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Teacher Professional Development

Abstract:

The text aims to provide a review of recent educational research conducted in the field of teacher professional development in order to contribute to the ongoing discussion concerning both initial and further education of teachers.¹

Key words: *teacher professional development, teachers' careers, learning to teach – development of professional competence, stage models of professional development, novice teachers – experts in the profession*

Introduction

The need to grasp the essence of teacher development processes, to pinpoint its principles, is of interest not only for pedagogical theory but is dictated also by practical reasons. We live in the times of turbulent social changes which have in a substantial way influenced the perception of education and educators. The teaching profession as well as educational institutions are considered the main agents of the so-called 'knowledge society' of the 21st century. With the new roles and, indeed, responsibilities, the questions related to teacher education – both initial and further – have acquired new importance.

The search of more effective and efficient models of teacher education draws on various sources – e.g. synchronic/diachronic comparative studies, pedagogical

¹ The review draws mainly on research conducted in the English speaking countries and in the Czech Republic. More details can be found in Chapter II of a monograph (Píšová, 2005) published in Czech.

prognostics, etc. This text aims to review recent educational research dealing with teacher development, the conclusions of which are hoped to suggest for the desired changes in teacher education.

Researching teacher professional development

Research of teacher professional development has been conducted mainly in two following areas: investigation of teachers' careers (career paths, professional lives), which may be considered predominantly a sociological and social psychological view, and in the field of the development of professional competence of teachers or, in other words, on teacher's professional "thinking in action" in the classroom, i.e. a primarily pedagogical and psychological view. A general linking notion for both these areas is the notion of a *life cycle* and its phases (Alan, 1989, in Průcha, 1997, p. 198).

Teachers' career paths

The former of the two areas, investigation of teachers' careers, is rooted in the concept of teacher socialisation in the general sense of the term, as defined e.g. by Lašek (2003, p. 58): "Socialisation is a life-long process, as due to changing conditions, new status and roles an individual enters new situations so far not experienced and mastered in his/her behaviour and he/she has to adapt to them." (cf. Feiman-Nemser, Floden, 1986, p. 520) The individual – in our case the teacher – seeks the saturation of his/her social needs in interaction with the environment.

It is obvious that social environment of schools as institutions will differ in various parts of the world; it is determined by broader objective factors such as its cultural and historical framework as well as current social changes. However, certain common trends may be identified in the professional career of teachers all over the world in at least two fields: in the socialisation processes of novice teachers and in the fact that professional trajectories of teachers are organised in stages/phases.

As regards educational research focusing on *novice teachers*, excellent summaries of findings were offered by Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986, pp. 520–521), Ball and Goodson (1985, pp. 1–26), Glatthorn (1995, pp. 41–46), in our country e.g. Průcha (1997, pp. 197–213; 2002, pp. 23–29) and others.

While minor attention was paid to teacher recruitment/career choice (in the Czech Republic e.g. Havlík, 1995, Havlík et al., 1998, Kotásek, Růžička, 1996, in

Průcha, 2002, Křesáková, 2001, *ibid.*, Urbánek, 2001), major interest was raised by various aspects of professional induction of beginning teachers during the first (sometimes up to the third) year of their 'real life' practice (Šimoník, 1995, Píšová, 1999, 2005, Podlahová, 2004 and others). Ball and Goodson (1985, p. 11) noted that "by definition individual careers are socially constructed and individually experienced over time"; the above empirical research of teacher induction dealt with both these aspects. Subjective perceptions of socialisation processes as a confrontation of an individual with the environment were described, for example, by a frequently cited study by Lacey (1977, cited *ibid.*). He suggested a tripartite schema for analyzing the processes of adaptation involved in becoming a teacher. His categories of coping strategies the novices choose to adopt include:

1. strategic compliance,
2. internalized adjustment,
3. strategic redefinition of the situation (*ibid.*, pp. 71–73).

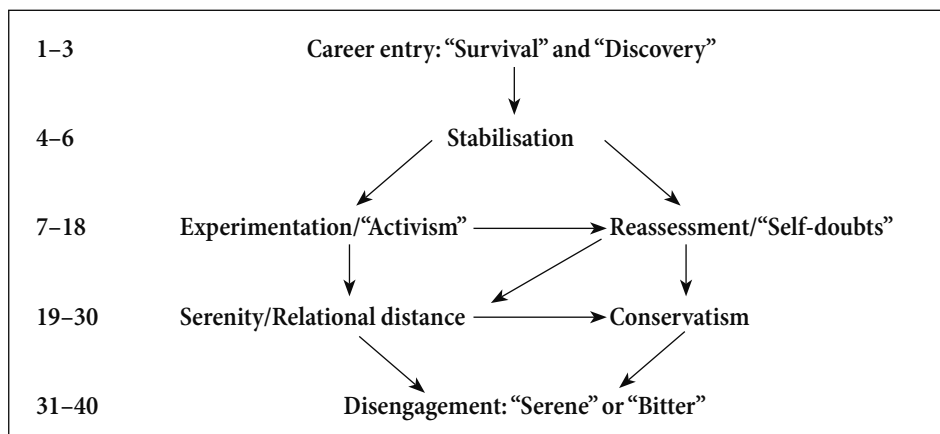
Similarly, Zeichner and Tabachnick (in Tickle, 1994, p. 55) considered a novice teacher an active agent in the socialisation processes; they "recognised that socialisation into teaching is a process of negotiation in which individuals can influence situations as well as adjust to them." Further educationalists supported this position; Woods (*ibid.*) already in 1981 carried out case studies that helped to distinguish two types of strategic orientations in novices: pragmatic and paradigmatic – uncompromising ones; later on Humphreys (1993, pp. 164–167) offered another dichotomic classification with different labels (conforming vs. confronting coping), etc. Thus, beginning teachers can "be viewed as making substantial contributions to the quality or strength of their own induction into teaching" (Tickle, 1994, p. 55). It is, however, doubtful whether novices may be expected to become agents of innovation and change in their schools as suggested by Šimoník (1995, p. 15). Some studies (e.g. already Zeichner, 1981/1982, p. 2 and many others) hinted that more frequently novices socialise into stable patterns of behaviour typical of a relatively rigid and conservative school culture.

Professional initiation is a critical period during which teacher's professional identity is sought and formed. This may become a rather painful process; novices even report acute feelings of a so-called "dichotomy of self" – Ball (1972, in Ball, Goodson, 1985, p. 18) made in this sense a distinction between substantive and situated identity. Furthermore, due to the specific aspects of entry into teaching beginning teachers may be endangered by a so called 'transition shock' or 'reality shock'; Lortie (1975, p. 59) in his seminal study *The Schoolteacher* noted that "one of the striking features of teaching is the abruptness with which full responsibility is assumed".

Further research of beginning teachers (e.g. Crow, 1986, Etheridge, 1988, Levine, 1990, in Freeman 1996, p. 224) focused on objective determinants of entry into the profession, on the character of educational reality and the influence of contextual variables (in the broader sense of civilisation changes and social context; in the more specific meaning of school culture/social climate etc.; more details Pířová, 1999, 2005).

Professional induction, however, is only the first phase of the professional trajectory of a teacher. Investigation of *teachers' career paths* as a whole were relatively numerous especially during the last decade, as documented in a detailed review by Goodson and Numan (2002, pp. 269–277). One of the pioneering and up till now influential sources is the above mentioned Lortie's (1975) monograph. Special attention

Figure 1. Successive themes of the teacher career cycle: schematic model (1989b, p. 37)



here will be paid to Huberman's (1989a, b) contribution to our current knowledge of this issue. His extensive two-phase qualitative research on the phases of teachers' professional lives conducted in Switzerland identified "some typical sequences or maxi-cycles" (1989a, p. 244) within the process of teacher development (Figure 1).

The author himself emphasised that the process of career paths development is by no means continual and linear, vice versa: it is a highly individualised process which as a rule entails stagnations, regressions, discontinuities, blind alleys. Huberman's research also represented a certain progress in the search of factors which may be considered predictors of teacher professional satisfaction in various

phases of their professional lives (also Lortie, 1975, Feiman-Nemser, Floden, 1986, pp. 510–512 and others). These conclusions were supported by further research (e.g. Lieberman, McLaughlin, Little, Elliot, Woods, Fullan, Hargreaves and others, in Day, 2002, p. 424).

At the same time, however, Huberman himself and many others warned against de-contextualisation, repeatedly accented that individual life stories must be related to their social and political context especially in the times of turbulent civilisation changes. Hargreaves (1999, p. 341) managed to formulate it as a necessity

“to connect the localised narratives of students, teachers and parents within their own schools, to the big pictures or grand narratives of educational and social change that are taking place ‘out there’ beyond their classroom walls, in ways that directly affect their lives behind them” (cf. Glatthorn, 1995, pp. 43–44, Biddle, 1995, pp. 61–66, Hargreaves, 1995, pp. 83–86, etc.).

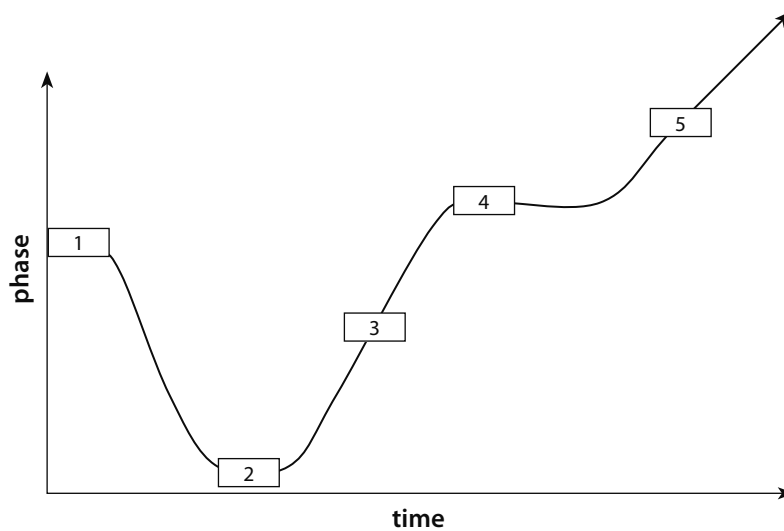
Other approaches to the investigation of professional lives of teachers built on the so-called critical incidents which were perceived as the key events in individual career paths (Sikes, Measor, Woods, 1985, Sikes, 1985, p. 33, Measor, 1985, pp. 61–77, Cole, 1985, pp. 89–104, etc.), or on ‘key people’ who significantly influenced the teacher on that path (Kelchtermans, 1993, in Mareš, 1996, p.16).

In addition to the above-mentioned research into teachers’ professional lives and/or its phases, a recent stream of educational research also paid attention to some *specific aspects of professional development*. These encompass emotional aspects of developmental processes, changes in teachers’ attitudes and value systems (in addition to the above sources Oja, 1995, pp. 535–539, Morine-Dershimer, Leighfield, 1995, p. 588–598, Tolley, Biddulph, Fisher, 1996, etc.), often discussed in relation to the issue of teacher roles, status and its changes (more details in Feiman-Nemser, Floden, 1986, Biddle, 1995, pp. 61–66; in the Czech Republic e.g. Kořal, 1996, 1998a, Havlík et al., 1998 – especially texts by Havlík and Spilková, etc.).

For illustration let us present one of such models; a model of emotional aspects of professional initiation (Figure 2) developed by Furlong and Maynard (1995, pp. 68–99). The authors were inspired by the conclusions drawn in a more general research project dealing with educational change processes carried out by Brandes and Ginnis (in Malderez, Bodóczy, 1999, p. 168).

Furthermore, another well represented field of research looked at the issue of teachers’ health, mainly dealing with stress and stressors which are typical of teaching as one of the helping professions (e.g. Cole, Walker, 1989 – especially contributions by Kyriacou and Woods; Brown, Ralph, 1994, a survey by Schwab, 1995, etc.; in our country e.g. Mareš, 1991, Křivohlavý, 1994, 1998, Míček, Zeman 1997, a review by Průcha, 1997, 2002, Kalhous, Obst et al., 2002, etc.). Factors influencing teachers’ health were longitudinally investigated in relation to teachers’

Figure 2. Novice teacher development
(adapted from Furlong, Maynard, 1995, pp. 68–99)



1 – early idealism; 2 – survival; 3 – recognising difficulties; 4 – hitting the plateau;
5 – moving on

workload and their satisfaction (e.g. Solfronk, 2000, pp. 11-14, a more detailed review and conclusions Průcha, 2002, pp. 33–79.; note also conferences organised by the Masaryk university Brno). Starting approximately in the 70s of the 20th century (firstly in the U.S.A., later on all over the world), researchers focused on the so-called 'burnout effect'. It was defined by Kyriacou (1989, p. 28) as “a state of mental, emotional and attitudinal exhaustion of teachers” and originally linked to the later phases of teachers' professional lives, mainly to the Huberman's (1989a, b; see above) phases of conservatism and disengagement. Later, however, it became clear that all teachers in all the phases of their career paths including novices in the profession may be endangered by burnout. In this sense, novices are even more vulnerable as, in addition to stressors which are considered generally valid in teaching (e.g. Hennig, Keller, 1996, pp. 21–34), they encounter numerous specific causes of stress – according to Nathan (in Tolley, Biddulph, Fisher, 1996, pp. 43–44) they include:

- “pressure of work including the amount of time which has to be spent on preparation; ...
- problems resulting from the need to establish working relationships with colleagues and students;

- lack of confidence and low self-esteem resulting from anxiety about getting things wrong, and overestimating the importance of perceived ‘failures’ in the classroom;
- setting unrealistic objectives which cannot be achieved;
- being required ... to cope by a multiplicity of tasks in addition to teaching ...;
- difficulty in gaining access to information, equipment and resources;
- external factors” typical of this phase of their life cycle.

Novice teachers as a high risk group were confirmed for the Czech environment e.g. by Kubíčková (2002, pp. 220–224). Reviews of studies dealing with the burnout effect were provided by Schwab (1995, pp. 52–57) or more recently by Huberman and Vandenberghe (1999, in Day, 2002, pp. 425–426), in our country by Průcha (2002, pp. 28–29) and others.

Teacher professional development – “learning to teach”

While the so far discussed research dealt predominantly with teachers’ careers, the second broad area of educationalists’ interest was dedicated to the development of professional competence in the classroom, to how teachers learn to teach. Similarly as in the previous chapter, equal attention was received by investigations of separate phases of their professional learning, mainly those of beginning teachers and ‘experts’ in the profession, and by attempts to map their professional learning during their professional life cycle as a whole.

Research of *novices* – and even of teachers-to-be in undergraduate programmes – focused on the so-called preconceptions (sometimes early conceptions; c.f. e.g. Bertrand, 1998, pp. 68–88, pp. 128–132), i.e. mental representations developed during their life experience. In the teaching profession this experience represents thousands of hours spent at schools as learners (both pupils and students). Lortie (1975, p. 61) labelled this experience ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and he underlined its specifically evaluative character. He warned that: “What students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles.” (ibid., p. 62) Kantorková (1993, in Mareš, 1996, p. 14) in her research proved that apprenticeship of observation may lead to naïve identification with the model as well as to its rejection (“*I would never do that*”). Research results indicated that preconceptions are relatively resistant to change and – no matter how incomplete or imprecise they may be (cf. LaBoskey, 1993, p. 25) – they function as a filter in the processes of receiving and interpreting new information and experience espe-

cially during the teacher training period (Zeichner, 1981, McIntyre, 1988, p. 101, Busher, Clark, Taggart, 1988, pp. 84–96, Eraut, 1994, pp. 60–61, Bailey et al., 1996, pp. 11–29, Mareš, 1996, p. 14, Švec, 1995, pp. 164–170; 1999, p. 40, etc.).

Furthermore, research on the initial period of professional operation of a teacher was oriented at the development of their knowledge base as well as their professional competence (survey e.g. Reynolds, 1992, 1995; in the Czech Republic e.g. Šimoník, 1995, Píšová, 1999, 2005; Kalhous, Horák, 1996, in Průcha, 1997, p. 211). In comparative studies pedagogical investigations also aimed to identify specific features that distinguish a beginning teacher from an expert in the profession; in this way, the educationalists believed, specific features of expertise / excellence in teaching may be found (Calderhead, 1987, 1988, Fogerty, Wang, Creek, 1983, in Clark, Peterson, 1986, pp. 279–280, Anderson, 1984, Livingston, Borko, 1989, in Richards, 1998, pp. 74–76, Russell, 1988, pp. 13–34, etc.). According to Berliner's (1995, pp. 46–52) conclusions drawn from a thorough analysis of a number of research studies, these features include:

- domain and context (expertise is always linked to one subject matter, it requires a relatively long-time experience which, however, cannot suffice on its own, and knowledge of context – mainly one's own pupils);
- automaticity (repetitive operations that are needed to accomplish one's goals);
- task demands and social situations;
- opportunism and flexibility;
- deeper and structured insight into problems;
- fast and accurate pattern-recognition abilities and creative solutions of problems.

Similarly to research of teachers' careers, research into how teaching is learnt (the processes of professional competence acquisition) was not limited to investigating separate phases of professional development, but attempted to analyse *professional lives of teachers in a school classroom* as a whole. Investigations in this field were strongly influenced by Fuller (1969, in Zeichner, 1981/1982) and Fuller and Bown (1975, *ibid.*); their studies supported the opinion that professional development runs in stages (or phases). The authors believed that these stages can be distinguished by the nature of teacher concerns that are dominant at a particular point in time: 1 survival or self-oriented concerns; 2 teaching situation concerns and 3 pupil concerns. Later on, Berliner (1988, in 1995, pp. 47–48) elaborated on their conclusions as well as on a general stage model of professional development (i.e. conceived virtually for any profession) designed by Dreyfus brothers (1986, in Eraut, 1994, pp. 123–139, including criticism of the model) and on research findings concerning the features of beginning/expert teachers. Based on that, he

inferred a five-stage model of teacher development with a focus on the cognition underlying teacher classroom behaviour. His model may be summarized as follows:

Figure 3. Stages of teacher professional development
(according to Berliner, 1995, pp. 47–48)

THE NOVICE

The novice teacher will concentrate on classroom survival by acquiring discrete instructional and managerial techniques. The approach is recipe-based with the focus very much on short term planning and immediate reactions. Much of the learning takes place through imitation or following the advice of others.

ADVANCED BEGINNER

The classroom routines are becoming increasingly automated. A certain degree of episodic knowledge has been acquired and similarities across contexts are beginning to be realised. Rather than one-off reactions to difficulties, strategies for dealing with situations begin to emerge. The teacher is starting to shift attention away from his / her own performance towards the design of construction and is starting to be able to question what he / she does in the classroom.

COMPETENT TEACHER

The teacher now has strategies to cope with most common classroom events and will work to these strategies. At this stage teachers have the confidence to cope with more improvisational planning and are able to make conscious decisions about their own actions based on the context. Whereas at the previous two stages, the focus was still very much on the content, competent teachers are beginning to focus on the learner. They are able to set priorities and engage in longer term planning.

PROFICIENT TEACHER

At this stage intuition and knowledge together are beginning to guide performance. Problem-solving takes account of the complexities of the situation and the focus is increasingly on the learner.

EXPERT

This stage is characterised by an intuitive grasp of situations. The teaching performance is now fluid and seemingly effortless. Planning is flexible. The expert is able to anticipate rather than react to classroom events, recognise global patterns and see how specific events are manifestations of these.

In 1992 Kagan (in Morine-Dershimer, Leighfield, 1995, p. 590, also in Kwo, 1994, pp. 218–219) carried out the analysis of forty qualitative studies of teacher development which to a large extent confirmed and further developed this model. According to her, the stages of the model differ from each other in the following fundamental ways: “how a teacher monitors classroom events, the degree of conscious effort involved in classroom performance, the degree to which performance is guided by personal experience and the teacher’s focus” (Kagan, in Kwo, 1994, p. 218). She concluded that the development of teachers (mainly novices) may be described in five components:

- “An increase in metacognition: Novices become more aware of what they know and believe about pupils and classrooms and how their knowledge and beliefs are changing.
- The acquisition of knowledge about pupils: Idealised and inaccurate images of pupils are reconstructed. Knowledge of pupils is used to modify, adapt and reconstruct the novice’s image of self as a teacher.
- A shift in attention: As the image of self as a teacher is resolved, a novice’s attention shifts from self to the design of instruction to pupil learning.
- The development of standard procedures: Novices develop standardised routines that integrate instruction and management and grow increasingly automated.
- Growth in problem-solving skills: Thinking associated with classroom problem-solving grows more differentiated, multidimensional, and context-specific. Eventually, novices are able to determine which aspects of problem-solving repertoires can be generalised across contexts.” (ibid.)

Even though the stage model of teacher professional development yielded new knowledge concerning professional learning, some of its principles are considered controversial. Criticism of the model to a large extent builds on arguments formulated by Grossman (1995, p. 20–24): she pinpointed that the model implies automatic linear progression from lower to higher stages and provided evidence that: “As pre-service teachers master the routines of teaching, many become satisfied with their teaching and are less likely to question prevailing norms of teaching and learning.” (Grossman, 1992, in Randall, Thornton, 2001, p. 34) Thus, further professional development is determined by a number of factors; Day and Hadfield (1996, p. 151) ranked among the most important ones: teacher commitment, his/her own perception of a teacher role as well as ‘ecological’ determinants – the environment (especially institutional culture) and opportunities for and support of further development (that would account for individual character and pace of developmental processes).

Conclusion

The review of educational research helped to confirm a graded character of teacher professional development both in terms of teacher career paths and of the development of teacher professional competence which is demonstrated in his/her performance in the classroom. The analysis of the phases (or stages) of teacher development identified specific features of professional growth, special attention was paid to the initial phase of teacher professional trajectory.

The analysis, at the same time, poses a number of questions – or rather imperatives – related to the conception of both initial and further teacher education programmes,

- to conceive undergraduate teacher education so that the phase of a novice (cf. Berliner's model) is eliminated in entry to the profession – a fully qualified teacher should not display the characteristics of a novice;
- to systemise the support of entrants to the profession and their socialisation processes and, thus, to reduce the danger of a 'transition shock' which may drive the new teacher out of the profession;
- to support optimal directions of teachers' career paths, to systemise career regulations and provide clearly defined career milestones through authorised certifications;
- at the same time to allow in the above system for individualised career paths in terms of pace as well as strategies of professional learning and
- to reduce emotional load typical of the profession and the danger of burnout in all the phases of teacher professional development.

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