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## ***Predictors of Teachers' Professional Development in Inclusive School<sup>2</sup>***

### **Extended summary**

Teachers' professional development is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that in recent decades, in many countries around the world, has been at the center of educational policy and become one of the central topics of scientific research aimed at improving the quality of educational work of modern - inclusive - school. The paper examines the professional development of teachers through the discourse of educational inclusion and current educational policies which intensively promote the right to quality education that best suits the child. The predictors of teachers' professional development in the model of an inclusive school are the topic of our research. In terms of a wider reference framework of the research, it is the social and professional problem of improving the quality of work in an inclusive school – pedagogical – evaluation discourse of inclusion. In other words, the starting point in researching the determinants of teachers' professional development in an inclusive school context was the claim that school quality cannot be improved without motivated, qualified, and competent teachers, as well as that a high standard of inclusivity in school work cannot be achieved without a continual professional development of teachers as a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. The aim of the research was to determine the connection between a set of different factors - socio-demographic, personal, and contextual - and teachers' professional development and identify the determining factors among them. The general assumption was that socio-demographic, personal, and contextual factors are linked with teachers' professional development in the

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inclusive context. The research was conducted on a sample of 265 primary school teachers. Quantitative model, correlation design, and survey technique were used. The research results show that researching a wider range of factors was purposeful and indicate a different level of connection of the examined predictors with teachers' professional development. The results in the first group of factors confirmed that gender, age, and professional experience have explicative value. The correlation of these factors with teachers' professional development is more evident in the indicator of teachers' evaluation of the usefulness of different forms of professional development than in the participation indicator. The findings can be interpreted as an effect of a relatively high homogeneity of respondents relative to participation indicator, due to legal obligation of professional development. In the second group (personal factors), the results in both indicators of professional development confirmed a significant correlation with teachers' attitudes towards professional development and inclusion, as well as with the self-evaluation of competencies in institutionalized relationships, while the relation of self-efficiency in teacher-student relationships is significant only in the indicator of the usefulness of professional development. As expected, the highest correlation, between the attitudes towards professional development and the usefulness of professional training, as well as between the attitudes towards professional development and inclusion, validates the results of other studies of the predictive significance of positive attitudes towards professional development in general and connects them in a direct and meaningful way. The results of the analyses of the correlation between the third group of factors with professional development also showed that contextual factors have an explicative value. A supportive and cooperative work environment (the climate and inclusive culture) and personal resources (finances and available free time) are very connected with professional development. The results indicate that time and money are the limiting factors in professional development and that, according to the findings obtained on our sample: the support of colleagues and school principal, good organization, positive climate for cooperation, and the experience with working in an inclusive class provide a desirable framework for professional development and teachers' affirmation. In general, the research findings, with numerous new insights into the factors and limitations of teachers' professional development, contribute to building a more complete picture of the current practice of the professional development of teachers in inclusive school and are not only informative, but also useful to all actors in school practice, creators of educational policies in modeling and introducing changes in this area. The role and tasks of scientific disciplines included in the research of teachers' professional development are also pointed out, in terms of further operationalization and conceptualization of the process, as well as determination of the conceptual assumption for its successful development at all levels and in all phases.

**Keywords:** educational inclusion, teachers' professional development, socio-demographic factors, contextual factors, personal factors

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