

## Theoretical Starting Points for the Concept of Professions and the Professional Status of Teachers

### Abstract:

The study answers the question whether the teaching profession has the attributes typical of genuine professions. It presents an analysis of the state of fulfilling the requirements of the teaching profession. It focuses especially on the description of the level of teachers' professional identity in Slovakia. It argues that to be an autonomous subject is the basic requirement of a teacher's expertise. It gives characteristics of the current understanding of the expertise in the teaching profession and professional knowledge, needed for a teacher's performance that is based on the cycle of integrating theory and practice and its reflection. It describes two main hindrances to the transition of a teaching career into an expert profession: a) the existing legislative barriers that separate the expertise and the teaching competence; and b) current obstacles in the university teacher training, especially in its curriculum and in the methodology used by university teacher trainers.

**Key words:** *profession, professionalism, professional identity of teachers, teacher's autonomy, expertise in the teaching profession*

When talking about a teaching career, we would generally call it a profession without any doubts. But let us look more closely if it really has the attributes that are required for a profession as such. Let us investigate if teachers are characterised by a high level of professionalism; if they perceive themselves and act as professionals; if, as a matter of fact, they are aware of the scope of their professionalism; and if teacher trainers are able to pass that onto them; or, if, on the contrary, they undermine students' perception of teaching as a profession.

Careers exist either as a craft, or as a semi-profession or as a profession. The marks of semi-professions are as follows: they are realised in large bureaucratic

organisations with a hierarchical structure, led by an administrative authority; they have a large number of members with a significant proportion of women; they employ people with a lower education level and not too long training; and they have a lower status (Lukášová, 2003, p. 22). This is also quite typical of teachers, and especially Anglo-Saxon authors describe teaching as a semi-profession. The transition from a semi-profession to a profession, or also towards a higher level of professionalism is called the professionalization of the teaching career. According to Slovak authors as well as foreign authors this process has been going on in Europe since the second half of the 20th century. It started when the undergraduate education of teachers was fully introduced in universities and the social status of teachers strengthened (Walterová, 2002; Kasáčová, 2002; Heargreaves 2002; etc.).

“Professions represent types of careers which have highly developed sets of norms, derived from their specific role in society” (Kofa, 1998, p. 20). The profession determines the social status of a person. Several authors (The International Encyclopaedia of Education, 1994; Štech, 1998; Kasáčová, 2003; Vašutová, 2004; Spilková, 2004; etc.) deal with variations of attributes that determine if a career would be, beyond doubt, considered to be a profession. They mention especially the following characteristics:

- a strong ideal to serve society - carrying out the career for the benefit of society;
- a professional identity characterised by the professional autonomy and socialisation, establishment of specialist associations, professional norms, ethical code;
- autonomy in professional decision-making - independent expert assessment of the client’s needs;
- challenging expert capabilities, owned only by the members of a profession;
- mastering the formalised theory-based knowledge in the process of longer educational preparation at a high level, etc.

## **Teaching as service to society**

Undoubtedly, teachers are contributing to the **benefit of society**. Broadly, we could say that they realise their high responsibility for the education of children and young people. This is also because society makes it clear by placing high demands on them. Day-to-day school practice proves that teachers are deeply aware of their personal responsibility for the health, security and personality development of children. They are also aware that parents and society expect –

sometimes almost miraculous – educational results from their work. However, it is just this responsibility of teachers and their sense of duty that often hinders them from, e. g., making pressure towards getting their rightful professional demands. And so considering that their love for children is of primary importance, teachers as a body are not prepared to stand up for the legitimate defence of their rights and to argue in favour of children's development (cf. Helus, 2001).

Paradoxically, the ideal of teachers to serve society led to their current low engagement outside the school institution. That is to say, service to society goes together with a wider social, political and economic context. Throughout the history of our country teachers have always been involved in the changes of society (1848, 1944, 1948, 1989). Being under considerable ideological and party pressure during socialism, after the year 1989, however, they were criticised for supporting the previous regime as “molluscs without backbones”. Nowadays they are criticised for their inability to solve “current” problems of their pupils due to economic and social reasons as well as political decisions. At the same time, in spite of realising serious consequences teachers are painfully aware of indifference and little interest in teachers' problems either from the side of the public, the government or even their own school representatives. And so it seems that they currently close themselves more and more in the territory of their own school and classroom; and instead of fighting for their profession they fall prey to professional pessimism.

In the context of the historical development of the teaching profession on the domestic as well as international scale, it is possible, though, to perceive this state of affairs as transitory. It can be explained as a specific sign of the belated crisis of the teaching profession – this crisis is usually described in connection with the era of de-professionalisation of teachers in other parts of the world from the 70s to the 90s of the 20th century (Teacher education 2001; Hargreaves, 2002; Walterová, 2002; Rosa, 2003 etc); as well as by the fact that the transforming countries - and Slovakia is an exemplary case of this – have not yet shown any significant signs of the era of neo-professionalism (for a more detailed description cf. Kosová, 2005).

## **The professional identity of teachers**

The way towards identity goes through seeking the uniqueness of oneself, intrinsic continuity, through self-definition and distinguishing oneself as opposed to others. Identity is then determined by the conscience, reflection and knowing oneself (Přehled..., 1999, p. 183). It means also “the identification of an individual with his/her own life roles” (Jandourek, 2001, p. 104). **Professional identity** is a distinct realisation of the substance of one's professionalism and realisation of

the position of the profession in the system of social categories and relations. It is distinguished by a high level of self-awareness, autonomy and self-control of the professional community when performing a profession and also by a high level of awareness and emotional attachment to the profession. It means that a professional community itself is also able to generate the standards and assessment of the performance of its profession as well as its own ethical code. At the same time it is, according to Kořa (1998, p. 22), a means by which a specific profession is protected against unprofessional encroaches from outside, e.g. against inadequate and unsubstantiated demands of society and clients, against power aspirations of political parties, churches, various interest groups, etc. This process is supported by professional socialisation, that means, e. g., by the existence of a professional chamber of teachers (equivalent of the British Association of Teachers and Lecturers) that applies the above-mentioned means by itself without any intervention from outside.

The above-named components of professional identity are not fully implemented in the case of Slovak teachers. On the contrary, there are quite significant signs of schizoid mentality when we think of identity (Kosová – Portik – Pupala, 2004) that can be seen in the failure to understand the essence of professionalism and expertise in the teaching profession. Sadly enough, this is true of all the categories of teachers, including university teachers and school management (more details about the professionalism of teaching – see below). Two things are clear: the absence of teachers' professional body (e. g. a chamber) and the lack of energy to form such a professional organisation of teachers. In spite of some attempts after 1989, formation of a professional association has not been successful especially due to the development towards a strong hierarchy inside the teaching profession. Unfortunately, teachers themselves find a lower status or a lower level of education sufficient for teachers according to the age of pupils (for example, some university teachers express their opinion that the elementary teachers need only a Bachelor's degree), but they would not allow such a criterion in the medical profession. Kindergarten teachers and teachers in primary schools are in this way undervalued in spite of the fact that their educational work is very complex, and in fact although the knowledge they need is of a different sort, it is at the same level of expertise. This means that the individual subcategories of teachers are not very supportive to each other in the process of solving their problems and of their own rights defence. The intro-professional rivalry of teachers makes them easy prey for other groups.

In Slovakia there is a lack of internal pressure and resolution to create some at least general standards for the teaching profession. No wonder that until now teachers have been organised only as a semi-profession by the bureaucratic apparatus. Any norms that have been applied were used just as means of outside control,

not for the autonomous assessment of performance expected from a professional or from a professional organisation. The expert protection of the teaching profession is very vague and this state is being conserved in the school legislation. Basically anyone, a graduate from any tertiary or even secondary school, can enter the teaching profession if he/she passes a certain supplementary pedagogical study. Contrary to common sense, the state allows the teacher to teach 50% of his/her lessons without proper expertise. In practice it happens that any secondary school graduate can stand for an absent teacher, unfortunately this happens most often in primary schools. There are still some regions in Slovakia where there are only 50% of qualified teachers in primary schools. This state of affairs is without parallel in any other real profession. In a similar way, there does not exist any ethical protection of the teaching profession – any ethical code, or any professional teachers' organisation that would enforce it. Teachers are hardly aware of this need in spite of the fact that just the infringement of the ethical principles in the interpersonal relations on the part of the teacher is the cause of such low prestige of this profession in society. So there might be individuals hanging over in the teacher's posts who hazard with the soul of the child, who regularly hurt him/her, or who are shame to the teaching profession, and this all happens without an adequate response from other professionals.

In the course of socialisation, as his/her social role is moulding the person, the same way he/she is being significantly marked by the social or cultural context, i. e. by what is generally acceptable. So the interiorisation of the importance of the teaching profession has a significant impact on the understanding of this concept and its performance in the future (Koťa, 1998, p. 17). The low professional identity can have a long term influence on the development of the teaching profession, and so full development of any aspect of professionalism is of an almost constitutive importance for the teaching profession.

### **Teacher's autonomy, teacher as a subject**

The ideal of service gives the members of professions an extraordinary mandate. The fact that they meet significant needs of society involves their necessity to be able to govern themselves. The quality of the work of a genuine professional is not determined by the external control. He/she has **great autonomy** in decision making because of his/her deep knowledge; he/she is well-acquainted with the needs of the client and applies his/her expert capabilities for the good of the client independently of any personal feelings. When his/her own performance is to be appraised, he/she demands autonomy or colleagues' assessment.

At first sight, teachers enjoy a high level of autonomy as they work in the classroom on their own without any outside control. The educational situations oriented on building children's character and pro-social behaviour require from the teachers preparedness to assess children's needs, to create a flexible response to them and to intervene effectively. Nevertheless, in the educational situations focused primarily on the cognitive development of children teachers are still significantly limited by the uniformity of the educational aims and contents. The overload of these aims and contents leads also to the uniformity of educational forms and methods. Thanks to academic freedom, the best situation is in the case of university teachers and then of primary school teachers. Due to their unique role in the classroom and in the context of the schedule, they can adjust the educational objectives more effectively to the current situation, integrate the topics, shift some of the activities, alternate the forms and methods of work and use time creatively. They are compelled to do it also because of the age and the variety of individual and social differences among children that, to the greatest extent, determine the educational process right from the time of their entering the school.

The autonomy of a teacher is endangered both from inside and outside. Teachers in practice, on the one hand, demand autonomy; they condemn bureaucratic practice of school authorities or inspections. But paradoxically, on the other hand, some teachers are not interested in autonomy and they always demand directions from above and ready-made methodology (Kosová - Kasáčová, 2001). According to Vašutová (2004, p. 19), the reason for this is that autonomy presupposes change in professional behaviour and a higher level of responsibility for the learning results of each child; and this can be perceived as a burden by some teachers. The profession is put to risk also by the process, called by Štech (2003, p. 12), taylorization of work. In his opinion, the activities of teachers are more and more subject to the methods of scientific work management and controlled by outside experts; everything is planned beforehand. So teachers are deprived of authentic control over their own activity, and there is less and less room for free communication with pupils.

The above-mentioned circumstances are of extraordinary importance for the teaching profession. Owing to the uniqueness of each pupil, all educational situations represent unique and unrepeatably relationships with children. To be able to cope with them, the teacher has to have himself/herself under control, first of all. He/she is able to guide others correctly only if, in relation to them, he/she is his/her real self - in other words, if he/she behaves as a subject, able to understand the educational situation, the children and himself/herself; with the inevitable detachment and distance in independent decision making, necessary reflection and ability to pose questions to his/her own conduct. Thus, the building stone of a teacher's professionalism - of being a competent teacher - means to be freed from

the outside pressure of the institution, not to be a conformist, but to be an autonomous subject (Koča, 1998; Štech, 1998; Lukášová, 2003). To be a competent teacher-professional, that helps others to be, is a reflected state of being in the role of a teacher, to be aware of the inner calling to this profession and to the responsibility for another human being (Lukášová, 2003, p. 28).

This, paradoxically, puts teachers under much greater demands than professionals in other, even more prestigious, occupations. The teacher has to control, first of all, him-/herself, and this, in turn, will help him/her to master the following four realities:

1. Stressful outside factors - disruptive pupils; indifference on the part of pupils; lack of time; impossibility to pay individual attention to pupils; extra-teaching duties; lack of means and tools; lack of support from parents, society and colleagues; lack of positive recognition and understanding of his/her innovations on the part of the superiors; one's own family and social problems.
2. Teaching as an impossible calling – i.e. such, “where even the best preparation does not guarantee high and regular success of the professional activities, and to which there belongs also the failure of pupils and of the educational enterprise itself” (Štech, 1998, p. 46). The pursuance of this career is combined especially with the following hardly-solvable dilemmas:
  - *Autonomy* of the pupil, that is the ultimate goal of education, independence in decision making, auto-regulation, so the pupil is self-forming vs. *dependence* of the pupil on the teacher, socialisation, i.e. interiorisation of norms, laws, rules. The pupil has to submit to rules, understand them, and accept them; but, at the same time, he/she has to think of them, re-assess them and change them. “To be able to develop a child to the full... is a little bit similar to experiencing your own death” (Štech, 1998, p. 47).
  - *Demanding aims* of education, whether national ones or of the individual teacher, vs. *impossibility to fully enter the inward being* of the pupil and effectively influence the processes of his/her learning, because a pupil is a closed autopoietic system, creating natural defensive mechanisms of self-understanding.
  - *Routine*, using one's own well-tried procedures, imitating experienced professionals, that, nevertheless, in certain circumstances does not bring about success vs. *creativity*, using original procedures, that, notwithstanding, bring about situations of considerable uncertainty, where there is nothing to lean on, only the routine-negating model.
3. Pedagogical relationship towards pupils – a professional is required to keep a certain distance, to keep detached; to be able to assess pupils' needs regardless of one's feelings; to be able to help and educate effectively; but, at the same

time, to have a facilitating relationship with pupils. This relationship, based on empathy, requires closeness, deep understanding of the child, refraining from judgement. If the teacher does not understand, he/she can cause harm; if he/she understands too much, he/she pays attention to too many alleviating circumstances; both of these can harm the child. The teacher – if his/her work is to be effective – needs to have authority over pupils, to have influence on them; but, at the same time, the teacher longs to be accepted and loved by pupils, risking that by this openness to another human being (a “little one” on top of it) he/she feels a threat of possible rejection. The relationship between the teacher and pupil is always asymmetric, his/her partners being less competent and relatively defenceless individuals. In such a situation it is difficult not to abuse power against the one who does not bring what we have expected, e.g. in an effort to push through one’s will in communication, in assessment, in giving opportunities, etc. Although school has to stop violence and aggression, it is their specific source (Štech, 1998, p. 46).

4. One’s own deficiencies – e.g. personal shortcomings; specifics of one’s temperament; subjective preferences regarding pupils, their thinking, importance of the subject-matter; but also one’s limited abilities, which can reach a higher level with pupils (ICT skills), etc. There are several permanent threats for the teacher: a threat that some of the educational situations can recall his/her unhealed traumas of childhood; a threat that the stress-factors will cause his/her psychological fatigue and even burn-out; that the teacher’s low self-esteem, caused by undervaluation of his/her profession, will lead him/her to compensate this among pupils.

Teachers are often far from realisation of these and other realities that go together with the autonomous existence. They do not reflect them and sometimes they do not even suspect that they make an essential part of their expertise and professionalism, that their self-understanding and self-regulation has a significant impact on the implementation of the teaching profession. These situations and dilemmas cannot be avoided by entering the teaching profession. It is impossible to learn how to solve them before they happen. It is only possible to work them out specifically and to make the effort to retain the integrity of one’s self.

## **Expertise in the teaching profession**

Professionals are people who, in their activity, make use of knowledge that is not available to everybody and that is effective at the same time. The recognised professionals lean on deep theoretical, i.e. formalised and systematic knowledge; but



simultaneously they have a special attitude to knowledge, they initiate further production of knowledge, they create new pieces of knowledge.

Since the end of the 20th century teaching has been spoken of as an expert profession. Why is it, though, that a teacher should be such an expert that no other specialist can stand in for him/her? Which **systematic knowledge** makes the essence of his/her professionalism? It is not the knowledge of the science and of the subject matter that he/she teaches. Every mathematician or artist is a better professional in this sense and a teacher needs just a certain part of this knowledge. If a teacher directs his/her attention to the contents of the subject matter taught, the comparison with these professionals' knowledge leads to feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. But it is neither pedagogy nor psychology, because in these he/she cannot beat a pedagogue-theorist or clinical psychologist using the knowledge of these sciences especially in their applied form. What kind of identity is the source of his/her self-awareness, when there is no area he/she can feel he/she is the best? The problem consists in the fact that the essence of his/her professionalism subsists in the integration of pedagogy with psychology in curriculum and instructional theories (called didactics in continental Europe - *didaktika* in Slovak) and psychodidactics, as well as in the integration of pedagogy with each school subject in subject-specific methodology/didactics, i.e. subject-specific curriculum, instruction and evaluation (*odborová didaktika* in Slovak). Unfortunately, subject-specific didactics has not made the basic scientific-methodological step towards becoming recognised scientific and study disciplines.

The professionalization of the teaching profession in the 20th century introduced a shift from the accentuation of teachers' minimal competences, i.e. simply passing on knowledge, to the accentuation of the model of broad and open professionalism of the teaching career. World pedagogy rejects **viewing the teaching profession** as a technological process that can be exactly planned and implemented step-by-step, but it views it as a complex, varying and creative process of personal teacher-pupil encounter mediated by the subject matter of education. The teacher is seen as an expert in this encounter, an expert in alleviating processes of learning, an expert in solving school educational (cognitive and moral) situations (Coolahan, Vonk, Shulman, Hustler, Intyre, Perrenoud, Berliner, etc. In Spilková, 2004). The teacher, then, should be able to "expertly diagnose situations and subjects, processes of decision-making and interventions while comprehending causality and being familiar with inter-personal strategies and self-reflection of the educational process built on an expert basis" (Vašutová, 2004, p. 23).

From this starting point the basic teacher competences are specified. If we compare the well-known classifications, usually there is one competence focused on the subject-specific instruction and other 6 - 7 competences of pedagogical or

integrated character. For example, Vašutová (2001) in the proposal of standards for the teaching profession in the Czech Republic enumerates the following competences: a competence in subject-specific instructional science, competence in instructional and curriculum theories/didactics and psychodidactics, competence in general educology/pedagogy, competence in diagnostics and intervention, social competence, psychosocial and communicative competence, managerial and normative competence, professionally and personally cultivating competence. Kyriacou (1996) sorts the areas of a teacher's competences into: preparation and planning of a lesson, presentation and monitoring of a lesson, management of a lesson, setting up the classroom climate, building conscious discipline, assessment of pupils' performance, reflection and evaluation of one's own work. Likewise cf.: V. Švec, (1999), Spilková (1999), Vonk (1992), Walterová (2002), Kasáčová (2002), etc.

The term **professional knowledge** then does not mean cognisance in a narrow sense, but it describes a complex structure that includes cognition-, skill-, experience-, attitude- and value- components. This is the reason why instead of competences the term professional values or responsibilities is coming into use (Lukášová, 2003, Vašutová 2004).

Inasmuch as teaching is a practical profession and it is a permanent communication between theoretical and practical, explicate and implicate, objective and subjective knowledge, integration of theory and practice takes its expression in teaching, too. This integration occurs in a certain cycle. The decision processes run on the basis of the theoretical starting points (e.g. learned theory), then there is action, and finally reflection comes as a return to the theory at a different level. According to Atkinson and Claxton (in Lukášová, 2003, p. 33) taking into account the thinking processes carried out in this cycle a teacher needs threefold professional knowledge:

- Attribution of causes is influenced by theoretical knowledge and it issues into the ability to plan the educational process.
- Insight (intuitive) is represented by knowledge in action. This is experiential knowledge acquired in practice (it does not mean knowing about the action, but immersion of thinking in the action itself, that is sometimes impossible to describe) that leads to the ability to realise the educational process.
- Reflection makes it possible to create contextual knowledge, i.e. knowledge of how theory and practice are connected. These in turn flow into the ability to assess and improve the educational process.

If it is typical of a genuine professional that he/she also **produces knowledge**, what kind of new pieces of knowledge does a teacher actually produce? A teacher's professional self-esteem would be enhanced in a significant measure if instead of overvaluing the scientific-specialist knowledge he/she would be emphatically

shown that teachers actually create that experiential knowledge in action that no one else knows; and that through their reflection it can be transformed into a theoretical form. If a teacher is able to realise the reflection of his/her own activity on an expert methodological basis, then:

- He/she creates “epistemology of the practical knowledge of the profession” (Štech, 1998) – he/she theorises practical procedures, which means that he/she makes the presuppositions of action that are implicate, intuitive, hidden or tacit into conscious, rational, verbalised knowledge. He/she re-enacts his/her own experiences by this description, transfers them into language, into the form of procedural knowledge. He/she asks himself/herself what is happening and what is experienced in the most self-evident phenomena in order to understand them, to anticipate them in the future or to change his/her own action. If the unconscious patterns of an action are through the reflective techniques transformed into language, they are separated from the action itself and are at the disposal for others as the knowledge of the experienced practitioners (more about this – cf. Kasáčová, 2005). These should become a method of teachers’ preparation as well as one of the possible foundation areas of building up didactics as a science.
- He/she creates his/her own theory of a unique case, for each case a new one. An experienced teacher-practitioner in problem-solving situations acts as if “improvising in a pre-planned way” (according to Štech, 1998):
  - He/she does not act routinely or automatically, is able to shift or broaden the cognitive framework (using routine in typical situations).
  - He/she has a developed sense of distinction between typical and atypical situations.
  - His/her action in a situation is non-mediated, not analysed rationally. This action has a special level of perception (perceiving immediately, recognising sharply) that virtually directly organises his/her action, gives it a structure and order (there is no time for deliberation, he/she must act right then and there).
  - He/she does not proceed either by deduction or induction but by abduction – i.e. by choosing one of several ready-made hypotheses.

An experienced practitioner, although he/she looks like an unthinking individual, owns intuitive, tacit knowledge that is lost when he/she leaves this profession. It is impossible to teach someone else this knowledge-in-action theoretically. However, by reflecting unique cases it is possible to better understand one’s own action and pass it on to others at least as a model, as one of the hypotheses.

To summarise what we have said, the teacher as an expert professional should be an expert in:

- his/her own self (to be an autonomous subject),
- the educational relationships (to help the individual development of a pupil and solution of educational situations),
- facilitating learning (broadly understood psycho-methodological transformation of the content of education) and
- permanent reflection of practical action and self-reflection.

### **What hinders the realisation of understanding teaching as a profession in Slovakia?**

In addition to the above-mentioned connections in answering this question two basic facts are essential: almost 60 years of dual understanding of teaching skills and dual preparation for the teaching profession.

The schizoid character of the professional identity subsists in **separation of the components of teacher qualifications**, when it comes to the so-called specialised and the so-called pedagogical in it.

- Long-time separation of specialised and pedagogical qualifications in the legislative documents of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic gives a basis for the understanding of these components as mutually independent, and that can be acquired separately.
- Qualifications in any field of knowledge are accepted as specialist competence, even if obtained outside a teacher education. This is even considered to be a foundation, and a pedagogical one is only some kind of addition at entering the profession that can be secured at any time by some substitution.
- Full qualifications for the pursuance of the teaching profession are possible to obtain through a non-graduate alternative, e.g. through a certain kind of supplementary pedagogical study. It is impossible to find a parallel to this in any other profession and it disqualifies teacher study programmes.
- Separate understanding of the specialised competence on the one hand and the pedagogic competence on the other hand makes it difficult to identify with the profession, when the status of an expert is bound to another, not to teaching or to subject specific teaching methodology.

All the established professions have their correlative in their specific study programmes in the system of the **university education**. Their existence is justified by the complexity in the expert knowledge and autonomy of their professionals. Constantly repeated doubts concerning the necessity of teachers' university education, and especially of the teachers of the primary school level, have their source even in the failure to understand the expert professionalism of the teacher. It must

be clearly said, that, using the words of Lukášová (2003, p. 23), “education of teachers is not far from what is called professionalization without professionalism”; that education of teachers does not lead to professionalism and makes the professional identity problematic. If we neglect the economic problems and the impossibility to choose candidates, then we have two basic problems – the curriculum of university teachers’ preparation and the methods of teaching students.

In the area of curriculum, generally, these are the hindrances to the change of professionalism:

- A conflict between the information-transmissive models and concepts of teacher education (to learn the content of the sciences) and the demands of professional competences (to be able to act in a competent way).
- A conflict between the academically favoured scientific-specialised content of the studies with the pedagogic-psychological basis of professionalization.
- A conflict of the academically understood university disciplines with the applied character of the school subjects and the educational process (this is unfortunately true even of the instructional methodology or of the social and affective education).
- Missing development of different didactics (curriculum theories and instructional methodologies) into scientific and study courses.
- Unsatisfactory proportion of theory to practice, insufficient or even non-existent directed theoretical reflection of the student’s own practice.
- A conflict between the officially taught and the hidden curricula, i.e. the experiences of students in everyday social life and their teaching practice and in the university studies.
- Low functional integrity of the studies (pedagogy and psychology, pedagogy and didactics, among different didactics, theory and practice).
- Low general education necessary for grasping the broader context of education and the self as a subject in it (likewise Lukášová, 2003; Spilková 2004; Vašutová, 2004).

In the area of strategies of university education these are the greatest obstacles in the development of professionalism:

- Disregard of the theories of education and learning processes of university students on the part of university teachers.
- Non-acceptance of the individual connecting phases in the process of gradual becoming a teacher.
- Predominance of information-transmissive teaching methods (lecture), their ineffectiveness in the student’s process of learning and contrariety to the professional orientation of studies.

- Teaching of didactics and pedagogic disciplines by teachers with no knowledge of practice, without the student's reflection of the practice directed by the teacher.
- Inadequate assessment of students – future teachers, unsubstantiated testing and cognitive examinations instead of assessment of professional teacher competences, including state examinations (likewise Lukášová, 2003; Spilková, 2004).

University preparation of teachers makes only the starting point for the professionalism of tomorrow. Whether a teacher grows into the shape of a real professional depends on his/her practical activities in the profession, but, at the same time, on his/her own lifelong learning. An important role here is reserved for **further continuous education of teachers** that should begin with similar content- and process- starting points in order to consciously lead to obtaining competences necessary for expertise in the teaching profession. These are issues that deserve another separate study.

The above-mentioned components of professionalism are not very hopeful for the status of the teaching profession. Besides factors that are of extraordinary negativity there are low salaries, feminization, impossibility of career advancement, poor material conditions of work, low status of the clients (pupils) in society. The conditions for the change of the status significantly depend on the legislature (e.g. codification of exclusively graduate way to the teaching profession; dependence of teachers' career advancement upon continuous education; disallowing non-professional teaching, etc.) These changes must be prepared and so to say fought for by the teachers' community. This presupposes higher self-esteem on the part of teachers and higher professional identity that have been quite low so far. The inward change of the profession in the future can be probably facilitated only through transformation of university programmes as well as of the further education of teachers. This is the responsibility which the faculties of education and institutes of further education should realise as soon as possible.

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