

**8TH INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA
COASTLINE COUNTRIES
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
CONFERENCE**

**AUGUST 29-30, 2022 / SOFIA, BULGARIA
BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
INSTITUTE OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY
WITH CENTRE OF PHYTOCHEMISTRY**

**FULL TEXTS
BOOK**

EDITORS

**Prof. Dr. Pavlina DOLASHKA
Dr. Kaldygul ADILBEKOVA**

**ISBN: 978-625-8213-50-8
By IKSAD Publishing House**

CONFERENCE ID

CONFERENCE TITLE

8th INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA COASTLINE COUNTRIES SCIENTIFIC
RESEARCH CONFERENCE

DATE AND PLACE

AUGUST 29-30, 2022/ SOFIA, BULGARIA
SOFIA TECH PARK, BOULEVARD "TSARIGRADSKO SHOSE

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HORIZONTAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS THROUGH MODERN APPROACHES**Ophelia KANEVA**

PhD in Educational Management; Associate professor in Varna Free University & Plovdiv University, Bulgaria;
ORCID No: 0000-0002-6318-4594

Abstract:

This work is focused on the specific need of the pedagogical experts of support, which reflects adequately the challenges of the hectic school agenda. It analyses some of the contemporary opportunities given by the technologies and mobility and upgrades them with specific good practices.

The material highlights pedagogical supervision as a modern opportunity for the educators and underlines the profile of the good teacher with its important meaning for the growing and quickly developing society.

After exposing challenges and possible answers for the teacher, some conclusions are offered not only to the educational management, but also to the pedagogical experts, local community, other supporting professions and the professional community in education in general.

Key words: supervision, INEDU, educational management, support for teachers, professional development

I: About the challenges before the teachers in contemporary & dynamic environment – instead of an introduction

XXIst century exists as an entirely new environment, which is not necessarily measurable by the usual recognizable dimensions such as time, space, one direction of development, family, personal experience, cultural ambience, nationality, practical applicability, etc. Teachers are facing it through their own concerns as well as through the look of trainee's eyes, at least. And this is usually happening 24/7 since good teachers are dedicated to development processes entirely. And taking into account such commitment, which educational system, and also society, needs and feeds, it is logical to interrogate the support that teachers are able to receive and rely on.

Traditionally education is developmental aiming children's evolution, which is thematized through building different competencies, certain character traits and strengths, creativity, motivation, responsibility to self, others and the world, building mastery and expertise, as well as abilities for self-development in the conditions of continuous changes. All these targets are reflected in the different national, European and global policies. Together with that expansion of the positive development of the personality requires seeking for integration with the different types of abilities and competences of all participants involved in school education – including (with focus on) the teachers. So, supporting mechanisms to teachers and set goals should not just be part of the educational management in general. They should be specified in a way to:

- ensure the comfort for teaching growing;
- verify the elegance of ongoing self-monitoring;
- be also on time and on place;
- proceed without contesting the authority of the professional educator;
- go with the necessary sensitivity to the heart of the pedagogical challenges.

Challenges before teachers are professional and personal, however shouldn't be ignored that exactly the personality of the educator is the main element of the educational process where the good example is followed by pupils. In that case any personal perspective of the professional (and not only) challenges faced by the teacher is a key focus to frame the support. And respecting such point of view, it is clear the support should be:

- horizontal
- ad-hoc
- held in a protected environment
- respecting teachers authority
- by a professional who's clear about the spectrum of core pedagogical challenges.

It shouldn't be ignored that such contemporary support need is expected to be answered in the frame of a system that is traditional, conservative, with slow-mode reforms – in a contrast with hectic time of the reality: which in its sense is the main challenge above all. The educational system in general is slower than the pace of the reality.

II: The surge of new technologies creates opportunities to generate adequate responses to challenges

A: Hybrid forms

The College of DuPage defines hybrid learning as a combination between face-to-face and on-line teaching into one cohesive experience (<https://www.codlearningtech.org/PDF/hybridteachingworkbook.pdf>)ⁱ. Approximately half of the class sessions are on-campus, while the other half have students working online. Although that may sound like a cut-and-dry formula, a lot of planning is needed to ensure that hybrid works well, allowing its two formats to capitalize on each other's strengths.

Given the unique opportunities that hybrid can offer, planning must be approached carefully. Instructors need to be familiar with not just the strengths of online and face-to-face teaching in their own rights, but also with how they can feed into each other over a longer term.

It could also be reflected that hybrid approach links old-school with new-style of studying area. In that case a smooth transition opportunity is viewed as a bridge between traditional teaching and the challenges of the contemporary one. So, hybrid forms are area shaped between the man and the technology. It enables a timely response that is not hindered by physical environment, travel time or other circumstance of the typical non-hybrid world. It provides an opportunity to form a collective in a virtual space, ensuring geographical independence for professionals and a wide scope for exchange of experience, cultural and community exchange.

B: Mobility of expertise

Sara Zamir believes mobility is a process whereby a teacher has the opportunity to develop both personally and professionally (Zamir, S., 2018)ⁱⁱ. The secure teacher feels confident

where is and wishes to learn and advance. At the same time, for there to be mobility, the teacher needs a sense of personal and organizational empowerment. Someone who feels appreciated, whose opinion is worth something within the organization, will develop the desire to grow within it. Mobility does not occur necessarily in a bottom-up process (vertically), in other words it is not necessarily a job promotion to a more senior position, and it may also be lateral mobility expressed in greater professionalization within the teaching field. Sometimes this kind of mobility leads society to sense that the person is „treading water“ career-wise, even though that person doesn’t actually feel that way (Steffy et al., 1999)ⁱⁱⁱ.

In other hand, mobility is an opportunity to bring together teachers from diverse geographical and educational contexts, allowing them to examine the question of transnationalism in particular educational process. While the activities that connect people, institutions and cultural practices across the borders of nation-states have gained interest in common fields in recent years, there has been little research so far into how transnationalism intersects with teacher education, and how existing practices can be better integrated into teacher education programmes (Ahmed, A., Barnawi, O., 2021)^{iv}.

Alternatively, teachers can be involved in virtual mobility activities, which enable them to contact representatives of partner institutions by using informational communications and technologies. Such opportunity fills gaps by introducing and examining existing transnational practices - including cross-cultural settings, multiple dialogues on mobility of knowledge, practice and others.

Mobility answers the necessity to communicate professionally and not only with the richness of language, culture, gestures, informal communication and sensitivity to the audience. It shapes the support according the concrete pedagogue, upgrading it adequately to the particular environment.

C: On-line spaces in a specific organization (and protected environment)

Mike Ribble and Gerald Bailey talk in their book “Digital Citizenship in Schools” about how technology influences the way people interact and the concept of digital citizenship in the classroom (Ribble, M., Bailey, G., 2007)^v. Authors define nine elements of digital citizenship, related to technology usage inside and outside the school environment, few of which are relevant to teacher’s support:

- (1) Digital access: teachers should be aware of possible digital divide, since not everybody yet has equal ability to be digital. Suitable alternatives for every participant in communication are still needed.
- (2) Digital communication: it has become so common that users forget they are doing so in a virtual space, where miscommunication happens often. The Internet has given a voice to anyone who needs it. In turn, this requires empathy and appropriate reactions from its users.
- (3) Digital literacy: includes the ability to differentiate between real and fake content, which can have a negative impact on the lives of users. They need to learn which content is good for them and what they should avoid in order to lead a balanced life.
- (4) Digital etiquette: shapes online behavior to respond positively to online content. In this way, online attitude is reflected in the real world and vice versa.
- (5) Digital health and wellness: users should be taught to protect themselves and others from potential harm and ask for help if they need it. Making use of online resources is a plus, but everyone should be aware of the dangers as well.

- (6) Digital security: while using devices at school or at home, users should be aware of potential malware attacks. Prevention and protection are a must in everyday behavior.

Rapid life happening is raising challenges about the capability of resilience. Making the educational environment safe and sustainable means ensuring access to affordable spaces for all, including teachers. This highlights links to positive transitions of practices and knowledge, dealing with the issue of security. It affects the individual perception of safety and understanding of the socio-technical perspectives towards sustainable usage in supportive practices. On-line spaces are adaptive in relevant terms, compared to the hectic daily schedule in the pedagogical environment. Respecting the recommendations of digital safeties, remote learning options are applicable for supporting teachers methods.

III: Specific opportunities and good practices

A: Face-to-face supervisions

Supervision in social sciences is well recognized since the end of XX century. It is widely applied in health area and standardly used in social service and care providing. As a horizontal support in pedagogical area, it starts to be acknowledged during the second decade of XXI century.

Scientists and research authors define supervision in different ways - as a process, as a tool, as a criterion for quality management. Judith Kaufman and Thomas Schwartz characterize supervision's goal to achieve effectiveness of developing and shaping a professional identity^{vi} (Kaufman, J., Schwartz, Th., 2008). Due to F.J. Reh, supervision is a form of planned assistance to the professional in the work as well as a tool for monitoring the quality and efficiency of efforts^{vii} (Reh, F.J., 2020). Alfred Kadushin and Daniel Harness develop a wide range of understanding for supervision in humanitarian world, especially focusing on social work^{viii} – a process of discussing problems and conflicts in professional interaction, designed according to certain rules; supporting the expert to learn from own experience, to develop own skills and to improve the quality of own work; a method by which a professional receives help in understanding the situation where works, own role and behavior in it (Kadushin, A., Harness, D., 2014). Carlton Munson says supervision is a tool to ensure a good emotional climate in the team (Munson, C., 2001)^{ix}.

On the basis of these preliminary researches in social sciences and taking into consideration the practice in the area (look further for practice from Bulgaria), shaping the philosophy of specific support could be define as follows:

“Supervision provides an opportunity (individual or group) for teaching staff to reflect on and review their current practice, discuss individual learners' needs in depth, explore how to change or modify their own practice, and gain emotional support for the challenges experienced”.

In group supervision each participant receives support not only by the supervising expert, but also from colleagues, allowing to analyze complex situations or issues, generating alternative solutions and providing supportive feedback. Individual supervision ensures protected atmosphere for sharing and support, which not only enforces the professional abilities, but adds esteem and confidence.

Due to analyses made in Bulgaria on supervisions provided in 2019 (Kaneva, O., 2022)^x, pedagogical supervision is looked by the teachers because of faced challenges with conflicts between children (17,7 %), relationships with parents (57 %), maintaining a stimulating and

supportive educational environment and positive discipline (43,6 %), disharmonious relations with colleagues (28 %) and school management (19,2 %), teaching process (20,4 %), etc. (see Fig. 1).

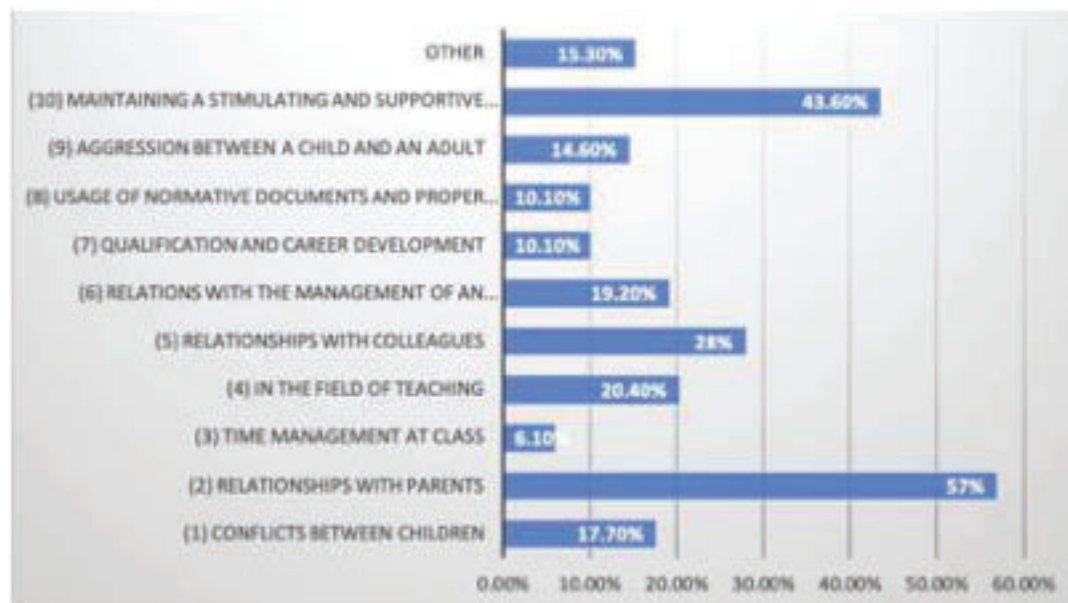


Fig. 1

And their satisfaction of received horizontal support by supervision is 99 %, of which completely satisfied are 52,23 % and satisfied 47,24 % (Kaneva, O., 2021)^{xi}.

In addition, the supervision processes enable the experts to map common challenges teachers face in their work, and also registers the good practices on the field.

B: INEDU platform

INEDU is a project/initiative for inclusive education through sports (inedu.eu)^{xii}. Thanks to its scope, the expert group behind INEDU develops online platform to support physical educators. The objective is to provide an online space for professional development of physical education teachers, wishing to introduce inclusive sport in their daily work at mainstream school. The platform offers opportunities for teachers to be engaged in effective professional learning with their peers, since this is considered as the main prerequisite for achieving sustainable results with regard to introducing the concept of inclusive physical education at schools.

The platform provides the experience of traditional face-to-face supervision, however in online environment. Online supervision functionality, envisages publishing of good practices identified in a dedicated news section and in a separate library or also known as repository of good practices, which can be used by other teachers, not participating in supervision. The concept for the platform with all related textual elements and the logic of functioning is designed and developed to build the technical infrastructure and ensure qualitative supervision in a flexible way. This reflects avoiding the traditional traveling resources in face-to-face meetings mainly, but also better matching between supervisee and supervisor, ad-hoc reaction opportunities, etc. The platform also considers the opportunity of international-based expertise to be implemented, as it is multilingual (English, Bulgarian, German, Greek).

INEDU platform contributes to effective performance of teachers (in particular case physical education teachers) in applying innovations and inclusive education, also in increasing professional development motivation and self-esteem.

IV: Conclusions

A: to the educational management

Human's welfare was never as essential as being expected by the school system in XXI century. And that is why educational management should ensure wide ground for knowledge, habits, skills to socialize better and achieve higher life standards. Supervision guarantees the managerial approach systematic understanding and reflection on each educational element and contact point. Such supportive instrument improves (not limited to):

- (1) ventilation of workflow pressure;
- (2) enriching the positive attitude to profession;
- (3) balancing the relationships in the collective, mastery of conflicts and aggressive behavior;
- (4) stabilizing connections with the parents and community partners;
- (5) maintaining a stimulating and supportive environment and positive discipline;
- (6) improving time-management and teaching process;
- (7) carrier and qualification development;
- (8) administrative competences and proper keeping of school documentation;
- (9) confidence (systematical and personal).

B: to the professionals – pedagogical experts

Obviously supervision answers the necessities of contemporary pedagogue experts in professional (and not only) environment. It also allows the specialist to grow up not only for self-development, but with priority for the community and for the educational system. That is how supervision is understood as a modern, flexible, dynamic, effective and efficient managerial tool through which active development, welfare and higher standards are achieved.

It is clear that teachers need on-going horizontal and tailor-made support which protects their burn-out, upgrades their abilities to lead the future generations to a better world and opportunities, and sustains their personality in a way to underline the good example they should reflect – to the pupils and other professionals as well. And as so, every teacher should be aware to look for the needed support and to insist on its tailor-made approach – not only in front of the school management, but mainly in front self.

C: to the other supporting professions in the sector – social workers, psychologists, therapists, social assistants, etc.

In regard with the findings of insufficient points of contact with other areas of the community, significant work is needed to promote the opportunities that not only the educational but also the social, health, cultural, legal and economic systems contribute mostly to the cumulative quality of humanitarian process - a task that within the framework of supervision cannot be exhausted, but can be qualitatively presented to the participants.

Horizontal support is well recognized and applied in social work area since XXth century, so teaching sphere could relatively easily transfer and adopt good practices and prevention

methods of burn-out, un-resilience, etc. In this respect, social practice in general should be active and open to communicate opportunities, especially having in mind the target group in humanitarian world, that is shared by all the supporting professions.

D: to the local community

As far as the community dynamics in the XXIst century develops multispectrally, an important aspect of any humanitarian activity should be mastering the contact points in intersectoral cooperation. Pedagogical sphere is not excluded. Alberto Rodriguez and Kate Hovde proof by

their study of school autonomy that the level of teacher satisfaction increases as social benefits in schools grow – such as the extended social network and partnership (Rodriguez, A. and Hovde, K., 2002)^{xiii}. Therefore, it is reasonable to think about the possible enrichment of the practice of the modern school and the local community at the same time.

The community not only supports but also seeks opportunities to improve school education to meet increasing demands, process dynamics, real-world claims and personal development needs. And here is the crucial point of the introduction of specific supports to teachers, in which face the community looks for answering the increasing requests. Because successful implementation of educational standards attract additional resources for the benefit of both the student and the pedagogical specialist, and the school education system.

E: to the professional community in general

Humanitarian dialogue in modern society can and does play a positive role at economical, sectoral, regional, national and global level. This role is mainly expressed through the responsibility and active position in the symbiosis of the different social and moral values of the individual manifestations of life - the responsibility towards the future, the full and satisfying life now, the positive approach to the accompanying environment and/or the attitude towards progress in personal, technology and community plan.

Together with everything already noticed, supervision ensures ground for positive education, for democratic management in school, for burnout prevention, upgrading skills, specifying expertise, discovering new points of view, enriching the varieties of pedagogical specialists, widening horizons, personal and systematical grow. All these elements could and should be considered as assets for the humanitarian system, for social sciences and the workflow.

ⁱ <https://www.codlearningtech.org/PDF/hybridteachingworkbook.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Zamir, S., 2018, A Teaching Career: Mobility and Stagnation, Athens Journal of Education - Volume 5, Issue 2 – pp 145-160

ⁱⁱⁱ Steffy, E. B., Wolfe, M.P., Pach, S. & Enz, E., 1999, Life cycle of the career teacher. Corwin: Kappa Delta Phi

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