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Dilemmas of Teacher Authority

Introduction

Authority is a complex and fascinating phenomenon which is difficult to grasp for a simple reason that in itself it does not even exist. It only comes into existence in a relationship.

When it comes to teachers, authority most often manifests itself in their relationships with students, but also with other teachers, colleagues and parents. Opinions regarding authority, its meaning, importance and functions differ, quite similarly to how they vary regarding education and various attitudes towards it. These heterogeneous interpretations make it in fact a 'philosophical' issue, i.e. it links it to the very view of life, a person's position in the society, the meaning of life. Differences in approach to authority is related to the way people regard their own existence and life around them, the way they see their roles in the company of other people, what their idea of the ideal 'community' is, what they think about the meaning of our existence in this world. It is a question whether they consider a child an immature human being that somebody more experienced needs to nurture, or whether they believe that a child is an independent autonomous individual that knows what is best for him or her, who in fact does not need anybody to be lead, guided nor controlled by.

This wide range of views and attitudes towards a child and its education results in the fact that many educators (parents, teachers) ask themselves what is even right, how they should approach children and youngsters, how they should educate or whether they have any right to do that at all, i.e. to instil their own views and attitudes in their educatees which may not correspond with children's interests and needs, and further into their future this

instilment might handicap them, even though they believe at the time that they have their best interest in mind.

Naturally, similar questions are also linked to the phenomenon of authority. In this article we are going to try to outline dilemmas, antinomies, ambivalences and paradoxes related to teacher authority. In other words, we are asking ourselves a question what dilemmas are faced by teachers who represent an authority for their students or are trying to gain one. What is it that such teachers could think about or more importantly have doubts about, how difficult and sometimes unsolvable questions they ask themselves are when it comes to their authority in relation to students, what choices and decisions they need to make?

On the one hand, together with such thoughts there is uncertainty creeping into the mind of teachers, because it is not clear to them how to relate to their students, how much distance they should keep from them, to what extent they should influence them, form their opinions and 'force' their own values and beliefs on them. On the other hand, the effort teachers make – with existing or potential authority – to think about their role (authority) in such a way, to contemplate their relations with students from all different angles and think through everything that is linked to the state of asymmetry between them and their students, lets them, in Erich Fromm's words (2001), be a 'rational authority' for their students. It is a kind of authority which favours all those who get into the sphere of its influence, i.e. the one which tries to help and support students, not the one which is used by its bearer only for his/her own advantage and satisfaction, e.g. based on the feeling of contentment that the bearer finally has power over someone and can make decision about them, as is the case with so called 'irrational authority'.

There are many dilemmas and antinomies associated with teacher authority, and different kinds of ambivalence are connected to it. In order for a teacher to have authority with students or to be an authority for them, he/she has to consider a lot of different things and factors related to it. To make the situation even more complicated, we need to state that each and every teacher even the best ones may think about these 'questions' in a different way depending on their age, their experience, their idea of life and their students' needs. Apart from this 'philosophical and life' orientation a good teacher needs to give a great deal of thought to questions related to so called 'business as usual' at school, during which it is necessary to arrange for calm and orderly environment, provide students with safety at school for the benefit of the learning process. Moreover, it is crucial to take into consideration that a teacher does not work with just one student, but with

the whole class or with selected groups of students. There is another issue associated with that, because a teacher has to relate to individual students and the whole class alike. Thus, as we mentioned before, authority is relational, and so it is clear that there are plenty of problems, contradictions, contrasts, ambiguities and difficult decision making, in other words a lot of dilemmas, antinomies or ambivalence.

Let us focus on the terminology for a while. Due to the fact that there is a term dilemmas used in the title of our article, the question is whether this word is 'unequivocal', unambiguous, i.e. whether it is correctly chosen in view of the sense and contents of our article. In the text we also use words antinomy and ambivalence. We believe both these terms to be more or less synonymous to the term dilemma/s, even though we do realize that to a certain extent they can be distinguished as far as their connotations and/or collocations are concerned both in their common as well as specialized terminology usage. The problem is that neither in common language, nor in professional literature there is consensus regarding the individual definition of the above mentioned terms. Prominent authority on philosophy of education, Eugen Fink, became known for defining dilemmas and antinomies, within which he believes all reflected education is bound to fluctuate. In his work „Grundfragen der systematischen Pädagogik“ (1978) he defines as a dilemma the contradiction between objective educational requirements and subjective prerequisites together with educational conditions, or the contradictory nature of pedagogical reality as something taken for granted as opposed to required concurrent openness to the world, other people and new values (Pelcová, 2001, pp. 138–139). When it comes to antinomies that everybody who teaches is bound to encounter eventually, the author mentions the antimony of oscillation (of the education or rather the educator) between the education as an aid, and the education as manipulation. Fink (1978) also adds that all good educators sooner or later have to ask themselves if they have any right to impose their approach to life and values on other individuals.

When searching in language handbooks, dictionaries of foreign expressions and universal encyclopaedias, you can learn that it is difficult to draw a defining line between the terms dilemma, antinomy or ambivalence. Nevertheless, **ambivalence** is predominantly being related to emotions or to emotional attitudes which are contradictory in a relationship towards a certain person or an object, e.g. in a form of sympathy or antipathy (Akademický slovník cizích slov, 1998, p. 45), or it is perceived as a dual approach towards certain facts or persons which is characterized by contradictory and

conflicting opinions, ideas and feelings (Všeobecná encyklopedie v osmi svazcích 1, 1999, p. 114), while **antinomy** is predominantly tied to (propositional) logic, in which it is perceived as “*a pair of statements seemingly immaculately proven, which are however contradictory*” (Akademický slovník cizích slov, 1998, p. 59), or as an “*assertion which seems to be both true and false*” (Všeobecná encyklopedie v osmi svazcích 6, 1999, p. 42), or as a “*contradiction between two mutually exclusive theses which both claim to be true*” (Slovník spisovného jazyka českého I, 1989, p. 39).

Since the circumstances regarding the definition are rather uncertain, we believe that it is for the best for us to utilize in our text the term **dilemma** in its established usage, i.e. as a difficult choice between two options which are often mutually excluding at first sight and/or as a difficult decision between two often seemingly contradictory options. At the same time, we do realize that the term dilemma is also perceived as “*necessary choice between two mutually excluding and often unfavourable options*” (Akademický slovník cizích slov, 1998, p. 166), i.e. without an option to find a ‘middle ground’. There is one more reason that speaks in favour of using the term dilemma in our text instead of ‘antinomy’. Based on experts on philosophy of education the dilemma is related to our decision making, during which we move within the limits of acceptability, meanwhile in case of antimony there are two extremes put against each other that go beyond acceptability. From this point of view it would be a dilemma to make a decision or think about whether a teacher for the sake of getting or retaining authority should keep bigger or smaller distance from students, whether it is better for ‘authority’ to have more or less frequent contact with students, while the very question whether a teacher should establish his/her authority with students or try to negotiate it with them would most likely belong to the term antimony. In any case, the border between the terms dilemma, antimony or ambivalence is still blurred. Since we are trying to give a lot of thought to contradictory feelings that a teacher can have, what conflicting, opposing, and contradictory thoughts and ideas might occupy his/her mind when he/she deliberates about what approach towards students is the right one or what role as a (potential) authority he/she should get into, what methods and techniques are permissible to gain and retain authority, we prefer using of the term dilemma/s. From the above mentioned terms dilemma is the easiest to understand and it includes in itself certain elements and/or shades of both antimony and ambivalence.

Similar to what Fink (1978) says about the reflected education being oscillated in dilemmas, so does every teacher, who tries to thoroughly consider

questions regarding his/her authority, is bound to deal with dilemmas, which are closely related to the question of authority.

There are many dilemmas linked to the phenomenon of authority which take on various forms in education. One of it is the question of moral autonomy and heteronomy. We can look at it both from the point of view of the recipient as well as the bearer of authority. It is for example the question whether as recipients of authority we should adopt the moral code as the whole and rely on 'somebody else's' authority, or whether as bearers of authority we have the right to shape another individual and 'force' upon him/her our view of the world. There is another related question: Is it permissible to accept such orders from authority even though they are against our conviction or even our conscience. Paradoxically there is more implicit danger of abuse when it comes to informal authority that is generally sought after. Formal authority is based on much clearer rules as opposed to the informal one. Therefore, it is much easier to check it and prevent its abuse. Informal authority on the other hand does not have clear boundaries similar to the informal one, thus we can hardly check it (abuse of informal authority can easily happen, for example by means of emotional blackmail).

Research in literature and practice

There are many more dilemmas to be found in current research on authority in education worldwide. For one, we can mention a case study from Finland (Tirri, Puolimatka, 2000), whose conclusions are based on data from interviews and essays asking secondary school teachers and ninth-grade students from two Finnish schools about their take on moral dilemmas related to teachers' practice of using authority. The study particularly focuses on the levels and sought-after balance of epistemic and deontic authorities. As it turns out, teachers in Finland are very strong epistemic authorities with very good knowledge of the subject they teach. What they really lack is the deontic authority, i.e. they are inconsistent when giving orders and punish, do not follow and enforce their own or agreed rules, or do not have any explicit rules whatsoever. They are biased, neglectful, impolite, insensitive to students' private matters, manipulative and in many cases even aggressive. Needless to say, such attitude usually leads to conflicts and loss of authority altogether. One of the conclusions presented by the authors is that even though it is expected of schools to support development of autonomy of students using a non-directive way of education, it "*seems to be a misconception ... that autonomy cannot develop*

within the framework of educational authority” (Tirri, Puolimatka, 2000, p. 163). They add that permissive methods may not be the best to promote autonomy, because in order to achieve objectives permissive teachers often incline to manipulation. Also they claim that even if an individual is given freedom to act autonomously without restrictions, they may not grow into autonomous persons. Based on their findings, the lack of deontic authority often leads to giving up on control over the class, disorder and decline of classroom climate, which is followed by teacher frustration causing them to face many more dilemmas and lead them to making all the bad decisions, the worst of which are manipulative tactics and aggression.

Another research dealing with similar dilemma is from Israel (Eshel, 1991). Its findings show that the level of utilization of formal or informal authority in schools has direct influence on students’ academic achievement. Formal authority is defined in this paper as the one which does not include any sharing of authority with students, while the informal one means that a teacher shares a lot of authority and accepts much more liberal approach. In authors’ opinion students’ results do not depend on the utilized model of authority as such (e.g. formal or informal), but rather on congruence between the used model and a type of school it is used at (traditional or open schools). Traditional schools are considered to be rather authoritative and open schools have more alternative and liberal features. The study was carried out in fourth, fifth and sixth classes of suburban Israeli primary schools. According to this research there are four options of congruence and/or discrepancies between teachers’ and schools’ approach:

- a. open school with high degree of authority sharing
- b. open school with low degree of authority sharing
- c. traditional school with high degree of authority sharing
- d. traditional school with low degree of authority sharing

Overall, students in classrooms with full congruence, i.e. (a) either those in open schools with teachers sharing a lot of authority in the classroom, or (d) those in traditional schools with low degree of shared authority, have generally better academic achievement and results than in two other cases (b) or (c). It seems that whenever the teacher’s approach contradicts the school’s official policy, in such cases students are faced with a dilemma of their own and feel that there is something very wrong and twisted, which usually undermines teachers’ authority. Such inconsistency eventually causes students to feel threatened and insecure which leads to the decline in their achievement.

Apart from those mentioned above, there are many other similar researches dealing with a dilemma between a liberal approach and the enforcing

of rules, e.g. in Germany (Susteck, 1995; Peschel, 2006; Heymann, 2006). One of the studies shows how difficult it is to apply rules in traditionally liberal schools in the United States (Bratlinger, Morton, Washburn, 1999).

In our own survey, which took place between 2014 and 2015, we used the incomplete sentence technique and asked teacher students at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague to come up with dilemmas which they think are associated with teacher authority. The exact wording of the sentence they were supposed to complete was: “*A dilemma connected with teacher authority is...*” Our sample consisted of 36 students (8 male and 28 female) of both full-time and combined postgraduate master’s study programmes. We chose this sample because student teachers still have their recent experience as secondary school students fresh in their memory, but also having graduated from a bachelor’s programme at the faculty of education they already have certain knowledge in the field, moreover some of them have already been teaching. When analysing the survey, we found out that there was no significant difference in responses between male and female participants.

We decided to divide the most common completions of the sentence into relevant categories. This way we were able to determine around 10 most common dilemmas. The most common dilemma that student teachers came up with was (1) the level of influence and control used on students (e.g. “*how much it is okay to influence students in general*”, “*to what extent teachers should affect students’ own mindset and try to shape their personalities*”), next most common dilemma (2) was the level of manipulation and pretence (e.g. “*whether it is okay for a teacher to lose his/her face*”; “*should a teacher always be him/herself*”; “*how to positively influence students without manipulating them*”), also respondents repeatedly raised a question (3) whether teachers should try to befriend students or rather try to keep the asymmetry in their relationship (e.g. “*is it possible to harmonize a friendly relationship with exercising authority*”; “*how can a teacher be both strict and keep close relationship and not lose students’ earned trust*”), they also often pointed out (4) the level of teacher’s objectivity, fairness, impartiality as opposed to his/her promoting favouritism, bias, prejudice and preference (e.g. “*teachers should be fair to all their students and treat them alike*”; “*how much to be impartial*”). Further there were some other questions raised as well, for instance (5) the level of distance between teachers and students, (6) formal versus informal authority, (7) level of in and out of school regulation of students’ behaviour, (8) using of punishment and praise, (9) whether and on what condition to take advantage of

authority (i.e. teacher abusing authority in his/her own benefit as opposed to students' benefit), and last but not least (10) whether it is possible to be authority for all students at once.

Most of other completions were questions or dangers rather than dilemmas (e.g. “*what acts could be considered legal or illegal for teacher*”, “*how can teacher build authority*”, “*teachers could get carried away when exercising authority*” etc).

In another survey, carried out in 2014 during an international online course on teacher authority which was a part of the European project called SoNetTe (Social Networks in Teacher Education), we asked student teachers from the Czech Republic, Estonia and Finland about interactive styles of teachers that can help building and exercising authority. As a result we could observe clear dichotomy and compare differences between views of the phenomenon between respondents from the three countries. Our research presents the comparison of most significant results of the analysis and interpretation of data from the quantitative research conducted at the end of the course using adapted questionnaire of teacher interactive style (Gavora, 2013). The sample consisted of 60 English speaking student teachers from the Czech Republic, Estonia and Finland – 20 respondents from each country. There were 18 men and 42 women respondents with the average age of 25. Student teachers were chosen to get an insight into their pre-service preconceptions concerning teacher authority based on their sociocultural background and previous experience and education. The adapted QTIS (questionnaire of teacher interactive style) consisted of 64 four-level Likert-type scale items with answers ranging from 0-never to 4-always. Items were evenly distributed into 8 dimensions, each of which characterized one of teacher interaction styles.

- Leader/organizer (with answers such as – is enthusiastic about his/her subject, knows everything that goes on in the classroom)
- Helpful/friendly (e.g. is willing to explain things again, creates a pleasant environment in the class)
- Understanding (e.g. listens to his/her students, is patient)
- Democratic (e.g. is benevolent, shares decision making regarding class matters with students)
- Uncertain (e.g. is shy, is not sure what to do when students fool around)
- Dissatisfied (e.g. is grumpy, is suspicious)
- Admonishing (e.g. is arrogant, is easily crossed)
- Strict (e.g. is severe when marking tests, has very high expectations)

- The core unfinished sentence that each item completed was: Good teacher...

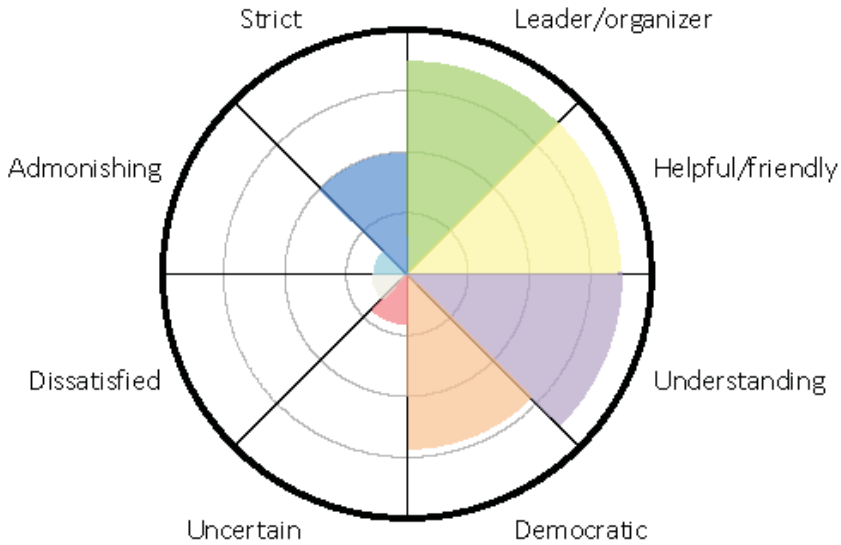


Figure 1: What makes a good teacher (with authority) – results of the data analysis for all countries (dimension significance)

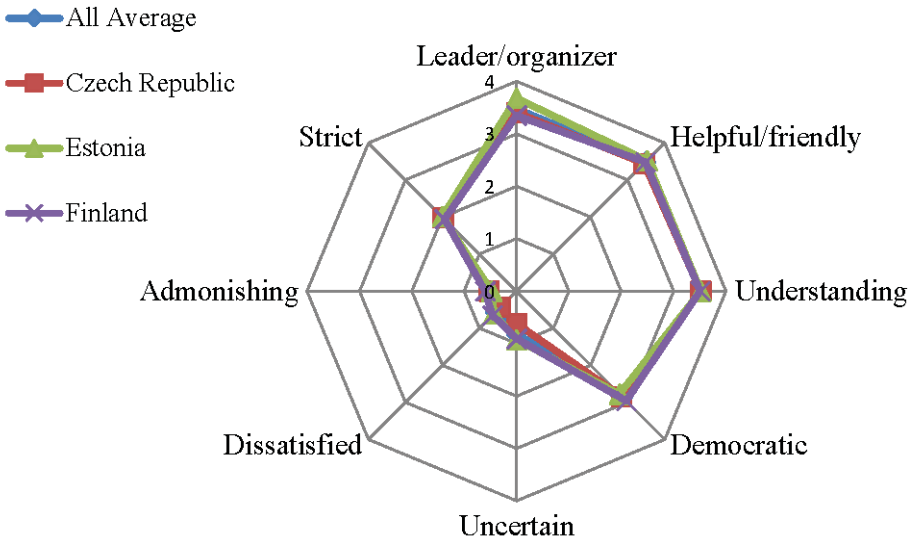


Figure 2: What makes a good teacher (with authority) – results of the data analysis for each country

Dimensions	All Average	Czech Republic	Estonia	Finland
Leader/organizer	3,479	3,406	3,679	3,350
Helpful/friendly	3,483	3,444	3,592	3,481
Understanding	3,513	3,513	3,563	3,506
Democratic	2,860	2,844	2,819	2,959
Uncertain	0,817	0,619	0,934	0,906
Dissatisfied	0,567	0,438	0,606	0,650
Admonishing	0,533	0,525	0,468	0,600
Strict	1,975			

Table 1: Results of the data analysis – mean scores (the higher the number, the more the dimension/trait is required for a teacher to be good and have authority)

The 8 dimensions above are in fact 4 dichotomies or in other words dilemmas, which is particularly evident from Figure 1 (each sector has its counterpart on the opposite side, such as democratic vs. strict). The analysis of the collected data helped us identify what traits and interaction styles (dimensions) student teachers believe help or interfere with building, exercising and maintaining teacher authority. As shown in Figure 2 and Table 1 differences between student teachers' opinions from different countries are not major. All participants emphasized leadership and organizational skills, which included e.g. classroom management and knowledge of the subject, as the most important and it peaked together with helpfulness, friendliness and understanding towards students. Those three dimensions were followed by the importance of the teacher's democratic approach (i.e. sharing power with students). On the other side of the scale (i.e. 0 – 2) was strictness, uncertainty, overt dissatisfaction and admonishing. Apart from strictness, which reached almost 2 points on the scale, the rest of dimensions have minor gains and therefore in respondents' opinion they do not help teachers to build and maintain authority. To sum it up, apart from clearly beneficial styles (Leader/organizer, Helpful/friendly, Understanding) and distinctly detrimental ones (Uncertain, Dissatisfied, Admonishing) which do not pose much of a dilemma, there are two dimensions (Democratic and Strict), the scores of which are not purely positive or negative. Based on the above it is possible to postulate that the lowest dichotomy between the scores of democratic and strict dimensions in this research (as seen in Figure 1) seems to indicate that they actually cause the biggest dilemma and proves the results of previously mentioned researches focused on teacher authority dilemmas (Šaroch, 2015).

Conclusion

Based on all of the above we believe we are able to conclude our article by defining following dilemmas related to teacher authority from the point of view of its bearers (teachers).

To be an authority right now and/or later in the future

This dilemma which may initially seem paradoxical is closely related to types of authority. Teacher authority is most often associated with students' discipline, i.e. whether students listen to their teacher at all, whether his/her lessons are calm and orderly. The teacher may face a dilemma whether to be an immediate authority in the aforesaid sense, i.e. 'day-to-day school operations authority' that we associate with students' discipline, or whether to sacrifice discipline enforcement for the sake of the future and bet everything on the chance that in the future (after leaving school) students will have realized that his/her tolerant, kind and democratic approach towards them was something that they themselves would like to live up to. Thus, students may later in their adulthood go along with the attitude they used to criticize about their teacher and considered it his/her weakness. Teachers may become students' behavioural role models only later when they are not in direct contact with them, but their influence begins to manifest itself anyway.

To be a 'day-to-day school operations authority' and/or a moral authority

We partially mentioned this predicament within the first dilemma above. It is the question of whether as part of his/her role a teacher should press for discipline using resolute, strict and consistent enforcing of obedience to the rules of conduct, or whether he/she should seek to become a moral authority for students based on leniency, kindness and tolerance. In other words, should a teacher rather embrace and perform in the role of a 'day-to-day school operations authority', i.e. the guardian of order who looks after the obedience to the rules of conduct and minds peace and discipline at school, and who students fear to some extent, or should he or she rather take up the role of a moral role model, the paragon of morality and magnanimity.

To be in contact with students more and/or to keep distance

Another dilemma associated with authority could lie in teachers' ruminations about the possibility of their losing the appeal for students caused by their frequent contacts. There is also a related question regarding how big a distance a teacher should keep from his/her students in order to set

a clear boundary between roles of a teacher and a student, so that students who get to know their teacher more closely do not lose their trust in him/her as their role model. The longer we are in contact with other people, the more we show them our flaws and weaknesses. If a teacher wants to become a role model for his/her students, the question is how open he/she should be towards the students, whether to share his/her concerns and troubles with them and whether to let them peak into his/her privacy.

To admit and/or not to admit weaknesses

The above mentioned dilemma is in its way associated with another one regarding a choice that teachers have to either conceal from students something that could potentially lower their authority or pretend to be better than they actually are. A teacher who discourages his/her students from using addictive substances could face a dilemma whether to admit that he himself used to smoke marihuana, and that he got drunk a couple of times in his/her life etc. Will students appreciate his/her honesty which could consequently strengthen his/her authority, or could the confession cause his/her authority to be damaged? Teachers who want to be role models in the eyes of their students may also deal with a dilemma concerning the perfection of their image in their students' eyes. In this case it is not about whether to conceal or hide something, but rather a struggle to come up with something that could help them become idols or heroes in their students' eyes. It is very well expressed in a scene from Jan Sverak's movie "Obecná škola" (Primary School), in which a teacher Igor Hnízdo, who his students take for a big and indisputable authority, tells them made up stories of his war experience and comes out as a brave man and a hero. When he and his class accidentally come across a panzerfaust, Igor Hnízdo is reluctant to defuse it and insists on calling for help. When the weapon is defused by a father of one of the students, who is not considered an authority at first, he decides to ask the teacher a simple question, because he knows his own son and boys from his class admire their teacher more than their parents and they will not stop raving about Hnízdo at home. Since his experience with the teacher's reluctance to defuse the weapon he has doubts about his heroism at war and tells him that he finds it difficult to believe that the teacher actually went through all that he tells children at school. Igon Hnízdo after giving it some thought tells him: "*I want them to have a role model.*" In other words the teacher – authority does not tell his students the truth in order to become their role model worthy following, the authority they can relate to, the example they can live up to.

To enforce and/or to negotiate authority

This dilemma is associated with a beauty of the Czech language, in which a change of just one letter in a word can cause the shift of its meaning to the level of a dilemma (zjednat – enforce, arrange for it using coercion versus sjednat – arrange it through negotiation, agree upon it). In current English as well as American literature on the topic a new term ‘sharing/shared authority’ has recently appeared (Stepanek, 2000, p. 27). This collocation expresses the effort of teachers and schools to let students get involved in shaping their school and learning/teaching processes, i.e. to certain extent share with students the organization of school life. Some authors (Metz, 1978; Pace, Hemmings, 2007) say that a contemporary teacher in fact needs to negotiate for his/her authority. We are getting to a dilemma that can be formulated using the following questions: Should teachers enforce their authority or negotiate for it? In other words, should teachers make their students listen to them and respect them using strictness and coercion, or should they negotiate about the sphere of influence and areas in which their students are going to respect them? Should a teacher simply and rigorously enforce his/her authority, or should he/she acquire it by friendly, open and democratic approach to his/her students, which would include discussions regarding the appropriate level of the teacher’s influence and his/her intervention into school life? Should teachers arrange for the immediate order and discipline, or should they try to arrange their long-term students’ respect via cooperation with them and based on long relationship with them?

To accept the role of an authority and/or to give it up

It would be difficult to find a teacher who does not want to have authority over his/her students, i.e. who would a priori refuse to become an authority for students. On the other hand, teachers who find out that they have become authorities for their students realize that students look up to them, they try to be like them, they confide in them, ask them for advice, look for their support, rely on them and literally develop an attachment to them, such teachers could find it difficult to deal with it. Teachers who do not want to let their students down might start to closely watch themselves in trying not to give their students a bad example, not to deviate from their roles, in the consequence of which they could start behaving unnaturally. Essentially it is all about the teacher’s capability to put up with the responsibility which is associated with the acceptance of the role of an authority. Teachers may view this responsibility as a burden and could start to waver

over their ability to cope with the role and might consider whether it is better for them, i.e. less demanding to weaken their influence (authority) over their students.

To make students adopt ideas and attitudes of the teacher and/or to lead them to independence and autonomy

Another teacher authority related dilemma is whether a teacher should be delighted when students accept his/her mindset and attitude, or whether he/she should gradually lower his/her influence and lead them to independent critical thinking. This dilemma is organically connected with students' age, when teacher's influence is strongest at the beginning of the school attendance and then gradually weakens. Nevertheless there are teachers who enjoy so much trust (authority) with senior students that they deliberate if it is not high time for them to weaken it. On the one hand, it is a great recognition for a teacher to have so much influence over students, on the other hand, there is a danger that students will learn to adopt opinions of other individuals and will never grow into free, self-confident and independent human beings.

To use authority in students' benefit and/or in one's own benefit

Teachers who have authority with students can use it in benefit of their students and offer them their support. On the other hand, there is a danger that when teachers start enjoying their role they will begin to use it in their own benefit, e.g. in a way that they will shield themselves with their authority during meetings with students' parents even though they are wrong in the particular matter, or when they start to intoxicate themselves with their power over students, which may saturate their social need to be put on a pedestal, to be admired, recognized and adored. The discussed dilemma can be based on the tension or uneasiness about whether as a teacher I should use authority strictly in benefit of students or in my own benefit. Use and abuse of authority corresponds with Erich Fromm's terms of rational and irrational authority. While the rational authority is based on the competence and helps an individual who relies on it in his/her growth, the irrational authority is based on power and serves the exploitation of people who yield to it (Fromm, 2001, pp. 53–54).

To have authority and/or to be an authority

This dilemma is to a considerable extent a matter of definition. While collocations 'to have authority' and 'to be authority' people usually do not

distinguish, or in other words they do not see any difference between them, some authors (e.g. Fromm, 2001) can actually recognize certain differences. Already mentioned Fromm (2001) for instance distinguishes between the being mode and the having mode. According to the author, authority in the being mode lies in both individual competence for the fulfilment of certain social functions, and also in the very base of personality which reached a high level of growth and integration (Fromm, 2001, p. 54). In case of the having mode the competence is not a fundamental element of authority, or in other words the acquired (gained) authority based on competence yields to the authority based on the social status, which can be obtained thanks to the lottery of genes (king, monarch), crime, including treachery and murder (dictator), money spent on elections or because of simple photogenic looks (politician – oligarch) or external features (uniform, titles) which replace the real (missing) competence (Fromm, 2001, pp. 55–56).

If we interpret the collocation ‘to have authority’ as some kind of possession of coercive power, or in other words an influence based on fear and sanctions (or fear of sanctions), and the collocation ‘to be an authority’ as the abundance of respect and esteem, i.e. an individual who enjoys natural respect, esteem and high regard of other individuals based on his/her manners and competence, then as teachers we may face a dilemma, whether it is better for us to aspire to authority based on coercion power, or rather to take a longer route and gradually become someone who students can see ‘glowing’ with natural respect or someone who is a personality that does not need coercive measures in order to have influence on others.

Even though most teachers would like to be such an authority for students, it is not an easy dilemma, because becoming one is a lengthy matter, in which a teacher may never succeed. To be or in other words to become a real personality is neither easy nor automatic. It is much easier to take the shortcut and coerce students into showing at least some respect. Moreover, especially at primary schools it is very often impractical for teachers to ‘give up on’ both coercive power and authority entrusted in them ‘by the power of law’ due to the structure of the class.

To help (as a teacher and a bearer of authority) students surpass him/herself or to prevent it

The last and quite paradoxical dilemma is closely connected to teacher’s objectives as a bearer of authority. As a matter of fact every teacher should seek to be surpassed by his/her students, for example in the areas such as knowledge, helping others, morality etc. If a teacher becomes an

authority for his/her students in a particular field, he should also care for his/her students to becoming better in the field than he/she is and also to be helpful to others. The difficulty of solving this dilemma is in the fact that human society, especially the current one, is based on performance, contest, rivalry, mutual comparison and competition. Therefore, it is not easy for an adult, in this case a teacher, to seek to be surpassed by somebody who has not yet reached his/her qualities, i.e. by his/her own student.

As a final note, we would like to point out that seemingly contradictory questions and ideas within individual dilemmas are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and that they can in fact complement each other and form a certain dialectical intersection. In many cases it is absolutely essential to take into account the context in which education takes place, objectives and contents of education, as well as the degree of authority and the involvement of its individual factors within the above mentioned dilemmas and areas of school life, in which the authority is being exercised.

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Dilemmas of Teacher Authority

The article deals with teacher authority from the point of view of dilemmas it can cause when used in education. In the first part authors try to define the term dilemma in association with authority by comparing it to antinomy. The work then introduces several approaches to teacher authority dilemmas, including the ones of Fromm, Fink and other renowned scholars. Further, dilemmas associated with exercising of teacher authority are presented using examples from current research dealing with this phenomenon. The authors also present results of two of their recent surveys focusing on student teachers' understanding of teacher authority dilemmas and teacher interaction styles that may cause them. Based on the literature and research authors in the last part of their article show most common and controversial teacher dilemmas related to the use of authority.

