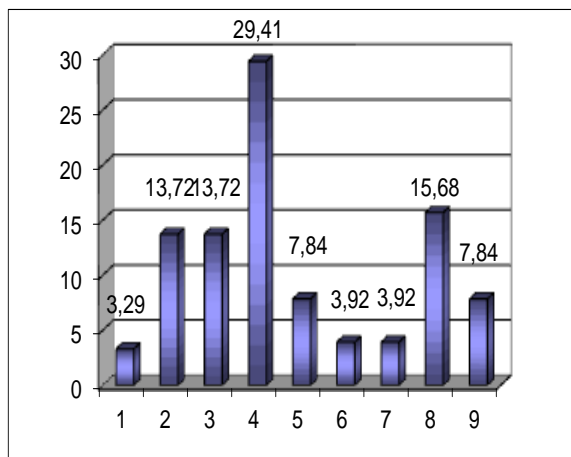


Figure no. 2. Distribution by teaching experience

Legend: 1. no answer, 2. 1-5 years, 3. 6-10 years, 4. 11-15 years, 5. 16-20 years, 6. 21-25 years, 7. 26-30 years, 8. 31-35 years

Regarding their distribution by teaching degrees, we found out that most of the subjects were 1<sup>st</sup> degree teachers (51.96%), followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> degree teachers (22.54%), permanently appointed teachers (19.60%) and beginner teachers (1.96%), as showed in figure no. 2.

As we can see in figure no. 3, most of the options are related to skill improvement in their teaching discipline (objective 3, described in the

method section) (ranking mean is  $x = 4.33$ ). Therefore, most of the teachers expect their professional development to have an important contribution to their specialty teaching level. Another important objective is the development of professional relationships with other colleagues. That is why the specialists in our field need to be in a closer professional contact with their colleagues. Concerning the beginner teachers, we can notice that their priorities are the following: improving their teaching performance ( $x = 4.90$ ), professional advance ( $x = 4.85$ ) and improving their skills in the teaching discipline ( $x = 4.82$ ).

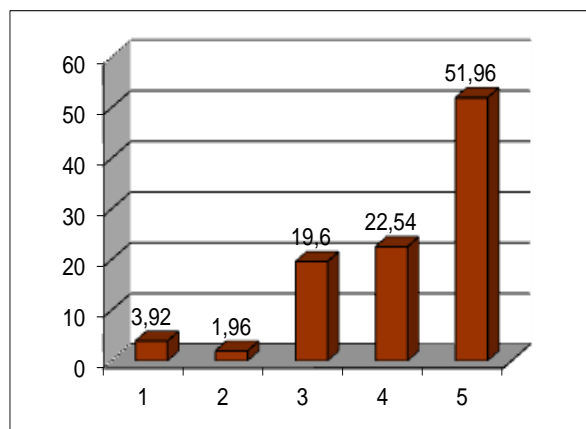


Figure no. 2. Subjects' distribution by teaching degrees

Legend: 1. no answer, 2. beginner teachers, 3. permanently appointed teachers, 4. 2<sup>nd</sup> degree teachers, 5. 1<sup>st</sup> degree teachers

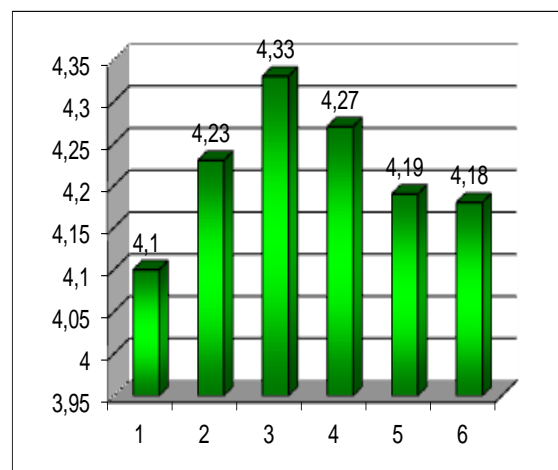
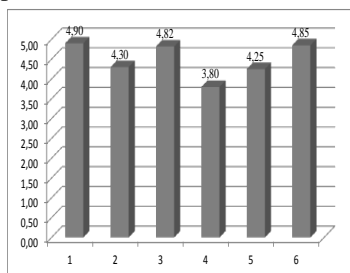


Figure no. 3. Mean of the option ranks for each professional development goal

Legend: improving the teaching performance (1), encouraging and maintaining the professional enthusiasm (2), improving skills in the teaching discipline (3), developing professional relationships with other colleagues (4), improving the networking with colleagues (5), professional advance (6)

Obviously, the beginner teachers identify that the way to promote in the professional career depends on their professional training level. We think this is a positive attitude and an important factor for the teaching career professionalization in physical education and sports field (figure no. 4).

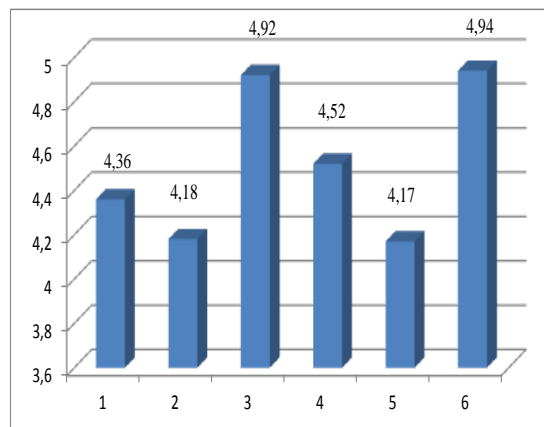
Maintaining the professional enthusiasm ( $x = 4.30$ ) and networking with colleagues ( $x = 3.80$ ) are not very important to this category of subjects. For the beginner teachers, the learning community doesn't represent an element essential to their career. In order to remediate this situation, we proposed the initiation of some sites able to promote and update professional information related to our field.



**Figure no. 4. Mean of the option ranks for the beginner teachers' professional development goals**

Legend: improving the teaching performance (1), encouraging and maintaining the professional enthusiasm (2), improving skills in the teaching discipline (3), developing professional relationships with other colleagues (4), improving the networking with colleagues (5), professional advance (6)

The most important objective for the permanently appointed teachers is their professional advance ( $x = 4.94$ ), as an illustration of their professional development. This category of teachers is composed of those who have decided to follow the teaching career, so they also need to advance for increasing their financial resources. Even in the education field, professional advance to a higher degree is very well described and supposes a certain number of years of experience, the young teachers considering it as a priority for their professional development. Other important objectives: improving skills in their teaching discipline ( $x = 4.92$ ) and developing their professional relationships with other colleagues ( $x = 4.52$ ) (figure no. 5).



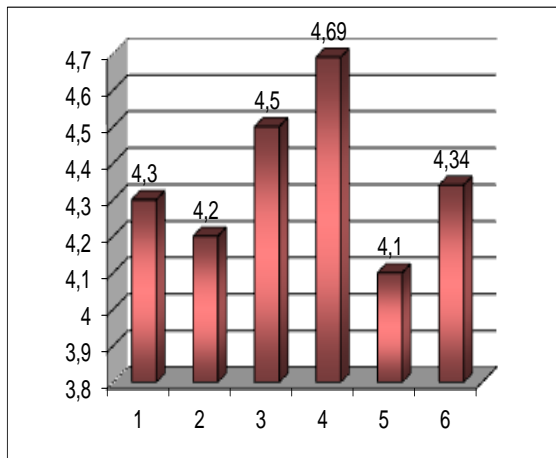
**Figure no. 5. Mean of the option ranks for the permanently appointed teachers' professional development goals**

Legend: improving the teaching performance (1), encouraging and maintaining the professional enthusiasm (2), improving skills in the teaching discipline (3), developing professional relationships with other colleagues (4), improving the networking with colleagues (5), professional advance (6)

In this category, we identified many teachers' consistent attitude to improve their specialty training level. We consider their intention to valorize the professional relationships as a premise indicating that they accept to get integrated into a professional community. The lowest percentages are represented by their professional enthusiasm stimulation and maintaining ( $x = 4.18$ ), but also by the improvement of their networking with colleagues ( $x = 4.17$ ). Being in their first years of career, the permanently appointed teachers don't feel yet the need to be in a closer contact with their colleagues. Usually, they are still in touch with their faculty mates.

The most important goal for the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree teachers is to develop their professional relationships ( $x = 4.69$ ), followed by the skill improvement in their specialty area ( $x = 4.50$ ) (figure no. 6). For the first time, we identified in this category a special focus on an open attitude toward the other colleagues having the same specialty. Here is a good premise for a collaborative learning approach: teachers have already accumulated information about the physical education and sports field, that is why after 5 to 10 years of experience, they need to exchange professional ideas and debate on some specific issues. Improving the teaching skills represents a constant in this category of teachers, too. Another important option refers to their professional advance ( $x = 4.34$ ). The lowest percentages concern their professional enthusiasm stimulation and maintaining ( $x = 4.2$ ) and the improvement of their networking with colleagues ( $x = 4.1$ ), which is similar to the previous category. We think this is a factor keeping to the professional vocation. They are still enthusiastic about their work,

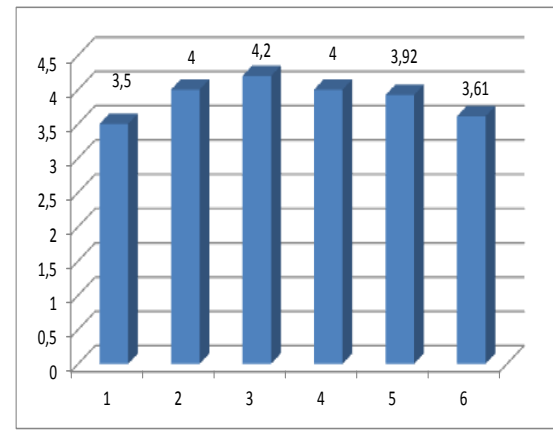
although their financial and the material resources are not always at a satisfactory level.



**Figure no. 6. Mean of the option ranks for the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree teachers' professional development goals**  
 Legend: improving the teaching performance (1), encouraging and maintaining the professional enthusiasm (2), improving skills in the teaching discipline (3), developing professional relationships with other colleagues (4), improving the networking with colleagues (5), professional advance (6)

As to the 1<sup>st</sup> degree teachers, we found out that improving their teaching skills was still a priority for them ( $x = 4.2$ ). We think that this option reveals their permanent interest in being updated with the latest pedagogical and specialty approaches (figure no. 7).

This professional development objective is followed by their professional enthusiasm stimulation and maintaining ( $x = 4$ ), the development of their professional relationships with other colleagues ( $x = 4$ ) and the improvement of their networking with colleagues ( $x = 3.92$ ). Consequently, for this category it is more important to keep at a high level both the enthusiasm when teaching physical education and sports and the professional exchanges. For the 1<sup>st</sup> degree teachers, the improvement of their relationships with the colleagues is very important. We consider that the alumni associations could help the teachers consolidate the relations among them and create a social community, not only a professional one.



**Figure no. 7. Mean of the option ranks for the 1<sup>st</sup> degree teachers' professional development goals**  
 Legend: improving the teaching performance (1), encouraging and maintaining the professional enthusiasm (2), improving skills in the teaching discipline (3), developing professional relationships with other colleagues (4), improving the networking with colleagues (5), professional advance (6)

### Discussions and conclusions

A high quality professional development is essential to increase educators' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, so that they could assure an educational process to the requested level. In all the categories of investigated subjects, we identified a priority able to improve the teaching skills. We consider that this option is a characteristic of physical education and sports teachers who want to be well informed about the latest methodical and psycho-pedagogical approaches. For each category of teachers, we identified a dominant option, even if this one wasn't significantly different from the others.

Beginner teachers are interested in performance teaching (all types of teaching skills - psycho-pedagogical, but also methodical ones), in teaching skills specific to their specialty area and in their professional advance. Such an option expresses their desire for increasing their professional level. Consequently, we consider that the continuing education program should be focused on information, which can consolidate/ improve their specialty skills.

Permanently appointed teachers are more oriented toward the professional advance. We think that their interest is particularly connected to their need of reaching a certain professional status level (which also determines a better financial status). For this category of teachers, we propose some continuing educational programs able to develop their competencies. We refer here to providing them the latest information about how to teach new sports branches or how to better teach the already known information. Such an approach can help them become more engaged in extra-school sports activities, organized as leisure activities. They can also help the



teachers develop a business of their own and get extra-money.

Personal relationships are a priority for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree teachers and for the professional advance of the junior and permanently appointed teachers.

We consider that the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree teachers, who appreciate the professional relationships, should be provided continuing education programs able to better satisfy the cooperative and collaborative learning. Thus, they are supposed to promote a student-focused learning process, but also to use some specific teaching methods. For this category, we propose the initiation of an e-learning teaching system assigned to develop new competencies.

It is very important for the 1<sup>st</sup> degree teachers to be provided an educational climate in which they can find professional and social influences. They need more than the other categories to find professional ways that can challenge them to approach a new teaching perspective. At the same time, they need to be part of a professional and social community, that is why the continuing educational program must provide them the opportunity to participate in events organized by the alumni associations.

In order to design attractive educational continuing programs, the promoter must be informed about the particularities of the professional development process in different categories of specialists. As we saw, each category has a specific way to approach the lifelong learning process. To draw up consistent programs and provide an attractive educational offer, institutions have to consider all the professional and social aspects that can influence the continuing educational process achievement in physical education and sports area.

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