

## ASSESSING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LEZHA, ALBANIA

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### Abstract

Changes in society, technology, and school curricula, require more professionally prepared and well-trained teachers. This study assesses the recognition of teachers' professional standards based on the study of geography teachers in the municipality of Lezha. These standards are part of the school documentation in which teachers base their work and refer to the Guidance No.5, date 25.02.2013, of the Ministry of Education and Science. Sixty geography teachers were asked through a structured questionnaire based on the Likert scale model and elaborated statistically through the SPSS 20 program. Data indicated the dominance of teachers with education, qualification and experience whom consider a standard when students are not only knowledgeable, but creative. Teachers need to increase the level of cooperation and communication between school and parents. They need to be more participative in various scientific activities, conferences, round tables, seminars for knowledge of the scientific researches and the exchange of experiences.

**Keywords:** *geography teachers, general teachers' professional standards, assessment, professional network*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Professional Standards for Teachers are statements that define and harmonize the professional knowledge and understanding, professional skills, attitudes, and also professional values of the teachers. A teacher's role in providing the quality of services to students is undeniable, as the teacher is responsible for providing lessons and role in improving the quality of services offered by a school. The world of academia constitutes a complex identity that combines many components such as: didactic activity, relationships with students, peers and parents. The profession also requires professionalism and values of ethics. They varies in dimensions, such as: the size of the knowledge, the ethical, psychological dimensions, etc. (Bozgo, 2008). Teaching is the art of combining all these components.

Providing the best possible results, based on professional standards of teachers and subject standards, leads to successful teaching. In addition to the general standards, each teacher must also meet the standards of the course they give lessons or have graded.

According to Sachs, J., (2003) the term: “Professional teaching standards” is widely and uncritically used in educational policy documents and popular discourses. Also, teachers’ standards are seen as quality assurance, as quality improvement.

Koster, B. and Dengerink, J.J. (2008) express: “Standards can be used by teacher educators as a list that describes what they have to do and how they have to do it. Under this limited perspective, standards tell the teachers in detail how to behave and the only thing they have to do is “tick off” a long list of behavioral elements (“standards as a description of behavior”). Standards can also be used to look carefully at an individual’s professional behavior, to analyze what has happened and why, and to work out alternatives on improving individual performance as a teacher, (“standards as a frame of reference and for self-regulation”).

These standards characterize a contemporary teacher, who aims and succeeds in making students active in a democratic society and in a developed market economy. By unifying professional and ethical claims, standards do not limit the originality and creativity of the teachers; but instead encourages them to become more creative. Professional standards for teachers were designed after examining the experiences of successful teachers (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013).

There are varying definitions of standards, but in general, it is considered as a set of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that the teacher conveys to his/her students during the lesson. A teacher holds the best of all these standards and demonstrates them during his/her pedagogical work along with other members of the community who may be the parents of the students. All standards are categorized under different indicators that aid their facilitator with identifying the degree of implementation of a given standard, while also revealing potential problems that may be encountered during practical realization.

The general professional standards for teachers consist of 10 standards. They include: scientific preparation, basic competences, professional development, knowledge and implementation of school documentation, teaching and learning, attention for students with learning difficulties, appraisal of learning and teacher as an active member of organizations of Educational Institutions, cooperation with the community, ethics and behavior.

According to Guideline No.5, dated 25/02/2013 “The general teacher standards” are approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports of Albania. They describe what every teacher should know, what he/she should be able to do, and what ethical and behavioral values should be part of his/her work. These standards evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, but also help in better understanding their professional progress and self-assessment.”

They also facilitate the work of the head teacher of the Educational Institution, when it comes to summarizing the professional needs of teachers for drafting and implementing the mid-term plan, and the annual professional development plan of the institution. The head teacher needs both types of standards to periodically assess the teacher, understand their professional development and find the necessary professional literature for them.

The general professional teacher standards are useful for the Council of Teachers to better define the topics of discussion they may encounter on daily basis and to enable professional debates, while dealing with further analysis of the student’s achievements. The Parent Council uses these standards to understand the quality of the educational services provided by the institution where their children learn.

Regional Educational Office considers both types of standards when distinguishing professional needs that are necessary to be completed at local level, as well as planning of the activity of professional networks of teachers and their professional counseling.

## **2. THE METHODOLOGY AND THE SAMPLING**

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the knowledge and the perceptions of geography teachers in Lezha municipality on these standards. This analysis would aid in determining how the standards are implemented and how it can be improved to better serve the purpose for which they were created.

A questionnaire survey was conducted with geography teachers at Lezha Municipality high schools. These questionnaires were filled out during the months of April-May 2018. For its realization, it was initially obtained permission from Lezha Regional Educational Office, then from the school head offices and mentors of the professional networks. Since 2018 there has been a system of professional networks where teachers according to their professional profiles are gathered once a month and discuss on specific topics of pedagogical work. A group of a professional network consists of 25 teachers and is guided by one mentor. The questionnaire was completed during these meetings. Sixty geography teachers participated in it, out of 84 with this profile, thus representing about 75% of the total number of geography teachers.

Each standard consists of their own indicators on which the questions of the questionnaire are built upon. A consistent part was built according to the Likert scale, with scaling 3 and 5. The results obtained from the questionnaire were carefully analyzed through the SPSS 20 program, whereby the variable frequencies were extracted and cross tabulation was performed among several variables. Mr. Luan DALIPI, as the responsible Inspector of geography and history profile at the Lezha Regional Educational Office, brought his personal opinions and experience in the evaluation of these standards.

## **3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

Sixty geography teachers participated in the sampling. 73.8% females (47 teachers) and 21.7% males (13 teachers), with majority of them having over 10 years (43.3%) in the educational institutions and an estimated 20 years (33.3%) in the educational institutions. According to teachers' qualification grades scheme, around 76.6% of them belong to the categories: Specialist teachers and Master teachers (table. 1). Teachers take exams to obtain qualification grades based on a wide professional program organized by the Educational Research Institute and Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES and ERI, 2016). We highlight that their experience in education is considerable.

**Table 1.** The category of work in education system

	The category of work	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	5-10 years' work in education (Qualified teacher)	8	13.3	13.3	13.3
	10-20 years' work in education (Specialist teacher)	26	43.3	43.3	56.7
	Over 20 years work in education (Master teacher)	20	33.3	33.3	90.0
	Less than 5 years' work in education (Unqualified teacher)	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

### 3.1 The "Scientific Preparation" Standard

It states that "If a teacher does not possess the scientific part of the subject, he/she cannot successfully practice the teacher's profession, and would not be equipped with the knowledge to comply with other standards.

The two estimated indicators are:

- a) Possesses the methods of scientific research of the subject
- b) Is aware of the subject's scientific innovations and conducts ongoing research into the benefit of the classroom (Guidance no. 5, dated 25.02.2013.)

*Question 1.1.* Your knowledge about the scientific preparation of the Geography course you consider:

- a) Very good; b) Good; c) Sufficient

**Table 2.** Knowledge of the scientific preparation of the Geography course

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very good	44	73.3	73.3	73.3
Valid Good	16	26.7	26.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

From the obtained results in (Table 2), most of the teachers have "Very good" knowledge of the scientific preparation of Geography course, with about 73.3% of teachers, possessing a good mastery of the subject and proper scientific preparation. Only 26.7% of them have chosen the "Good" alternative.

*Question 1.2.* Are you researching on scientific innovations of the geography subject?

- a) Yes; b) No; c) As needed

**Table 3.** Researching on scientific innovations of the geography subject

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	17	28.3	28.3	28.3
No	1	1.7	1.7	30.0
Valid As needed	42	70.0	70.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Research on scientific innovations on the subject of geography seems to not only garner interest, but also a necessity for teachers during their work, which is evident in the alternative chosen by 70% of the teachers in (Table 3). This demonstrates that teachers conduct their research in this area according to the needs that arise, but also because they want to acquire new knowledge of certain situations and phenomena. 28.3% of them have chosen the "Yes" variable, expressing the dedication the teachers have obtaining new information.

### 3.2. The "Key Competencies" Standard

It is the starting point and the scope of the curriculum. Based on it, the basic curriculum documentation is compiled and then the curriculum is implemented in the educational institution. The teacher cultivates the students' basic competencies and ways of incorporating them into teaching, learning, and assessing student's learning process. All these competences are a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that students need for their own development and, inclusion in society, etc. Such cross-curricular skills are: critical thinking, group interaction, individual work, etc. To make it feasible for students, teachers must first own them themselves (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013).

Estimated indicators are: Teacher:

- Enables students to communicate with arguments, clearly, convincingly, fluently with a rich vocabulary and well-structured sentences
- Cultivates students' ability to use complementary foreign language resources to deepen the concepts and to supplement subject information
- Cultivates students with the ability of critical thinking
- Creates regularly the opportunity to face challenges for which the problem-solving scheme is implemented
- Uses student learning methods and strategies for independent work
- Cultivates students with the ability to work in groups
- Exercises students to maintain an ethical attitude on events and occurrences
- Cultivates students with the competence of taking initiatives or ventures

*Question 2.1* To your knowledge, is it a standard when the teacher:

- a) Explains the topic; b) The student responds to the acquired knowledge; c) The student that possesses the knowledge, is creative

**Table 4.** When is it a standard for the teacher?

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Explains the topic	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
The student responds to the acquired knowledge	9	15.0	15.0	16.7
Valid The student that possesses the knowledge, is creative	50	83.3	83.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The results of the question in (Table 4) indicate the dominance of the third alternative, "The student that possesses the knowledge, is creative", and as such ranks about 83.3%. The teachers stated that a standard is when the student not only possesses the knowledge and reproduces them, but the first they are creative. Teachers give importance to this standard because their main goal is not just to form students with the right knowledge, but mainly to encourage them to be creative and critical, which are very important competencies for their future.

*Question 2.2.* To your knowledge, which students are included in this standard by the teacher?  
 a) Students with high scores; b) Students with low scores; c) Students from all levels of scores

**Table 5.** The student's category by quality score

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Students with high scores	8	13.3	13.3	13.3
Valid Students from all levels of scores	52	86.7	86.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

According to data in (Table 5) results indicate that, 86.7% of the teachers' states that the students included in the standard should be from all levels of learning quality. Students should work individually or in groups without becoming part of the differences.

### 3.3. The "Professional Development" Standard

This standard refers the teacher as a student itself during his professional life. A quality teacher is constantly improving, reflecting on his/her daily experience, while also building on his/her professional literature. Nowadays, teachers attend various training and qualifications, seminars and conferences that are helping their professional development. Paraskevas, A., et al, (2010), in their study showed that the mixed didactic approach which they planned, tested, and implemented constitutes an innovative proposal for teacher training in Primary Education, relating to both knowledge improvement in the field of geographic coordinates and map construction, as well as promoting active involvement and interaction among participants which may facilitate sustainable collaboration among in-service teachers. The approach included lectures, web-based courses,

fieldwork activities, and investigation of parameters that affect collaboration via asynchronous dialogues.

In all these activities, teachers get acquainted with the scientific innovations pertaining to their subject matter. Indicators that are evaluated in this standard are: Teacher:

- Reflects constantly on his/her teaching practices
- Cooperates regularly with colleagues and parents of students to improve teaching practices
- Develops and implements his/her professional development plan to improve students' achievements
- Takes part regularly in professional meetings or the council of teachers by being prepared seriously for them
- Continuously identifies individual needs for professional development
- Regularly studies professional literature from various sources (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013)

*Question 3.1.* In your professional development you count on:

- a) Only to your education; b) Work experience; c) Training, qualifications; d) All

**Table 6.** Sources of professional development

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Training, qualification	3	5.0	5.0	5.0
Valid All	57	95.0	95.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 indicates 95% of sampled teachers rely on their education, work experience, training and qualifications, thus answering to the "All" alternative, in their professional development. Teachers are supported and developed professionally by referring to indicators of this standard.

*Question 3.2.* Do you study different literature that helps your professional development?

- a) A lot; b) Some; c) At all

**Table 7.** The study of different literatures for professional development

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
A lot	46	76.7	76.7	76.7
Valid Some	14	23.3	23.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the question: "Do you study different literatures for your professional development?" it is noted that 76.7% of surveyed teachers are committed studying and use incorporating a lot of literature from different sources to help their professional development. 23.3% of teachers study some literature, while relying on other forms of professional development.

### 3.4. "Knowledge and implementation of school documentation" Standard

This standard refers to the fact that teacher must be aware of the school documentation protocol. Like all other professions based on rules and documents, teacher's teaching and learning process is also based on school documentation that every teacher should be well aware of and practice accordingly. Among the indicators that are evaluated are: The teacher has knowledge about:

- Albanian Legislation related directly to educational activity
- Sub-legal acts, orders of the Ministry of Education, etc.
- Recognizes the general teachers' standards and subject standards
- Recognizes the procedures for organizing the curriculum in an educational institution
- Recognizes school structures

*Question 4.1.* Are all the teacher standards practical and applicable?

- a) Yes; b) Some of them; c) No

**Table 8.** Are all the teacher standards practical and applicable?

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	22	36.7	36.7	36.7
Valid Some of them	38	63.3	63.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The data in (Table 8) showed that 63.3% of the teachers are concerned about the practicality and implementation of some of the standards indicators, pertaining to school documentation. They emphasize that such difficulties have roots in many and frequent undertaken reforms in our country over the years. It is necessary to recognize them and to facilitate their efficiency in documentation. 36.7% of them have chosen the alternative "yes".

*Question 4.2.* How much do you think you know about the school documentation and Normative Acts?

- a) Very well; b) Good; c) Unanswered; d) Sufficient; e) I have no information

**Table 9.** The teacher knowledge about school documentation and Normative Act

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very well	22	36.7	36.7	36.7
Good	37	61.7	61.7	98.3
Valid Sufficient	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The geography teachers of this area are familiar and good implementers of the school documentation. We found that most of the teachers (Table 9), precisely 61.7% of them claim that they have "Good" knowledge about necessary documentation and normative provisions and 36.7% have a "Very good" knowledge.

### 3.5. "Teaching and learning" Standard

Teacher is mainly the facilitator of the learning process and the source person. Today there is no universal method of learning, so it is the teacher's merit to use the most varied methods. During class lessons, teachers try to make them more attractive to students by means of different methods.

The teaching and learning process include all strategies, procedures, techniques and didactic tools, by whom teachers link up the aims and topics objectives (Trëndafili, G. Karaguni, M., 2008).

It is important to use methods consistent with the level of learning that students possess and their psychological characteristics. The most commonly used methods by teachers are: brainstorming, question map, INSERT, cluster, group work, excursions, etc. Our study highlights the importance of offering opportunities for experiences, thus paving the way for an interest in geography, e.g. by means of travelling or using maps.

Molin L., et al. (2015) narrated: "Since not all children are given the opportunities of travelling or using maps, it is important for the school to be able to make space for this type of experiences in teaching. Hence, it is urgent that for teachers in their subject didactics education, to develop a competence that makes fieldwork and teaching outdoors a natural part of teaching". The estimated indicators of this standard are: Teacher:

- Uses diverse practices in the teaching and learning process
- Motivates students in a variety of ways creating pleasant emotions
- It is first concerned with deepening the core subject concepts to students
- Encourages the use of technology to improve and facilitate the teaching and learning process
- Designs and implements curriculum projects (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013)

*Question 5.1. Do you use new methods and teaching techniques?*

a) Always; b) Often; c) No answer; d) Rarely; e) Never

- If so, which ones are most common \_\_\_\_\_

**Table 10.** New methods and teaching techniques.

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Always	18	30.0	30.0	30.0
Often	42	70.0	70.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The data from Table 10 shows the answers regarding the standard of teaching and learning. It is noted that 70% of surveyed teachers informed us that some implement and practice new teaching methods and techniques, while 30% suggest that they "Always" do. This result shows that teachers stay coherent with methodological and pedagogical developments and apply them to achieve effective teaching. Most teachers use techniques such as brainstorming, inserts, concept maps, group work, flip charts and so on.

### 3.6. "Taking care of students with difficulty in learning "Standard

This standard deals with the special care that each teacher has to show for students that have learning disabilities. A teacher should bear in mind that there are distinguished students with different psychological qualities and abilities in his/her class (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013). His/her job is to make students feel motivated in order to reach their full potential. The teacher

should create a spirit of collaboration by implementing special programs for students with learning disabilities. Some of the indicators of this standard state that the teacher:

- Creates in the classroom a culture of hospitality and cooperation from other students for the students with learning disabilities
- Uses differentiated teaching strategies that suit best to students
- Organizes activities with students and give everyone the opportunity to get involved

*Question 6.1.* For students with learning disabilities, teacher:

a) Gives lessons in the same way to all students; b) Gives specific assignments; c) Pays more time

**Table 11.** The care of teacher for students with learning disabilities

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gives specific assignments	38	63.3	63.3	63.3
Valid Pays more time	22	36.7	36.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 11, 63.3% of the teachers responded "Giving special assignments" compared to other students and only 36.7% of them spend more time with students with learning difficulties. None of the teachers selected the first alternative "Giving lessons equally to all students", because they think that these students require special care and different treatment from others.

### 3.7. “The assessment of the learning” Standard

It ensures that teachers evaluate student achievement using the techniques and instruments of diagnosis and evaluation (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013). Evaluation can be done in different forms, but in all cases it should be transparent and should reflect both student achievements and mistakes. This way, students reflect on their mistakes and improve on them.

Spacic (2013) expresses: “To make evaluative decisions, most of the teachers rely on the information obtained by checking their students. Control is the process through which information is gathered. Evaluation is the judgment made on the basis of the information you have available”.

Some of the indicators of this standard state the teacher:

- Bases the evaluating process and learning outcomes on core competencies, learning standards and course program objectives
- Conducts regular assessment process strategies and practices and process outcomes
- Implement the theory and practice of compiling tests processing
- Possesses students assessment practices in curriculum projects
- Explains to the students in advance about the criteria and how they will be evaluated
- Collects information and uses evidence for student learning progress

*Question 7.1.* Where do you rely more on your students' assessment? Please rank your way of evaluation.

a) Homework; b) Answers to the lesson; c) Essays or practical work (\_\_\_\_\_)

From the question 7.1 conducted with the geography teachers, these types of selected approaches were presented, which are as follows:

ABC- Homework, Answers in lesson, Essay or practical work  
 BCA- Answers in lesson, Essay or practical work, Homework  
 BAC- Answers in lesson, Homework, Essay or practical work  
 CBA- Essays or practical work, Answers in lessons, Homework

**Table 12.** The students' assessment

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
ABC	4	6.7	6.7	6.7
BAC	30	50.0	50.0	56.7
Valid BCA	25	41.7	41.7	98.3
CBA	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the Learning Assessment Standard, 50% of the respondent teachers have highlighted BAC assessments as the most important accurate way for evaluating of the learning process. We notice teachers are more based on “the Answers in lessons”, after that “Homework” and then “Essays and practical work”. However, it is worth pointing out that 41.7% of other teachers prefer to evaluate according to the BCA ranking: Answers in lesson, Essays or practical work, Homework. A very small number of the teachers prefer to evaluate in other ways.

*Question 7.2.* Do you rely on the theoretical materials and practice when drafting tests or written exams?

- a) Yes; b) No; c) In some cases

**Table 13.** The use of theory and practice on drafting test written exams

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	58	96.7	96.7	96.7
Valid In some cases	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The results of Table 13 showed that 96.7% of surveyed teachers rely on the theoretical materials and also practice when drafting tests or written exams, while 3.3% of them rely on themselves in some cases. Teachers possess the knowledge of this standard for the given indicators.

### 3.8. "Teacher as an active member of organizations in educational institution" Standard

This standard requires to enable teachers as productive members. A teacher is an active member of the organizations of Educational Institutions such as the teachers’ council, the subject team and working groups (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013). Based on interviews conducted with the geography teachers in the pre-university education system in Lezha Municipality, results revealed that a good number of them are active members of certain organizations of the Educational Institutions such as: Disciplinary Commission, Chairman of the Student’s Government, etc. Some of the indicators of this standard state for the teacher:

- To collaborate with colleagues for drafting educational plans
- To participate in curricular projects for realizing free lessons and models
- To welcome colleagues' proposals for improving students' learning conditions
- To engage in reaching common objectives at school level (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013)

*Question 8.1.* In which of these organisms of the school institution would you like to be part of?

a) Discipline Commission (Article 115 DN, Ministry of Education and Science); b) Ethics Commission; c) Chairperson of Students Government; d) Health, Safety and Environment Commission (Article 125 DN, Ministry of Education and Science)

**Table 14.** Teacher as an active member of organisms in educational institution

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Discipline Commission (Article 115 DN)	19	31.7	31.7	31.7
Ethics Commission	22	36.7	36.7	68.3
Chairperson of Student Government	11	18.3	18.3	86.7
Valid Health, Safety and Environment Commission (Article 125 DN)	8	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

From the results in (Table 14), we noticed that teachers' opinions on participating in Educational Institutions are different. 36.7% of them preferred to be members of the School Ethics Commission where they teach. A smaller percentage, of about 31.7% stated they would like to be members of the Disciplinary Commission. Despite the statistics, teachers are generally willing to be active in different administrative functions within school.

*Question 8.2.* When the school head teacher carries out organizational tasks you:

a) Are ready to take some tasks; b) Express preference what task you want to get; c) Prefer not to get too much commitment

**Table 15.** Readiness of teacher on organizational tasks

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Are ready to take some tasks	35	58.3	58.3	58.3
Express preference what task you want to get	18	30.0	30.0	88.3
Valid Prefer not to get too much commitment	7	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The results in (Table 15), shows that 58.3% of respondent geography teachers express readiness for every kind of tasks they are entrusted with. 30% of them express preference about what task they would like to receive and only 11.7% of them belong to the group of teachers who expressed a lack of desire towards their involvement in the duties and commitments given by their leaders.

### 3.9. “Collaboration with the community” Standard

Teachers collaborate with different community members, like parents of students, but also participants from civil society, to better enhance their teaching productivity. Schools today have become important community centers where teachers are active participants for various community problems. Educational institution along with family, must be an ideal environment for social development, because we have to be secure that new generations will understand the values of human dignity (Power, 2001). Some indicators of this standard emphasize that the teacher:

- Must use diverse methods of communication and collaboration with parents and the community
- Provide parents with updated information on the achievements of their children

According to Karaj 2008: “In effective school, parents are an integral part of the educational process. Teachers inform them about class’s activities based on procedures of both sides communication”.

- Organize various students’ activities by including the community
- Encourage parents to provide their volunteer assistance (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013)

*Question 9.1.* What are the means of communication with your students' parents?

a) By phone; b) School meetings according to a chart; c) Meetings outside school

**Table 16.** The means of communication with students' parents

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
By phone	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
School meetings according to a chart	53	88.3	88.3	98.3
Meetings outside school	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

One of the most important relationships for teachers is the collaboration with parents and the community. The data from Table 16 shows that 88.3% of respondent teachers have chosen "School-based meetings according to a chart". The minor of them thinks other variables.

*Question 9.2.* How good is the level of parent-school cooperation in your school?

a) Very good; b) Good; d) Neutral; d) Sufficient; e) Weak

**Table 17.** The level of parent- school cooperation

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very good	16	26.7	26.7	26.7
Good	32	53.3	53.3	80.0
Valid Neutral	9	15.0	15.0	95.0
Sufficient	3	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 17 shows that the level of parents-school cooperation is fairly high, with 53.3% of teachers suggesting the parent-school relationship is "Good", while 26.7% of them rated it "very good". The rest of the teachers emphasize that there is still a need for improvements in ethical relations between parents and school.

### 3.10. “Ethics and Behavior” Standard

The behavioral norms and the values of ethics stand at the core of the teacher's profession. The values of ethics and behavior are impartiality in assessment, non-discrimination and equal treatment of all students. Teachers must have as part of their professional culture, all the values of ethics and behavior which guarantee success during the teaching and learning process. The Ministry of Education and Science (2013), in The Teachers Code of Ethics of Public and Private Pre-University Education states that: "The principles that govern the education process are based on universal values that guarantee the way in which education is developed, such as: justice, impartiality, non-discrimination, equality, dignity, etc." Some of the indicators of this standard evaluate that the teacher:

- Must respect human rights and freedom as well as children's rights
- Should create a friendly environment with students
- Does not exercise discrimination, violence, indignity
- Cultivates students respect for individual differences, ethnicities, etc.
- Communicates openly and in a correct way
- Creates an atmosphere where students feel free and motivated
- Cares for health and hygiene conditions (Guidance no. 5, date 25.02.2013)

*Question 10.1.* The most commonly occurring problems in your school are between:

- a) Teachers and teachers; b) Teachers and students; c) Students and students; d) Teachers and Leaders; e) Teachers and Parents

**Table 18.** The most commonly occurring problems in your school

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Teachers and teachers	2	3.3	3.3	3.3
Teachers and students	14	23.3	23.3	26.7
Valid Students and students	44	73.3	73.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

73.3% of geography teachers state the problems that occur mostly in schools are more likely to occur between students and students. 23.3% of respondent teachers indicate that they encounter more problems between teachers and students; only 3.3% of them argue that problems also appear amongst teachers. Relationships between teacher-leaders and teachers and parents are worthy to be appreciated.

*Question 10.2.* According to you, the engagement of your school staff to create a good communication and behavior is:

- a) Very good; b) Good; c) Neutral; d) Sufficient; e) Weak

**Table 18.** The engagement of your school staff and parental community

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very good	42	70.0	70.0	70.0
Good	17	28.3	28.3	98.3
Valid Sufficient	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

From Table 18, we see that 70% of the teachers' think pedagogical staff engagement in creating good communication and behavior is at a very good level, while 28.3% of them say staff engages well, dominating the required variables.

For a deeper viewpoint, a cross tabulation was made (Table 20) between teachers with different quality categories in education and their need to update with scientific innovations in the subject of geography.

**Table 20.** Cross tabulation 1. The teachers with different quality categories in education and their need to update with scientific innovations in the subject of geography

Alternatives	Their need to update with scientific innovations in the subject of geography			Total
	Yes	No	As needed	
<b>5-10 years' work in education (Qualified teacher)</b> Count % within category % of total	0	1	7	8
	0	1.7%	11.7%	13.4%
<b>10-20 years' work in education (Specialist teacher)</b> Count % within category % of total	10	0	16	26
	16.6%	0%	26.6%	43.3%
<b>Over 20 years work in education (Master teacher)</b> Count % within category % of total	4	0	16	20
	6.7%	0%	26.6%	33.3%
<b>Less than 5 years' work in education (Unqualified teacher)</b> Count % within category % of total	3	0	3	6
	5%	0%	5%	10%
Total	17	1	42	60
	28.3%	1.7%	70%	100%

From the analysis of data displayed in (Table 20) results indicate that 16.6% of the respondent teachers belong to the category of 10 years of work in education (Specialist teacher) continuously "Update with scientific research". 26.6% of this category update "According to the needs that arise during work". Meanwhile, teachers belonging to the category of 20 years of work in education (Master teachers), we notice research is mostly done "According to the needs" with 26.6% of them and only 6.7% of them carry out these updating on a regular basis. As we see, with the increase of the work experience and engagement, recent scientific research is done according to the needs. In fact, in this sampling, we have a prevalence of teachers with 10 and over 20 years of work in education in the amount of 76.6%. They show a good management of the professional work and need to apply updated information to the geography subject in order to be in coherence with the reality the future generations are being prepared for. Further findings point out teachers would mostly need to be trained in terms of scientific innovations. Training agencies, School Head Offices, Regional Education Offices would be of great help in this.

A daily problem for teachers are ethical relations, opportunities of involvement of the parents, and the community in solving them. Another cross tabulation below in (Table 21) was done between variables: To determine among whom do the problems that occur mostly in school appear? And which are some ways of communicating with students' parents?

**Table 21.** *Cross tabulation 2.* Among whom do the problems that occur mostly in your school appear? And which are some ways of communicating with students’ parents?

Alternatives		Among whom do the problems that occur mostly in your school appear?			Total
		Teachers to teachers	Teachers to students	Students to students	
Some ways of communicating with students’ parents	<b>By phone communication</b> Count % within category % of total	0 0%	1 1.7%	5 8.3%	6 10%
	<b>School meetings based on a plan</b> Count % within category % of total	2 3.3%	13 21.7%	38 63.3%	53 88.3%
	<b>Meetings outside school</b> Count % within category % of total	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.7%	1 1.7%
	<b>Total</b> % of total	2 3.3%	14 23.4%	44 73.3%	60 100%

Table 21 presents two other selected indicators and their interconnections. It is noted that common problems that occur mostly in schools are found among students with a percentage of about 63.3%. In this case the most common way of communicating with parents is through meetings that take place at school and only 8.3% of problems between students are resolved by phone communication. 21.7% of the teachers think that the problems also occur between teacher-students, where the solution is again made through the organization of school meetings according to a certain plan. Meanwhile, we see that in special situations there are also problems between teachers and teachers, which take a small percentage of about 3.3%. Another way of communicating for problem solving are the out-of-school meetings with 1.7%.

To help the study, personal thoughts were also gathered by personal communication over the efficiency and applicability of the general professional standards by geography teachers, with Mr. Luan Dalipi, inspector at Regional Educational Office of Lezha. Regarding the issue he states:

*"Standards are the basis for all teachers' work, because they guide them to what they need to know, what they should do and what ethical and behavioral values should characterize them. All schools have been presented with these standards and they are available for every teacher. To sum it up, standards are friendly, but when school conditions are not the right ones, difficulties rise."*

He also points out that:

*"Regional Educational Office of Lezha has tried to provide trainings for them and also for School Departments, School Teams and Professional Networks. They are generally functional, but there are schools and teachers that need to be significantly improved. Knowing and implementing these standards is mandatory for them to be applied in all schools."*

Asked about how they can use these standards to develop this profession and how involved they are in implementing them, he says:

*"One of the key goals of using standards is self-evaluation and professional improvement of teachers. We monitor and seek recognition, implementation and improvement of work by teacher standards."*

He recommends:

- Organizing a training program for teachers
- Citing them as means to implement such standards to school service, in order to make them more qualitative, effective, and integrated
- Monitoring their effectiveness in the work of teachers and further development of the profession

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The general professional standards for teachers are one of the basic working documents for teachers. Their recognition, use and efficiency by geography teachers in the pre-university educational system in the municipality of Lezha served as the main goal of this study. It included 60 teachers (71% of total number of geography teachers) whom were mostly around 45 years old and 78.3% of them were females. Referring to the categories of work, teachers with over 10 years of work in education (Specialist teachers) dominated with about 43.3% of the teachers. 33.3% of the teachers have 20 years of work in education (Master teachers). The sampling indicated that teachers have education and qualification experience.

Regarding the "Science Preparation" Standard, about 73.3% of geography teachers claimed that their preparation in this discipline is "Very good". Teachers were distinguished by a good enough mastery of the subject and proper scientific preparation to achieve a good transmission of information to students. 70% of respondent teachers needed to be updated, to be familiar coherent with recent scientific innovations (Results of question 2, Standard: Scientific Preparation).

For geography teachers it is a standard when the student is not only knowledgeable, but creative in the classroom (Results from questions on Standard "Key competences").

In the professional development area, it was noticed that geography teachers combined their education substantially with the experiences gained through the years, as well as with the numerous trainings and qualifications realized on different topics. This fact was pointed out by 95% of respondent teachers (Result from the first question of Standard "Professional Development").

Based on the Standard "Knowledge and implementation of school documentation", 61.1% of teachers claimed to know it well. This posed a positive aspect to the development and planning of their work at school (as outlines the second question of this standard).

Geography teachers paid special attention to the classroom, especially students with learning disabilities, where 63.3% of them "Gave special assignments" to such students, while 36.7% "Spent more time" with them. (Derived from the standard question – "Care for students with learning disabilities").

Based on the "Learning Assessment" Standard, 50% of teachers paid more importance in "Answers on the lesson", "Homework" and "Essays and practical work" (derived from the first question of this standard). Also, most of the teachers based the formulation of the tests and written exams on theory and practice, with about 96.7% of them (Shown from results of the second question again of this standard).

About 58.3% of teachers expressed a high readiness for any task defined by the head teachers. (As outlines the second question of the standard – "The teacher as an organizational member in the institution").

Cooperation with parents is present at a good level, with about 53.3%, while the most traditional and dominant way of communicating with the parents of students was realized through meetings with about 88.3% of respondents. Meetings took place in school according to a plan (Derived from both questions of this standard).

The most problematic situation encountered were between "student-student" reported by 73.3% of teachers. Meanwhile, the commitment that the pedagogical staff had to create a positive climate and communication, is at a very good level, with about 70% of the expressed one (As outlines the first and second questions of the Standard - Ethics and Behavior).

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of this study, some recommendation are suggested.

General professional standards for teachers associated with subject standards as part of teacher's documentation. They are considered as important documentation and every teacher and head teacher should have them.

The level of cooperation and communication between the school and parents (for the 20% of teachers), (extracted from the second question of Standard - Collaboration with the community) should be increased. This can be improved through the organization of various activities, through their participation as important members of educational institutions and by taking into consideration their given concerns and opinions.

Teachers should be encouraged to a greater participation in various scientific activities, conferences, round tables, seminars to improve knowledge of scientific researches of the geography subject and the exchange of experiences, not only according to the needs encountered during their work, but also on regular basis.

A better climate within the school should be created, especially among students, with the aim of reducing problematic relations. Numerous educational, social and cultural activities should be carried out (extracted from the first question of Standard 10 - Ethics and Behavior).

Teachers should be supported and encouraged to use and study literature from various sources in order to help their professional development (issued arise by the second Standard question - Professional development).

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