



Strategies for Reducing Teacher Stress Caused by the Attestation Process

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Abstract: The article highlights the challenges teachers face during the attestation process. It explores the causes of professional stress and the specific behaviours exhibited by teachers when undergoing attestation for conferring or confirmation of teaching degrees. The article aims to assess teachers' perceptions of the stress, generated by the attestation process by using various research methods and tools. It was found that factors underlying the attestation process include the development of professional competences, salary bonuses, recognition of professional merits by school management, improved quality of educational process, enhanced reputation among colleagues, parents, and students, and career advancement. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the investigation results, the author of the article offers suggestions on continuous professional development activities that can strengthen resilience against stressors during the attestation process.

Keywords: professional stress; teachers; teacher attestation process

1. Introduction

The attestation process, although necessary for professional recognition and validation, is often perceived as a major source of stress among teachers. This stage involves a series of requirements and responsibilities that can generate emotional tension and mental exhaustion.

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One of the main stress factors is the large amount of documentation required. Teachers must prepare complex portfolios, detailed reports, lesson plans, and present evidence of both teaching and extracurricular activities. All of these require time, accuracy, and deep involvement. Additionally, uncertainty regarding specific evaluation criteria and the fear of potential subjective interpretation by the evaluation committee add to a constant feeling of insecurity.

Another stress-inducing aspect is the overlap of this process with daily professional duties. Teachers must continue to fulfil their teaching and administrative responsibilities, which often leads to overload. Furthermore, the pressure to demonstrate innovative teaching skills within an educational system that is often conservative or bureaucratic is perceived as a major challenge, particularly when adequate resources or institutional support are lacking.

Fear of failure and a lack of confidence in their abilities also contribute to emotional imbalance. Even experienced teachers may feel insecure in front of an evaluation committee, especially if they lack support from colleagues or school management. Moreover, the emotional impact of peer judgment is often underestimated, yet it can seriously affect self-esteem and professional confidence.

Researcher G. Ivan, in her work *“Dealing with Stress and Job Satisfaction in Teaching”*, analyses the impact of professional and personal factors on teachers’ mental health, highlighting the main sources of stress in educational settings such as overload, conflictual relationships, and bureaucratic pressure. She also emphasizes the role of professional satisfaction as a balancing factor and a source of psychological resilience, presenting relevant coping, adaptation, and self-efficacy strategies for improving the working environment in education and supporting teachers’ mental health (Ivan, 2009, p. 13).

For these reasons, the attestation process must be viewed not only as a formal procedure, but also as a moment of emotional vulnerability for teachers. Therefore, it is essential that educational institutions develop support mechanisms, counselling services, and encouragement strategies to transform attestation into a constructive and motivating process rather than a source of professional stress.

2. Laws Governing the Emergence of Occupational Stress

A significant aspect in the prevention and reduction of occupational stress lies in understanding the *laws that govern its emergence*. According to T. Şova, these laws represent stable, essential, and necessary connections between emotional phenomena

that ensure the existence, functioning, and development of occupational stress. They reflect an objective and appropriate understanding of reality, independent of the subject's will and of the dynamism of affective processes, with stable properties and characteristics in any circumstance. Şova states that occupational stress, influenced by social-economic, moral, cultural, political, and ideological needs, is governed by the following interdependent relationships: *occupational stress and health, occupational stress and decision-making, occupational stress and classroom management, occupational stress and performance, occupational stress and evaluation/self-evaluation*. Each of these laws is *inherently human*. Individuals engaged in professional activities are affected by occupational stress in ways that are *essential and wide-reaching*, influencing all aspects of life; are *dynamic*, shifting with changes in social, familial, or professional contexts; are *systemic*, interacting in ways that form a normative framework for theoretically and practically mitigating occupational stress (Şova, 2014, p. 88).

Therefore, it is clear that the prevention and reduction of occupational stress depend on understanding the laws that regulate this phenomenon. Therefore, a multidimensional intervention, focused on applying these laws in the professional and social realities of teachers, is essential for addressing stress effectively.

3. Teachers' Behavioural Reactions to Occupational Stress Caused by the Attestation Process

Based on the above findings, we can confirm that any teacher in our country, especially during the attestation period, acknowledges the impact of occupational stress on work quality and health, both of which directly affect the efficiency of the educational process. *Teachers' behavioural responses to occupational stress during the attestation process* vary. These responses align with those described by S. F. Gross in his book "*Smart Behaviour for Guaranteed Success*":

- *Physiological reactions* - muscle tension, tics, high blood pressure, tachycardia, arrhythmias, increased gastrointestinal activity, dry throat, excessive sweating, skin conductivity changes, immunoglobulin level alterations, memory loss, reduced concentration, increased error and confusion rates, impaired decision-making and time management, inefficient planning, inhibitions and mental blocks, irrational and obsessive tendencies, decreased creativity.

- *Emotional reactions* - frustration, hostility, anxiety, nervousness, depression, dissatisfaction, demoralization, negative self-image, guilt, alienation.
- *Behavioural reactions* - decreased performance, professional instability, absenteeism, avoidance/escape, passivity/aggression, deterioration of interpersonal relationships, overeating, insomnia, increased use of alcohol, tobacco, and coffee (Gross, 2001, p. 97).

The impact of occupational stress experienced by teachers, particularly during attestation, is deep and multifaceted, negatively influencing both health and professional effectiveness. These physiological, emotional, and behavioural manifestations demonstrate the vulnerability of teachers when facing high demands and institutional pressures. Acknowledging these effects as part of professional reality requires concrete support measures, such as psychological counselling, training in stress management, and improving the attestation process to ensure the well-being of educators and the quality of educational outcomes.

4. Regulatory Provisions for the Attestation Process of the Teaching Staff

The attestation of the teaching staff is a rather complex process that requires ongoing monitoring by the school management, maximum responsibility from candidates applying for teaching degrees, and objective evaluation by the members of the attestation commission. The primary document guiding this process is the *Regulation on the Attestation of Teaching Staff in General, Vocational Technical Education, and in Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Services*, approved by Order no. 1091 of 07.10.2020 of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECC), and amended by Order no. 1335 of 30.09.2024. According to the provisions of this regulation, the attestation of the teaching staff is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with local education authorities, Departments of Culture, Youth, and Sports, Psycho-pedagogical assistance services and institutions of general and vocational technical education. The attestation is voluntary and takes place every five years for the confirmation or successive conferring of the second, first and superior teaching degrees. Only teachers who have accumulated at least 75% of the required number of professional credits are eligible to submit an application for conferring or confirming the teaching degree (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024).

Referring to the challenges faced by teachers during the attestation process, M. Marin, in the article *“Professional Development: Comfort Zone or Risk Zone? Or*

How to Positively Approach the New Teacher Attestation Regulation in a Positive Way”, emphasizes that active teachers accept the innovations in education because they are aware of the importance of quality instruction and of the necessity to prepare schools for the future (Marin, 2013, pp. 55–64).

The objectivity and transparency of the attestation process are essential for reducing the stress associated with it. This can be ensured by adhering to the following *principles outlined in the regulation*: principle of pedagogical meritocracy, principle of legality in the attestation process, principle of social and professional equity and equal opportunity, principle of objectivity and impartiality, principle of unity in institutional and pedagogical actions in the conceptualization and implementation of attestation, principle of alignment with the normative and legal framework of general, vocational technical education and psycho-pedagogical assistance services, principle of scientific grounding and coherence in theoretical and practical attestation activities, principle of leveraging successful practices and disseminating them, principle of encouraging professional pedagogical creativity, principle of systemic unity, periodicity, and flexibility, principle of transparency in the process and outcomes of the attestation (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024, p. 1).

Nevertheless, there are no ready-made solutions for avoiding professional stress, including that caused by the attestation process. Therefore, both the educational institution and especially the teachers themselves must be proactive, self-motivated, and capable of self-regulating their professional behaviour in order to meet the challenges of their profession.

5. Research Methodology

In order to objectively support the statements made, we aimed to *evaluate the perceptions of teaching staff regarding professional stress caused by the attestation process*.

The *research sample* consisted of 150 teachers enrolled in continuing professional training courses at the Centre for Continuing Professional Training within Alecu Russo Balti State University, who are either undergoing attestation during the current academic year or plan to do so in the following year.

Research methods and instruments included: scientific documentation, an interview aimed at assessing teachers’ perceptions of work-related stress caused by the attestation process, mathematical data processing methods.

The interview designed to assess teachers' perceptions of professional stress generated by the attestation process included two questions, with the aim of evaluating teachers' opinions and explanations regarding the balance between **external demands** and **internal resources** necessary to cope with the stress (occupational stress generated by the attestation):

a) *To what extent does the attestation process create premises (motivate) teachers for professional development?* – Internal coping resources, from an **interpersonal perspective**.

b) *Does the attestation process provoke you comfort or discomfort?* – Expressing emotional reactions to occupational stress from an **intrapersonal perspective**.

Evaluating the attestation process either as a motivating factor for professional development, or as a threat that leads to continuous exposure to occupational stressors, enables us to draw conclusions about the positive effects and destructive consequences of stress caused by the attestation process.

6. Interpretation of Research Results

The interviews assessing teachers' perceptions of professional stress caused by the attestation process were conducted in October 2024. Teachers' perceptions on how attestation stress affects their career development were interpreted in both *interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts*.

In response to the question *“To what extent does the attestation process motivate professional development?”*, participants brainstormed their answers that were recorded on a poster in the order in which they were expressed. At the end of the brainstorming session, teachers were asked to register one item they considered most favourable in terms of how attestation promotes professional development, using a method similar to “Gallery Walk.” The task sparked intense discussions. While all listed factors were considered important, many were seen as externally imposed, and the list was constantly supplemented with new constraints, making it difficult to determine a clear ranking of factors that support professional growth.

Table 1. Stimulating factors in the attestation process related to teachers' professional development

No.	Teachers' Perceptions	Rating
1.	Developed professional competences	I
2.	Salary increase	II
3.	Recognition of professional merits by school management	III
4.	Improved quality of educational process	IV
5.	Prestige among the teaching staff, parents, and students	V
6.	Career advancement	VI

The results indicate that most of the factors were externally driven, often triggering negative emotions in professional activity. Although the factor “developed professional competences” received the highest rating, it was also associated with significant challenges during the attestation process.

Another important factor was “salary increase,” which, although considered insufficient in proportion to the effort involved, still served as a motivator.

Ratings III and IV were attributed to the “recognition of professional merit by the school management” and “improved quality of the teaching process.” These factors confirmed the relevance of *professional responsibility* in the interpersonal domain of stress management competence.

Next in the ranking was the “desire for prestige within the teaching staff, among parents and students”, followed by “career advancement”.

From the interpretation of interview results, it becomes clear that teachers are subject to a high level of occupational stress. Attestation by conferring or confirmation of teaching degrees, whether for “fear of losing their job” or due to “frequent checks by the deputy director of lesson plans” intensifies the expression of negative emotions at work. Only two participants identified “career advancement” as a reflection of intrinsic motivation in the attestation process.

Teachers' differing views on occupational stress caused by attestation were categorized into two groups: *positive representations*, showing that teachers experienced **comfort** during the attestation regardless of stressors, *negative representations*, expressing **discomfort** due to the overload of tasks and professional responsibilities.

The responses to the question “*Does the attestation process provoke you comfort or discomfort?*”, were presented in the figure below.

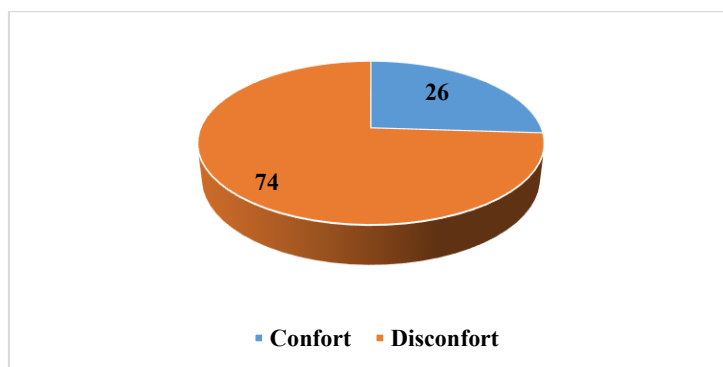


Figure 1. Comfort vs discomfort provoked by the attestation process

The data in Figure 1 shows that 26% of teachers are aware of the positive effects of stress generated by the attestation process. However, for the majority, this stress leads to numerous negative consequences, including:

- Physiological level - *chronic fatigue, sleep disorders, digestive problems, cardiovascular diseases;*
- Psychological level - *anxiety, depression, irritability, harsh behaviour toward students and colleagues, resistance to participating in any non-formal activities.*

Occupational stress caused by the attestation process is predominantly perceived by teachers as an obstacle to professional development.

Thus, teachers' perception of the attestation process as minimally motivating for professional growth and a threat with a high risk of continuous exposure to stressors highlight the importance of building resilience to occupational stress during the attestation process. Proper stress management can transform this challenge into an opportunity for growth.

7. Suggestions for Continuing Teacher Training to Prevent and Reduce Occupational Stress Generated by the Attestation Process

To prevent and reduce occupational stress caused by attestation, we propose a series of continuing professional training activities that can be implemented within educational institutions.

Table 2. Continuing Professional Training Activities Aimed at Preventing and Reducing Occupational Stress in Teachers

No.	Objectives	Activity	Implementation format
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> studying the provisions of the Attestation Regulation for general, technical vocational education, and psycho-pedagogical assistance services; substantiating the necessity of professional career development through attestation. 	Provisions of the <i>Attestation Regulation for general, technical vocational education, and psycho-pedagogical assistance services</i> ;	Active reading Independent reading
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing the conditions for conferring /confirming teaching degrees; Identifying similarities and differences in the conferring/confirmation processes. 	Mandatory Conditions for Teaching Degree Attestation	Roundtable discussion
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysing the structure of the Case Study for second-degree conferring; Solving the case studies using the Regulation's suggested algorithm. 	Case Study for Conferring/Confirming Second Teaching Degree	Didactic workshop
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing the conditions for conferring/confirming first and superior teaching degrees; Analysing products/projects from educational practice. 	Practical Task – Presentation of Product/Project for the First and Superior Degrees	Didactic workshop
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing the effects of stress in different educational contexts; Identifying professional stressors to respond appropriately in emotional situations; Demonstrating positive orientation, emotional flexibility, and creativity in teaching behaviour. 	Developing resilience to occupational stress caused by attestation	Training sessions) (6

We shall continue with the description of the possibilities to implement the activities listed in table 2.

The active reading session titled “Provisions of the Attestation Regulation for Teaching Staff in General, Technical Vocational Education, and Psycho-

pedagogical Assistance Services” can be conducted during a joint meeting of the Attestation Commission and the candidates, pursuing attestation for the conferring/confirmation of teaching degrees. A general PowerPoint presentation of the Regulation can be delivered, emphasizing the following aspects:

- The objectives and core principles of teacher attestation;
- The reference framework for teacher attestation;
- The organization of the attestation process for general, technical vocational education, and psycho-pedagogical assistance services (teaching staff);
- The procedure for conferring teaching degrees;
- The procedure for confirming teaching degrees;
- Appeals regarding the results of attestation.

At the end of the session, participants should highlight the mandatory activities during the attestation year, as outlined in the *Credit Map* and in the *Methodology for quantifying, accumulating, and recognizing professional credits* (Annex 1 of the Regulation).

The roundtable titled “*Mandatory Conditions for Conferring /Confirming Teaching Degrees*” will involve an analysis and discussion of these conditions, including identification of similarities and differences in the processes of conferring/confirming teaching degrees.

Experienced teachers may be invited to share their experiences with questions like: “What has been your experience with attestation?”, “What was the easiest part?”, “What challenges did you face?”, “How did you overcome them?” The discussion will then shift to the specific regulatory provisions for conferring/confirming each degree.

The didactic workshop “*Case Study for Conferring/Confirming the Second Teaching Degree*” will be practical, focusing on analysing the structure of the case study and simulating solutions using the algorithm proposed by the Regulation. Emphasis will be placed on the following steps: (1) define the problem identified in the case study; (2) present relevant educational policy documents related to the issue (codes, laws, guidelines, methodologies, instructions, etc.); (3) explain how regulatory provisions apply to solving the problem; (4) identify potential risks if the issue is not resolved; (5) present a personal intervention plan; (6) list recommendations to prevent similar

problems; (7) express proposed solutions clearly, persuasively, and with justification.

The *didactic workshop* “*Practical Task – Presentation of Product/Project from Educational Practice for Conferring/Confirming the First and Superior Teaching Degrees*” will also be practical, analysing the structure of educational practice products/projects in accordance with Annex 10 of the Regulation. Each candidate will deliver a 15-minute presentation, using a visual tool (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.), showcasing a selected product that demonstrates *successful educational practices*, following the structural elements outlined in Annex 10.

The training titled “*Developing Resilience to Professional Stress Caused by Attestation*” may consist of six sessions, structured around competency values for stress management in teaching staff, as defined by T. Şova: *pedagogical empathy, inhibition of conflict impulses, professional responsibility, psycho-physiological resilience, prosocial behaviour, socio-professional availability* (Şova, 2014, p. 130).

Clearly, stress resilience strategies should not focus solely on knowledge about stress, but should align with the broader goals of any conscious individual, allowing them to integrate these strategies into their professional development objectives and thus maintain a high quality of life.

Through these continuous professional training activities, teachers can better understand the organizational and procedural challenges and identify opportunities for improvement and growth.

8. Conclusions

When viewed primarily through the lens of its destructive effects, we conclude that occupational stress generated by the attestation process is unavoidable. What matters most is to enhance the resources necessary not only to reduce this stress but also to leverage eustress (positive form of stress) in order to *maintain teachers’ emotional stability, which is key to professional effectiveness*.

The stress experienced by teachers during the attestation process is inevitable, yet essential, as it strengthens the prestige of the teaching profession, defines levels of professional competence in accordance with educational standards, and establishes a motivational framework for professional development. It also enhances responsibility for one’s teaching career, develops self-reflection and self-assessment

competences, motivates for performance in the educational process, and ensures social protection by aligning the quality of educational services with appropriate compensation.

We emphasize the vital role of school managers in applying organizational strategies to prevent occupational stress. They must maintain oversight to ensure the creation of a healthy professional environment, based on the nature of work, interpersonal relationships, and the development of a healthy organizational culture.

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