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EXPLORATORY STUDY ON TEACHERS' PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

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Abstract

Concern for personal and professional development of teachers is a prerequisite for career development and is also a way of adapting to social changes and to the students needs. Teachers as the essential resource of the school and their community, need a permanent update of the self, that they actually use in working with students. The article presents the results of a exploratory study on a sample of 107 school teachers in order to study their perception of how the personal development process is being conducted and to identify the main needs for personal and professional development. The research method is the survey based on a questionnaire and the results obtained are statistically analyzed and interpreted, so as to provide a comprehensive picture of this aspect. The article presents the results obtained, among which we mention, that the questioned teachers learned about personal development first of all from the workplace and most of them chose to take part in courses in order to achieve their own personal development. Many of the respondents prefer personal development groups as well as books and websites. The teachers involved in the research seek after a change in their communication and professional skills, through personal development. Most of the research subjects have further personal and professional objectives such as, applying both the knowledge and the working techniques acquired. Through the personal development process, the majority of the questioned teachers believe, they have optimized up to now, their professional and communication skills and their creativity.

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1. Introduction

As we have the ability to continually adjust our beliefs, ideas, perspectives and expectations towards something and someone, it is important to be aware that our own personal development, or that "life long learning" which can be our salvation and the safe path to maturity. This study starts from the premise that personal development is very important for every teacher who wants a successful teaching career, along with the satisfaction of the work he/she performs. Being a very demanding profession from a psychologically point of view, which requires the teacher, both specialized knowledge, general culture and well-developed social-emotional skills, we consider that it is necessary for each teacher to be aware of its own personal development needs. Personal development as a continuous process ensures optimal integration in all life areas, increases well-being and connects the person to his/her own needs, as well as, to the group or community demands. Personal development has an influence on reducing stress and acquiring stress management techniques, contributes to developing the ability to creatively solve problems, optimizes communication and communication skills and finally improves interactions with students, student - parents, and work colleagues. The teachers' way of being, or their personality, with all its dimensions, is the basis for all subsequent processes. In other words, continuous personal development is a synthesis of mind and heart.

2. Problem Statement

According to the literature, the process of personal development, offers teachers a better adaptation to the school and social environment requirements, it also decreases the burn-out phenomenon, helps at increasing self-esteem, at consolidation of well-being and also at negative emotions management. The teaching profession is a serious responsibility, which requires skills of emotional self-control, crisis intervention and conflict management, together with the development of an educational relationship with each student. Thus, personal development is the foundation of a successful pedagogical act. A self-aware teacher, will have a better understanding, not only of his own person, but also of the children and adolescents, who need so much attention, understanding, modeling and compassion (György, 2018, p. 187). According to the principles of positive psychology, in education and in school in particular, there are two major directions of development, namely, the first is the modeling of adults so as to offer positive models to children, which they educate, because as Snyder and Lopez (2005) formulate "the children are, plastic speaking, hungry for positive models ... it would be good for them to have the opportunity to find them in the real people around them, not in the characters in the programs and movies they watch" (p. 94). The second direction of intervention considers that "For adults to teach, provide role models and strengthen positive skills, they must be familiar with the concepts and have the skills they teach" (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014, p. 23), to learn not only to point the finger at the problems that children can create and create "but rather to ask what can be done for them, to help them give everything they have better in them" (Snyder & Lopez, 2005, p. 95).

Also, it's not only the development of personal and professional skills which are important but also the teacher should be aware that the use of feelings of shame and fear, as a strategy of discipline, motivation and behavioral change are only evidence of unconsciousness and major emotional detachment

from the didactic act and the principles of emotional intelligence. For the re-humanization of the Romanian educational system, we consider that students and adults need to learn guided by curiosity, creativity and receptivity.

Another important argument for the personal development of the teachers, is the fact that the school is a learning context based mainly on the relationship with others. Therefore, for the change through learning to take place, it is necessary for educators, to live in this context, experience safety and personal evolution. Thus, the presence of the relational and educational intelligence skills among teachers, represents a source to combat the stress in the teacher-student relationship. In the vision of György (2018), in order to develop educational intelligence, teachers need to understand and practice with the students the following elements:

- the *movement* because it facilitates the production of chemicals at the brain level, which stimulates the educational process, increasing the attention, the concentration, the motivation for the cognitive learning and last but not least the well-being;

- *positive emotional state, safety and lack of negative stress*, because in the learning process students need to feel safe and relaxed. Criticism, shame, threat or verbal punishment, causes in the child's brain the production of too much cortisol, a substance harmful to the whole body, which triggers in the child or adolescent survival reactions as fighting, avoidance or inhibition, in relation to the danger represented in that moment of educators;

- *repetition and practice*, because they contribute to the creation of new neural networks, as part of the healthy routine of the student's life.

Being a teacher today involves a great deal of responsibility (multiple skills, appropriate style, diversity of roles), but it also means dedication, power, passion, it means educating to be, it means helping students to develop, as you have developed yourself. To educate implies science, but also art, it involves knowledge, but also emotions, it requires theory, but also practice, it implies the individual, but also the relational dimension (Roşu, 2019).

Also, according to Vicol and Vrabii (2017), modern pedagogical education is currently updating the most integrative ways of human development, thus creating opportunities for self-improvement. Today, as never before, we need teachers who demonstrate mobility, constructive thinking, morality, who are capable of collaboration and responsible for the future.

We believe that the teaching profession requires a long process of personal development, because the teacher influences both consciously and unconsciously the way of being of each student. In order to fulfill the formative dimension of the education process, it is necessary for teachers to be fully aware of how they significantly shape the destinies of their students.

3. Research Questions

Through our research we aim to find out the answers to the following questions:

- Which are the main personal development needs of preuniversity teachers?
- What have teachers tried so far, in their personal development process?
- What are teachers' expectations from persons and institutions, that offer personal development programs?

- How relevant is the personal development process for the questioned teachers?

4. Purpose of the Study

Because the level of our personal development, is what determines our actions and pushes us towards certain decisions, in accordance to our values and beliefs, this study aims to:

a. Investigate the way preuniversity teachers, perceive the process and the results, related to their personal development.

b. Identify how well teachers understand and practice activities specific for their personal development.

5. Research Methods

In order to achieve these objectives, we conducted a survey based on a questionnaire. The research tool developed by us, contains 13 items, of which 6 are objective and 7 are subjective items. The questionnaire was applied to 107 teachers from pre-university education, from October 2017 to April 2018.

6. Findings

We offer here a descriptive statistic of the obtained results, in order to outline a more structured image on this dimension of the teaching profession. The analysis carried out by us, starts from each item of the questionnaire and synthesizes in percentage the opinions expressed by the questioned teachers.

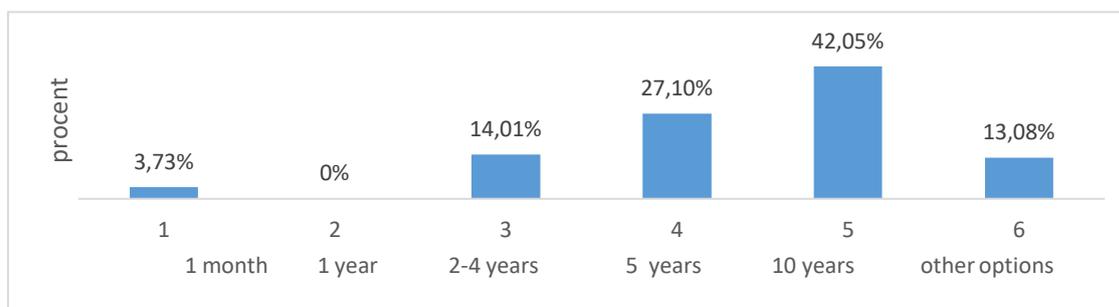


Figure 01. The first contact with the idea of personal development

Regarding the first contact with the idea of personal development, the questioned teachers answered as follows: 3.73% a month ago, 0% a year ago, 14.01% 2-4 years ago, 27.10% years ago, 42.05 % 10 years ago, and 13.08% other variants. According to the Figure 01, the idea of personal development is still relatively recent, most of the surveyed teachers, indicating that they have been concerned about this for about 10 years.

The second item, as shown in Figure 02 refers to the source of the idea of personal development, so that 51.40% responded through the workplace, 3.73% from friends, 8.41% from the internet or television, 11.21% from books, 32.71% from the university and 15.88% answered other variants.

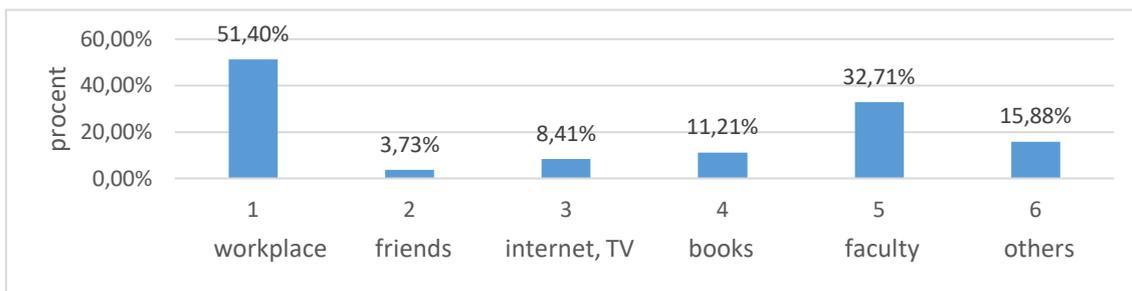


Figure 02. The source of the idea of personal development

We mention that at this item it was possible to indicate several response variants. Therefore, we conclude that the workplace is the first source of teachers' personal development, but also the university is an important factor in identifying the personal development needs.

The next item of the questionnaire aims to identify the personal development methods used so far by the questioned teachers. The results are contained in the Table 01.

Table 01. Methods of personal development tried so far by the questioned teachers

Item	f	%
Answer options		
<i>Methods of personal development tried so far:</i>		
Personal development groups led by a psychologist	22	20.56%
Coaching	13	12.15%
Participation in courses	83	77.57%
Participation in trainings	26	24.30%
Personal development groups led by a trainer /coach	15	14.02%
Workplace courses	49	45.79%
Courses at the university/student NGOs	39	36.45%
Books, magazines, internet	69	64.49%
Other:	3	2.80%

Regarding the methods of personal development tried so far, participation in courses was teachers' first option with 77.57%, followed by books, magazines and internet in proportion with 64.49%, followed by courses at the workplace with 45.79%. Then 36.45% of the questioned teachers' indicated that for their personal development they participated in courses organized by the university/student NGOs, 24.30% participated in trainings, 20.56% in personal development groups led by a psychologist, 14.02% in personal development groups led by a coach, 12.15% in coaching sessions, and 2.80% responded with other variants, without indicating any.

The next item of the questionnaire aims to highlight the form of personal development, considered as the most effective by the teachers. The results are presented in the Table 02.

Table 02. The most effective form of personal development

Item	f	%
Answer options		
<i>The most effective form of personal development:</i>		
Books or websites	49	45.79%
Personal development groups	55	51.40%

Individual coaching sessions	7	6.54%
Trainings of specific soft skills (eg time management, public speaking, conflict management, organizational communication etc.)	34	31.78%
Other:	1	0.93%

At this item 51,40% of the teachers showed a predilection for personal development groups, followed by books or sites with 45.79%. They also consider effective for their personal development the trainings of specific skills like: time management, public speaking, organizational communication, and so on, with 31.78%. Individual coaching sessions was selected only in proportion of 6.54% and 0.93% consider other variants to be suitable for them, but they do not provide concrete examples.

Regarding the person or site that teachers follow most often in the field of personal development, the subjects offered their own answers, which we grouped as follows:

Table 03. The person or site that teachers follow most often in the field of personal development

Item	f	%
Answer options		
<i>The person or site that teachers follow most often in the field of personal development:</i>		
Didactic Corp House	21	19.62%
Specialty sites and blogs for personal development, Facebook	20	18.69%
Didactic.ro	17	15.88%
Edu.ro	11	10.28%
Specialized teachers	10	9.34%
School Inspectorate	6	5.60%
Personalities from education and culture	6	5.60%
The director of the school and service colleagues	4	3.73%
Teacher Training Departments	2	1.86%

We mention that the answers were ranked according to the frequency with which they were indicated. As shown in the Table 03., the website of the Didactic Corp House is the most frequently viewed 19.62%, followed by specialized sites and personal development blogs, Facebook, with 18.69%. Other sites that have met many elections are didactic.ro with 15.88%, edu.ro with 10.28%. As we can see in the table above, teachers prefer to follow specialized sites on the Internet, in order to be connected to information, which can contribute to their own personal development. In a smaller proportion other sources are indicated, for example specialized teachers 9.34%, School Inspectorate 5.60%, personalities from education and education 5.60% and the director of the school and service colleges 3.73%.

Another item of the applied questionnaire was the change that the teachers seek after personal development. Being an open item the answers were grouped according to frequencies as follows:

Table 04. The person or site that teachers follow most often in the field of personal development

Item	f	%
Answer options		
Professional skills	36	33.64%
Effective communication	30	28.02%
Teaching style	8	7.47%
Addressing issues related to simultaneous teaching	6	5.60%
Increased self-esteem	5	4.67%
Emotions management	5	4.67%
The way of thinking	5	4.67%
Attitude towards others and towards life	3	2.80%
Better control over classroom situations	3	2.80%
Active listening	3	2.80%
More efficient organization of time	3	2.80%
Creativity	3	2.80%
Innovation	2	1.86%
Modern, efficient and happy parent	2	1.86%
Diet	2	1.86%
Knowledge of children	2	1.86%
Efficiency	2	1.86%
I do not want to change but to optimize	2	1.86%

From the Table 04. it turns out that the teachers want to change or to optimize their professional competences, 33.64%. They also want to modify their communication skills 28.02%, probably in the sense of having a greater influence on the behavior of their students and the educational relation with them. Also 7.47% of the respondents consider that their own teaching style should be optimized, followed by simultaneous teaching with 5,60%. In 4.67% equal percentage, teachers want through personal development to improve their self-esteem, emotion management and thinking. To a lesser extent, with only 2.80% for each aspect mentioned, teachers want to optimize: attitude towards others and toward life, to gain better control over classroom situations, their active listening skills, time management and creativity. Finally, we mention the aspects that teachers want to change through personal development and which have met few options 1.86%: innovation, being a modern efficient and happy parent, diet, knowledge about children, efficiency.

Regarding how much they solved from the objective proposed by the personal development activities, teachers indicated the degree of achievement of their objective, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (complete), as follows:

Table 05. Self-assessment of the degree of achievement of the objective proposed for personal development

1 not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 completely
0%	0%	1.87%	6.54%	9.35%	6.54%	23.36%	28.97%	20.56%	2.80%

We observe from the Table 05 the fact that most of the options expressed by most teachers are at point 8 of the self-assessment scale with 28.97%, followed by point 7 of the scale with 23.36% and point 9 of the scale with 20.56%. This aspect indicates that most teachers consider that they have almost

completely achieved their goal for personal development and therefore, we consider this process important for them.

The next item of the questionnaire, refers to the subsequent objectives of the teachers, established after certain experiences with personal development techniques. The answers given by the subjects were grouped according to their frequency as follows:

Table 06. Subsequent objectives of the teachers, established after certain experiences with personal development techniques

Item Answer options	f	%
Personal and professional development	20	18.69%
Application of working knowledge / techniques	18	16.82%
Self-knowledge	9	8.41%
Relationship skills	8	7.47%
Techniques for classroom management	8	7.47%
Development of communication	6	5.60%
Emotions management	5	4.67%
Developing self-esteem	4	3.73%
Public speaking	2	1.86%
Positive approach to crisis situations	2	1.86%
Goal setting	2	1.86%
Flexibility	2	1.86%
Weight loss-diet	1	0.93%
Decision making	1	0.93%
Motivation development	1	0.93%
Learning a foreign language	1	0.93%
I do not know	1	0.93%

From the Table 06. it can be seen that a good part of the questioned teachers want to continue the process of personal and professional development, without indicating a specific objective. 16.82% of the respondents propose to apply what they have acquired, 8.41% of the teachers affirm that they are still concerned with self-knowledge, 7.47% intend to further develop their relationship skills, as well as the classroom management techniques. Other objectives established by teachers include: 5.60% communication development, 4.67% emotion management and 3.73% self-esteem development. Other aspects which have been mentioned very sporadically by teachers, are included in the table above. They are important from a personal point of view, but statistically they are not particularly relevant.

Another subjective item was the indication by the investigated teachers of the most pleasant experience they have in personal development. The multitude of responses given by the subjects required their answers to be grouped as follows:

Table 07. The most pleasant experience with personal development

Item Answer options	f	%
Meeting new people	12	11.21%
Optimizing relationships with friends and colleagues	10	9.34%
Awareness that they can apply the acquired techniques	9	8.41%

Self- and interconnection activities	7	6.54%
Development of social life	5	4.67%
Coaching module Didactino.ro	5	4.67%
Attend personal development seminars	5	4.67%
Teamwork with students	4	3.73%
Getting to know new people	3	2.80%
Sharing experiences with colleagues	3	2.80%
Communication with students	3	2.80%
Discovering the techniques for solving crisis situations	3	2.80%
Success in personal life and service	3	2.80%
Reaching goals	2	1.86%
Participation in international / national conferences	2	1.86%
Identifying your own needs and goals	1	0.93%
Meeting with better trained people	1	0.93%
The course of children's entertainers for holiday centers	1	0.93%
The course on interactive teaching methods	1	0.93%
The ICT course	1	0.93%
The mentor course	1	0.93%
Professional counseling and guidance course	1	0.93%
Mediator experiences	1	0.93%

Analyzing Table 07., we notice that the most pleasant experiences with personal development, indicated by a part of the teachers 11.21%, is meeting new people, followed by the optimization of relations with friends and colleagues 9.34%. We choose to present in this brief analysis other pleasant experiences mentioned by the questioned teachers, such as: awareness of the fact that they can apply the acquired techniques 8.41%, the self- and interconnection activities 6.54%, the development of the social life 4.67%, the module of training Didactino.ro 4.67%, participation in personal development seminars 4.67%. The other pleasant experiences mentioned by the teachers were less frequent, for which they are mentioned only in the table above.

The next item of the questionnaire, investigates as Table 08 shows, the existence of possible unpleasant experiences with certain types of personal development, as well as the reasons underlying them, invoked by the teachers. Therefore 96.26% maintained that they did not have unpleasant experiences with different types of personal development, while 3.73% indicated that they had unpleasant experiences in this area.

Table 08. Unpleasant experiences with certain types of personal development activities

Item	f	%
Answer options		
<i>Unpleasant experiences with certain types of personal development activities</i>		
I did not have	103	96.26%
I had	4	3.73%

The reasons teachers consider that they have had unpleasant experiences with certain types of personal development activities, include: lack of technical equipment, lack of will, lack of seriousness of the parties involved, lack of punctuality, the need to present personal experiences and emotions. We

consider that these reasons refer rather at the beliefs of the people involved in the process of personal development.

The penultimate item of the survey based on a questionnaire asks the teachers to indicate the usefulness of the efforts made in the sphere of personal development, on a scale from 3 (very useful) to (1) useless, regarding the following aspects, as Table 09 shows:

Table 09. Usefulness of efforts in the area of personal development

Item Answer options	Very useful		Somewhat useful		Useless	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
<i>Increasing professional efficiency</i>	85	79.44%	21	19.63%	1	0.93%
<i>Improving communication skills</i>	79	73.83%	28	26.17%	0	0%
<i>Development of social life</i>	60	56.07%	47	43.93%	0	0%
<i>Improving relationships with close friends</i>	59	55.14%	42	39.25%	6	5.61%
<i>Improvement of personal life</i>	62	57.94%	45	42.06%	0	0%
<i>Increasing creativity</i>	75	70.09%	29	27.10%	3	2.80%
Change of diet	16	14.95%	50	46.73%	41	38.32%
Higher incomes	15	14.02%	46	42.99%	45	42.06%
Improving health	20	18.69%	68	63.55%	18	16.82%
Better relationship with your life partner	32	29.91%	54	50.47%	17	15.89%

Regarding the usefulness of the efforts made in the sphere of personal development, as can be seen from the table 09. teachers consider that, it is very beneficial for the increase of the professional efficiency 79.44%, also for the improvement of the communication skills 73.83% and the increase of the creativity 70.09%. It is appreciated the usefulness of the efforts made, for the personal life optimization 57.94%, for the development of the social life 56.07%, as well as for improving the relations with close friends 55.14%. We extracted from the table in order to analyse, only those answers that have met the most allocations for the very useful variant.

The last item of the questionnaire, refers to the estimated time for completing the personal development process. We found that, 0.93% consider that they will complete this process in a month, 0.93% over a year, 3.74% between two and five years, 0% over five years, 1.87% over 10 years, 11.21% can probably never estimate, and 81.31% think that never, because personal development is an ongoing process. All this results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. The time estimated by the teachers for completing the personal development process

Item Answer options	f	%
<i>Estimated time for completing the personal development process:</i>		
Months	1	0.93%
Over a year	1	0.93%
Between 2 and 5 years	4	3.74%
Over 5 years	0	0%
10 years later	2	1.87%
I can never possibly estimate	12	11.21%
Personal development ends never, it is an ongoing process	87	81.31%

Knowing and assuming personal development needs is the starting point in the teaching career. The specialized and didactic knowledge are actually built on this basis.

7. Conclusion

The idea of personal development is still relatively recent, most of the surveyed teachers, indicate that they have been concerned about this for about 10 years. Therefore, we conclude that the workplace is the first source of teachers' personal development, but also the university is an important factor in identifying the personal development needs. Regarding the methods of personal development tried so far, participation in courses, was teachers' first option, followed by books, magazines, internet and also professional trainings at the workplace.

As shown in the paper, more than half of the surveyed teachers showed a predilection for personal development groups, followed by books or internet pages.

The website of the Didactic Corp House is the most frequently viewed internet page for personal and professional development, followed by specialized sites and personal development blogs and Facebook. Teachers are very interested in optimizing their professional competences, they also want to modify their communication skills, probably in the sense of having a greater influence on the behavior of their students and to improve the educational relation with the pupils. Most of the teachers consider that they have almost completely achieved their goals for personal development. Also, a good part of the questioned teachers want to continue the process of personal and professional development, without indicating a specific objective.

The most pleasant experiences with personal development, indicated by a relevant part of the questioned teachers, is meeting new people, followed by improving relations with friends and colleagues.

Teachers consider personal development to be beneficial for the increase of the professional efficiency, for the improvement of the communication skills and the increase of their creativity. It is also appreciated the usefulness of the efforts made, for the personal life optimization, for the social life development, as well as for improving the relations with close friends.

Finally, most of the questioned teachers think that personal development never ends, because it is an ongoing process.

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