THE PROBLEMATIC OF ENTRY IN PRACTICE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF STARTING AND STATE TEACHERS

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Abstract

The development of society is linked to a number of changes and constant reforms. These changes do not always take the form of life values, they are also changes that relate to the functioning of different institutions, such as a kindergarten. In the course of history, teacher education has evolved, with changes in the way teachers should look and what they should control in their profession. The main aim of this paper is to verify, based on quantitative research methods, what problems beginning kindergarten teachers face in their practice and what are their strong sides when they enter their practice. The partial aim of the research is therefore to find out in what area the beginning teachers are best prepared by the university and which area is rather neglected within the university studies. This issue is also assessed from the point of view of the introducing teachers. A questionnaire, which consists of open and closed questions, was chosen as the main research tool. The obtained data were statistically processed and statistical hypotheses was verified. Data were processed using well-arranged graphs and statistical tests. The results can be used as an argument for revision of the curriculum, or as a notification for beginning teachers, what they should be careful about when entering their practice.

Keywords: novice teacher, mentoring teacher, kindergarten, professional career.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to Průcha (2013, p. 261), the teacher is: “one of the basic factors of the educational process, a professionally qualified pedagogical worker, co-responsible for the preparation, management, organization and results of this process.” In addition, Opravilová (2005) says that under this term we refer to all persons who are in school and participate in upbringing and education. As we will deal with the kindergarten teacher later in the article, we will mention the definition by E. Šmelová (2009, p. 12), which defines kindergarten teachers as: “a qualified pre-school specialist, 22 mature personality competent to take responsibility for the development of a child, saturating his or her needs, taking into account his or her individual peculiarities.” In their research, Tomkova and Spilkova et al. dealt with the teacher and specifically his or her professional path (2012, p. 11), who state that the research on the career path of a teacher is most frequently focused on beginner teachers and expert teachers; we will discuss these in more detail in this article.

1.1 Professional career path of a teacher

The teacher is one of the pedagogical workers, as stated in Act 563/2004 Sb., On Pedagogical Staff, as amended. The law states that a pedagogical worker is a person who performs direct educational, teaching, special-pedagogical or pedagogical-psychological activity through direct influence on the educated person, through whom he / she carries out education and training based on a special legal regulation (Šmelová, 2018).

On the basis of the above-mentioned law, the teacher must meet the requirements of professional qualifications acquired through secondary vocational education with GCSE, higher vocational education or university education.

One does not become a teacher on a one-time basis, but it is a process in which an individual goes through certain stages. Kantorová (2008, p. 201) presents a total of four stages (choice of teaching profession, professional start - beginner teacher, expert teacher and conservative teacher). In addition to the above-mentioned categories Průcha (1997, p. 214), adds a stage of professional adaptation and a stage of professional advancement.

Dreyfus and Dreufus (1986) distinguish the stages according to the growth of flexibility when responding to different situations as follows: a novice teacher, an advanced beginner, a qualified and competent teacher, a proficient and competent teacher, and an expert teacher.
Berliner (1995) further elaborated the Dreyfus’ stages in based on research that has been carried out in terms of the teacher's stages. According to him, the teacher goes through the following stages: beginner, advanced beginner, competent teacher, experienced teacher, expert teacher. As we can see, the stages of Berliner (1995) and Dreyfus (1986) agree on the number, as well as on the first two and last stages.

The choice of teaching profession is the period during which the profession is selected. There can be several reasons for choosing this profession. One of the cases is the family tradition when the father, mother or both parents are teachers. The choice may be due to a relationship with children or a model of a teacher from his / her own study period. However, we also encounter cases where a student decides to study teacher education as a result of not being admitted to another school (Průcha, 1997, pp. 180-188).

The second stage is a professional start, the teacher is a beginner. It is a period of teacher's entry into the profession. The teacher plays a new role and is imposed to demands and challenges that he or she must cope with and that he or she must manage. The novice teacher is usually full of enthusiasm and effort. He or she is getting into a new role of interpersonal relationships (pupils, teachers, parents) that they must cope with (Urbánek, 2005, p. 95-97). This period is crucial for the future career of the teacher. Due to all the demands placed on the teacher, there may be a shock of reality. This shock may arise because of different expectations of future teachers compared to the reality that begins after entering the profession. The reason for this may also be the teacher's lack of preparation. How intense the shock of reality the teacher feels is very individual and depends, for example, on teacher's preparation, but also on mental resilience. (Průcha, 1997, p. 421, Urbánek, 2005, pp. 96-97). Such a teacher tends to focus on short-term planning, and his / her professional learning is based on advice from others (Berliner, 1995).

Unlike a beginner teacher, an advanced beginner generally has an automated approach to teaching, he or she begins to develop strategies and can ask questions and find out why things are happening in the classroom. His attention is also shifting from concrete to the overall perception of teaching processes (Berliner, 1995).

Competent teachers already have established reliable procedures regarding a specific situation, they have their strategies that they use and are able to act according to current conditions to improvise, with enough confidence. Such a teacher no longer focuses on content but on individual pupils (Berliner, 1995).

An experienced teacher is characterized by a great deal of intuitive behaviour, can solve problematic pedagogical situations and, in comparison with the previous stage, focuses on the pupil's personality (Berliner, 1995).

The next stage is an expert teacher. Every teacher should wish to get to this stage. The word expert originally comes from the Latin word *expertus*, which meant having experience with something. Finally, it was found that experience does not mean that an individual is an expert (Kalhous, Obst, 2009, p. 93). The expert teacher is characterized by autonomy, problem-solving skills in difficult situations, and does his or her job effectively. Expert teacher performance is fluent and does not require increased effort, he or she plans flexibly and, in addition to dealing with various events, is able to anticipate these events.

1.2 Research on the career path of a teacher

Hattie (2003) conducted a research to determine if there is a difference in the quality of the educational process between a teacher in the phase of professional growth and an expert teacher. The research was conducted with over 300 teachers from a total of 65 schools. The results were evaluated in a total of 16 different categories, such as classroom climate, teacher improvisation, feedback, teacher authority, student understanding. Research has shown that in all categories, the expert teacher has gained greater success. Each category was rated more than 80%. It has been found that expert teachers are better able to respond to emerging situations and their students demonstrate greater ability to think abstractly and generalize acquired knowledge.

Kalhous and Obst (2009, pp. 94-97) report the results of a research survey recording what makes an expert teacher. It has been found that an expert is the expert in a single area. These teachers do certain skills automatically, they are more responsive to the emerging situation, react flexibly and improvise, can solve situations at a deeper level, they quickly orient themselves and recognize the essentials.
2 METHODOLOGY

The issue of the research is directed to the area of novice teachers and their most problematic areas, which they encounter when entering practice.

The main objective of the research was to find out what novice teachers perceive as the most problematic area when entering practice, and on the contrary, what does not cause them any difficulties. Partial objectives of the research were to find out: What novice teachers perceive as their strengths, what they see as weaknesses. We also looked at this issue from the mentoring teacher’s point of view, where we focused on how they perceive the problem areas for novice teachers, and on the contrary, what does not cause them any problems.

The research sample were the novice teachers who practice in kindergarten for a maximum of three years and have at least a bachelor’s degree. Kindergarten teachers who were in daily contact with the children and with their head teacher were approached to process and retrieve the data. The teachers who participated in the research were selected based on intentional selection. Such a selection is not based on coincidence, but on the judgment of the researcher who considers the object as an average case (Chráska, 2007).

Before the beginning of the research, the kindergarten teachers were contacted and informed about the purpose of the research. A total of 50 kindergartens and 198 teachers were addressed. When analysing the data, we used 100 filled-in questionnaires that returned to us.

Based on the nature of the research topic and the characteristics of the research sample, a quantitative method of investigation was chosen for the research. A questionnaire was the main research method for data collection. Before the start of the research, we consulted the research questionnaire with the experts in pedagogical research and practice and drafted it in accordance with the most recent educational literature. This is a method of asking questions in writing, as well as obtaining answers in writing. In the questionnaire, we chose a combination of closed and open questions. Open questions in this case served as a supplement to better understand the issue. The questionnaire was designed in two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was made up of open questions, where novice teachers had the opportunity to express themselves freely, what they consider their strengths and weaknesses in teaching practice. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of closed questions that were drafted into a scale based on the teacher's competences. The same questionnaire was presented to the mentoring teacher to evaluate the work of the novice teacher she supervises in the same way. Since the questionnaire was presented to the mentoring teacher, as well as to the novice teacher, we were able to compare their responses.

Two hypotheses have been set for finding out the results:

- **H1₀** There is no statistically significant link in the perception of Competence of Pedagogical Diagnostics from the perspective of novice teachers and mentoring teachers. Novice teachers evaluate the ability of pedagogical diagnostics in the same way as they are evaluated by the mentoring teachers.

- **H1ₐ** There is a statistically significant link in the perception of the competence of pedagogical diagnostics from the perspective of view of novice teachers and mentoring teachers. Novice teachers evaluate the ability of pedagogical diagnostics differently than it is evaluated by the mentoring teachers.

- **H2₀** There is no statistically significant link in the perception of self-reflection competence from the perspective of novice teachers and mentoring teachers. Novice teachers evaluate self-reflection the same way as mentoring teachers.

- **H2ₐ** There is a statistically significant link in the perception of self-reflection competence from the perspective of novice teachers and mentoring teachers. Novice teachers evaluate self-reflection the same way as mentoring teachers.

The obtained data were further analysed and statistically evaluated based on the chi-square statistical method for closed questions. The first part of the questionnaire that included open questions was analysed using coding. For clarity, the results were presented using graphs-
3 RESULTS

The following chapter presents the interpretation of the obtained data from the research investigation. For clarity and orientation in the teacher's statements, the data were plotted in graphs. From the obtained and analysed data, we created four graphs, which present the results of the research and then two contingency tables, according to which we calculated the statistical significance of the hypotheses.

The above results indicate that most teachers (42) perceive the area of managing preparations of educational reality as their strength. Another area most frequently perceived by teachers as their strong point is cooperation in developing school curricula, which was selected by 37 teachers and only two less (35), had an area that included self-reflection. 33 teachers have identified as a strong point the area that related to knowledge and overview of school legislation. The area of communicative competence was chosen by a total of 30 teachers and the lowest score was achieved in the trends of primary and pre-primary pedagogy, which was chosen as a strong point by a total of 28 teachers.

The weaknesses most frequently encountered by novice teachers when entering practice were communication and collaboration with the mentoring teacher (37), as well as the selection of inappropriate educational practices (35). A total of 33 teachers stated the difference of their ideas and the reality as their weakness and the area of problems occurring during the daily routine of the kindergarten had a very similar result (31). The least number of teachers (28) stated the area of pedagogical diagnostics as their weakness.
From the perspective of the mentoring teacher, communication with children is one of the strongest aspects of the novice teachers. The following score was very similar. 35 teachers stated the motivation of children, 33 teachers the cooperation in developing the school curricula and 31 teachers the knowledge of school legislation.

The area that causes novice teachers the biggest problems from the perspective of the mentoring teachers is the disrespect of the opinions of the mentoring teacher, which was reported by 36 of interviewees. The second highest score was given to the field of inappropriate educational practices (28). Almost identical results were found in the area of problems encountered in the daily routine of kindergartens, which were reported by a total of 26 teachers, as well as work with the voice (25).

Table 1. Frequencies and expected frequencies for the pivot table in terms of perceiving the competence of pedagogical diagnostics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pedagogical diagnostics</th>
<th>manages</th>
<th>handles with help</th>
<th>does not manage</th>
<th>Σ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>novice teacher</td>
<td>30 (27,5)</td>
<td>11 (17,5)</td>
<td>9 (5)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring teacher</td>
<td>25 (27,5)</td>
<td>24 (17,5)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Σ</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²=11,683

α = 0,05  Σ = marginal value
We have included the expected frequencies for each field in the pivot table and based on the formula for calculating the Chi-square test, we calculated a test criterion with a result of $2^2 = 11.683$. Next, you had to calculate the number of degrees of freedom, which are 2 for our pivot table, as well as to find the critical value of degrees of freedom in the table with the relevant significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. Subsequently, we compared the test criterion with the relevant critical value, and it was found that there is a statistically significant correlation in the perception of the competence of pedagogical diagnostics from the perspective of a novice teacher and a mentoring teacher. To find out where a significant relationship exists, we have made a sign scheme to show us in which category the statistical significance is manifested. According to the formula for the sign scheme we obtained values which we subsequently compared with the intervals for individual levels of significance $\alpha = 0.05$, $\alpha = 0.01$ and $\alpha = 0.001$. Based on the sign scheme, we found that the statistical significance manifests itself in the “does not manage” category. Therefore, we can conclude that there are differences in the perception of the competence of pedagogical diagnostics in novice and mentoring teachers. Using the Chi-square test and sign scheme, we have obtained a result that presents the results of perception of this competence. It has been found that novice teachers underestimate themselves and think that they do not adequately understand the pedagogical diagnostics in kindergarten. On the other hand, mentoring teachers did not find the problem with these novice teachers and evaluate them as “capable” of pedagogical diagnostics. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative one.

4 CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned above, one does not become a teacher on a one-time basis, but it is a long-term process that includes several stages. In our research, we have focused on the first stage, namely the novice teachers and their strengths and weaknesses when entering the practice. The main objective of the research was to uncover the problematic areas of novice teachers in practice. Within the quantitative survey, we used the questionnaire as the most suitable method. We have analysed the data obtained, when the open questions were decoded, and the closed questions were statistically evaluated using the chi square. The results show that novice teachers and mentoring teachers perceive problem areas differently. Novice teachers perceive as their strongest feature the knowledge of how to properly fit and create training for educational realities. More than half of the teachers interviewed reported this area. On the other hand, the mentoring teachers perceive communication with children as the strongest aspect of novice teachers. The opinions on the strengths differ slightly in the mentoring and novice teachers. On the other hand, the weaknesses are relatively consistent because both the novice and mentoring teachers perceive the biggest problem in the area, that they are not able to respect each other and accept their opinions related to educational reality and to education in general.

The results of the research can serve as a basis for further research in this area. Furthermore, the results of the research could be the basis for suggestions for curriculum change, but also for the educational content of novice teachers.
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REFERENCES