

Eva Vincejová*
Ivan Pavlov**

SLOVAK TEACHING IN THE DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS¹

Preface

In the last decades the Slovak educational system underwent turbulent changes, that can hardly be labeled only as positive. The deterioration of the student results (in international and national measurements), unfit system of funding that supports mediocrity, but not the quality, insufficient equipment of the schools with modern didactic tools, reduction in the amount of candidates to teacher's profession and its social prestige, distrust of the society towards the potential of the school system's ability to react with flexibility to the needs of the practice, non-conceptualization of the departmental educational policies and other manifestations of the falling behind are justifiably the object of criticism from every side. Reduction of the seriousness of the education and training in the society (including the programs of the political elites), is the result of the crisis of the societal trust in schools as the engine for change in science, engineering and as a pillar of the democracy and citizenship in the society. The searching for the solution of the indicated crisis phenomena is happening also on the soil of the sciences about education. Teaching andragogy (Pavlov 2014) and teaching ethics explore and provide stimuli for the practice of the upbringing and education on how to professionalize the work of a teacher.

International comparative research have developed theoretical model that is specifying the essential signs of professionalism, which are the criteria for the assessment of the degree of professionalism of the teachers.

***Eva Vincejová** – Ph.D. in Pedagogy, Charles University in Prague; research interests: andragogy, teachers' education, didactics; e-mail: eva.vincejova@ff.cuni.cz

****Ivan Pavlov** – Ph.D. in Pedagogy, Matej Bel University; research interests: andragogy, ethics; e-mail: ivan.pavlov@umb.sk

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Concept of the professionalization appears as a promising way to “equalize” teaching with the other professions. The balance in the professionalism of the teacher in all dimensions of his development was comprehensibly proposed by Bronislava Kasáčová (2004, pp. 22-45). Štefan Švec (2003, pp. 1-2) has specified the characteristics of the teaching profession, which are distinguishing it from the profession of the lower level. These characteristics amount to refined scientific-theoretical foundation and a considerable amount of wisdom in profession and practical work experiences accumulated by tradition; specific culture of the institutionalized work; autonomy in the competent labor decisions and self-regulation in the working procedures; high level of personal responsibility for the exercise of the profession; code of professional ethics with obligation to the member of the profession; universally accepted catalog of the standard professional competence; higher societal calling, prestige and its straightforward bond with generally shared values (of education). We understand professionalization as equivalent and, at the same time, a condition of the improvement of the teaching work (described in the paper as characteristics and criteria), professionalism as a construct pertaining to the professional community (status aspects, attitudinal attributes and values) and professionalism as a notion pertaining to pedagogical performance (knowledge, fitness and attitudes) of the individuals in the profession. Every construct introduced in the last decades as a result of societal changes changed its attributes, developed along with contemporary postmodern individualism, its meaning of free and responsible choice supported by neoliberal policies and its school reforms was deregulated. Beáta Kosová (2013, p. 114) states that “trends towards the professionalization of the teaching profession are not possible to be brought to life without deeper changes in the teachers’ sphere of values and orientation within them. In the area of working with people the technical competency has to be always corroborated by ethical conduct and behavior of a professional.” Theoretical analysis of criteria, which are the condition for professionalization of the teachers even in Slovakia within “Ethical code of the profession are helping to solve disputed questions of its performance” has led us to the finding, that code of ethics does not exist and is being replaced by provision of professional law about the set of rights and obligations of a teacher, which do not have the character of free signing up to the principles of the duty towards children regarding their education (Pavlov 2013, p. 13).

Soňa Dorotíková (2013, pp. 127-129) is pointing out that teaching is usually associated with role and duty in the meaning of fateful determination, bound to self-fulfillment in the teaching profession. Teaching belongs to relational professions, which are oriented towards human and which it

influence reasoning and actions of others, they demand also high degree of moral seriousness of professional decisions and moral responsibility. Mutual relationship is conditioned by intensity of intellectual and emotional potential of the teacher, which is difficult for specialized preparation of even personal (moral) assumptions. High degree of moral commitment of the teachers for fulfillment of the “call of duty towards others” is giving unique ethos to the profession – the challenge for self-betterment and fulfillment of cultural, humanitarian and moral ideals. Naděžda Pelcová and Ilona Semrádová (2014, p. 115) consider part of ethos in teaching profession as social commitment, internalization of human values, but also as self-realization and the ability of critical thinking about the nature of own educational and learning activity. Jaroslava Vašutová (2007, p. 43) states, that ethical behavior of a teacher is considered as his primitive attribute, on the other side a conviction exists, that it is formed automatically together with the achievement of professional status. Status is representing a social position or the respect, that the teaching profession enjoys regarding with the degree of acknowledgment of importance of its function and the ability to fulfill it (Samuhelová, Tokárová 1996, p. 18). Status as a prestige (seriousness, importance) is characteristic to individuals (teacher at school, some category in teaching) or to the whole professional group. We regard status of a profession as directly proportional to the ethical behavior of the teachers. If the research of ethical side of the teaching profession (Vacek 2013, pp. 162-177) points towards lasting adverse symptoms in the behavior and the conduct (violation of moral principles), it is obvious, that it has influence upon the status.

Theoretical basis of teaching ethics as part of applied (professional) ethics

The mission of professional ethics is to create a concept of certain profession in relation with structure of social values, to which this profession is directed. Consensual social values represent the reference framework for the assessment of the calling of each profession with the help of professional ethics. Dominant and evaluative criterion of profession is the service to the values, effort to justify them and to confront professions, that should serve them, with them, which creates the essence of the searching for the identity of profession (Žilínek 2001, p. 346). Professional groups are developing such moral norms and principles, which help them in professional activity to distinguish right from wrong, to choose the good and act as to not to harm other people. In other words, they are creating their own professional ethics, which is expressing the sum of moral norms and values that are

characteristic for the given profession. Professional ethics exhibits itself on two basic levels: at the individual and the institutional. At the individual level it concerns individual ethics of particular individual and at the second level it concerns group ethics, which is institutionalized. Existence of the professional ethics is the source of shaping of professional honor – conscious pride of belonging to a given profession and conscious compliance of moral obligations, by means of which the performance of this profession is regulated. Professional ethics acts as a regulator of behavior of the members of the group in accordance with values, moral norms, and ethical principles of professional group. Professional ethics is, on the one side, bound with the requirements of the society, on the other side it is bound with the interests of individual members of the group. Professional ethics is therefore reflection on societal, group and individual values (Remišová 2000, p. 219).

We are using the term professional ethics in relation to the moral values, norms and principles, that regulate the behavior of social-professional group that is teaching. It regards the applied (professional) ethics as the exercise of the teaching profession. Teaching profession within the borders of current law (on schooling and education) is planned to serve the public interest. It regards professional ethics, which model is according to the Emília Sičáková and Ľubica Slimáková (2001, pp. 8-9) based on phenomenon of strong professionalism, bureaucratically supported and oriented towards the support of the cultivation of high standards of professional behavior as expected forms and manifestation of behavior. Basic assumption is the ability of healthy and responsible decision making and binding trust towards the skills of the workers to differentiate between the fragile boundaries of ethical and unethical. Applied and customary principles are creating protection from irresponsible behavior. Jan Průcha et al. (1998, p. 190) characterize professional ethics as a set of requirements, which are necessary to be respected during the exercise of the profession (code of ethics). These requirements are: professional status in society, required qualifications, definition of a relation between a client and a professional, keeping the professional secrecy, professional growth, rules for rewarding, rules for policy violation, definition of consultation, advisory, and judging services, rules for public relationships and the means to monitor the exercise of the profession.

Ethics of teaching profession has theoretical and normative character of common ethics during the performance of educational activities. The morale of the teaching profession represents a set of moral standards valid and typical for the teaching profession. We are, according to them, judging the moral thinking, attitudes, behavior and actions in the educational activities. Morality of a personality of teachers is a sign of their professiona-

lism. Professional (teaching) ethics is a subject of scientific theory studies and research is a part of study on colleges that prepare the future teachers (as a teaching subject), pedagogic textbook and didactic (where rules create separate parts). Pedagogical ethics is in broader sense oriented towards the process of education, schooling and training of children and school-age pupils and teacher ethics that concerns the bearers of educational and schooling influences – adults. Ethics of a teaching profession as well as other professional ethics is based on the assumption of ability to be educated, susceptibility of an adult person during the exercise of profession. We consider this aspect as a key in the discourse about the opportunities to actively influence value orientation and attitudes of teachers in the teaching practice. The notion of the ability to be educated is understood here as the openness (potential) of an adult person towards the growth of his personality traits with the help of functional and intentional influences. Education of adults is a system of formative (preferentially auto-formative) influences and activities, that shape and develop personal traits of character in a manner that a person is able to enforce them in life and at work in human society. Process of education of adults consists of complex conditions and difficult changes. In result the individual human being appears to be the effect of the lifetime of shaping the personality and character. He becomes a member of socio-cultural, socioeconomic and environmental society. Education as “instructing about desirable”, or about rehabilitation as “wean away from unacceptable”, is not “tutoring and specifying acquired”, but it is about self-education as “self-learning of self-development” in accordance with moral and value systems and principles (Pavlov 2015, pp. 14-15).

Ivan Pavlov and Martin Schubert (2015, p. 20) understand adulthood as an unfinished process of forming the personal integrity which occurs during entire lifespan and is usually finished in later adulthood (entirety, complexity, maturity, synergy) and manifests itself in the manner, that nothing is in a conflict, in contradiction with the rest and the truth (ethics, values, morality), what we trust becomes a pattern of life. Integrity is the keeping of moral principles, clear stance on what we believe. Integrity is different from honesty, which says the truth to the others, while integrity tells the truth to self (it avoids self-deception). Integrity represents harmony of thinking, feeling, action and the conviction about the values, consistent attitudes, that do not suppress any personality traits, but overcomes the duality of internal conflicts by bringing compliance. Concept of the integrity (psychological basis) is also pivotal for education, adult education and adult counseling, because its fulfillment and completion is a part of support in the life journey, which requires active approach of adults towards chan-

ge and readiness to co-shape own personal integrity. Psychological science (psychology of personality and moral psychology) provides valuable sources of knowledge and inspirations about concept of the integrity of a person to the andragogy, which is also applied to content, methods, forms and resources of effect of andragogy upon the members of teaching profession.

We count teaching ethics as belonging to the set of professional ethics (similarly as medical, business, management, governmental, media etc.) Applied ethics critically reflects deformations of morality and moral collisions of contemporary world and focuses on moral revitalization and those measures, which support the healthy moral development of businesses, institutions and society as a whole. Pavel Fobel and team (2013, pp. 39-48) represent concept of organizational ethics, which is an application and institutionalization of ethics environments in organization of various kinds. The basis is, that in organizations we encounter ethical problems associated with the behavior of employees (even supervisors), which can be judged as acceptable or not, depending on the organizational ethics and culture. Organizational ethics expresses the consensus of all actors, for whom these characteristics are valid:

- integrated interest of employees, employers and management,
- solving of moral problems, arising from a clash of interests of these groups,
- reaching conformity in achieving the common goals, resulting from values, vision, mission, norms of behavior, recognition of universally valid standards in the organization,
- consensus in values and common interest in reaching goals as a part of modern (uneconomic) policy of organization.

Stated characteristics are present also in the school environment as organization, in which teachers perform their profession. Elaboration of organizational ethics of teaching profession is considered as a concept, which will allow to discover until now unknown aspects of teaching ethics, but mainly it will provide concrete impulses for its application in the management and pedagogical practice. The task of applied ethics is, according to Fobel and team (*ibide.*, p. 44):

- to justify, what is ethically proper and ethically improper in the organization of ethics,
- to provide critical analysis of actual condition of ethics in specific organization,

- to formulate and design specific ethical norms and requirements agreed upon by both employees and management,
- to articulate ethical recommendations for organization, so that it would gain a reputation of responsible and socially beneficial with high loyalty and commitment of employees.

Dimensions of teaching ethics

We assume, that the development of teaching ethics as applied professional ethics takes place in at least three dimensions heading towards active expression of moral principles and their interpretation in everyday pedagogical practice.

In the first dimension occurs the theoretical reflection on practical ethical issues of performance of teaching profession, their comparison with foreign trends and experiences. This level provides sufficient resources, material for scientific-theoretical study and impulses for teaching practice. In teaching ethics we are encountering an ambition to determine theoretically what belongs to the ethics of exercising the profession, the meaning of ethics determines those key personality traits, characteristics, which describe the most specifications of the exercise of teaching profession. Until recently this dimension in pedagogy (pedeutology) was represented by the psychology topics of relations between the teachers and pupils (Štefanovič 1964), later by pedagogical mastery, tact. Today authors approach this task by creating inventories, categorizing the personal moral qualities and virtues, i.e. pedagogical love, wisdom, courage and credibility (Helus et al. 2012), by introducing teacher personality typology in relation to moral approaches towards pedagogical activity (Beňo 2000); standardization of (competence profiles) professional competence (Pavlov 2013); models of professional behavior in ethical and department dimension (Vašutová 2007); philosophical and historical studies about the nature, content of teaching ethics (Žilínek 2001, Kasáčová 2004, Kosová 2013, Gluchmanová 2013) and by expanding the research finding about the issues of teaching ethics in pedagogical practice (Darák 2001, Vacek 2013).

Active support of positive self-concept of teaching (as a part of activities of professional development) can mean increase of self-confidence, understanding of the new contexts of requirements, motivation for coping with changes, or transition of proven pedagogical experiences to the colleagues. International researches OECD (TALIS) suggest, that concept of subjectively perceived fitness of teachers significantly influences their pedagogical activity and successfulness of pupils (NÚCEM 2013). Finally, it

should be stated that the research has markedly interdisciplinary character because the knowledge of psychology of adults, teaching andragogy, school management (for example, culture of school as a condition and a result of application of ethical principles in pedagogical activity) and apparently others (Černotová 2005, Gluchmanová 2008) overlap.

In second dimension (normative-legislative) endeavor implements (mainly organs of state administration body) principles of teaching ethics to legal norms (laws, edicts or other regulatory departmental documents). In conditions of SR it concerns mainly §5 law NR SR n. 317/2009 Z. z. amended, which contains rights and obligations of teachers². We also fill in a proposal of set of professional standards for all categories according to the professional, which has the potential to raise the status of profession in the society. Proposal of professional standards of Slovak teachers results from ethical principles (as a components of professional competences) used during teaching. They are ranked into the area nr 3. Professional development, which contains competences related with a role of pedagogical employer, his self-improvement and activity in the school of law (<http://pkrmpc.dev2010.lomtec.com/stranka/o-projekte>). Resulting from the Chart 1 is a positive finding, that the proposition of Slovakian professional standard (for lower secondary education) contains mutual requirement for all career degrees about basis, principles and practices of

²Right to: conditions necessary for the exercise of one's own rights and responsibilities, protection from violence from pupils, parents and others, protection from improper interference with the exercise of pedagogical practice, participation in school management through membership or election of representatives in counseling, methodical and self-governing regions, proposals to improve education, selection and application of pedagogical methods, forms and resources, which form conditions for teaching and self-development of pupils and development of their competences, continual education and professional development, objective assessment and rewarding of the performance of pedagogical activity.

Obligation: protect and respect the rights of pupil and his legal representative, maintain confidentiality and protect from the abuse of personal records, information and medical data about the health of pupils and results of psychological examinations, with which he came to contact, to respect individual educational needs with regards to their personal abilities and options, social and cultural background, take part in the developing and leading of pedagogical documentation and other documentation, direct and objectively assessing work of the pupil, prepare for performance of direct educational action, participate in the making and realizing of school teaching program, maintain and develop own professional competences through continual study or self-study, perform pedagogical activity in accordance with actual scientific knowledge, values and goals of school educational program, offer to pupil or legal representative guidance counseling or professional help connected with education, regularly inform pupil or legal representative about the progress and results of education concerning him.

teaching ethics (similarly constructed are professional standards even for further categories of teaching). The problem is, that this requirement leaves beginning teachers at the entrance to profession. Definition on the level of knowledge and competences creates potential, which can suggest indicators exhibited directly in pedagogical practice. However, gradation of indicators (in dependence with career levels) does not reflect the extent of “professional ethical development” of teachers during career path.

Table 1

Professional competences of teachers of lower secondary grade of education (extract from the proposition of professional standard)

Competence 3.2 Identify with professional role and school
Beginning teacher of second grade of elementary school
<p><i>Knowledge and competences required for entry into profession:</i></p> <p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of organizational characteristics of a school system, as well as institutional rules of school, • knowledge of basic theories of teaching profession, • knowledge of basic structure of profession and professional background of a profession. <p>Competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect and perfect the effectiveness of own teaching activity, • identify with own profession.
<p>Individual teacher of second level of elementary school, teacher of second grade with the first certificate, teacher of second grade of elementary school with second certificate</p> <p><i>Knowledge and competences required for achieving the corresponding career degree:</i></p> <p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of role and goals of pedagogical profession and of school, • knowledge of and respect the basis, principles and practice of professional ethics. <p>Competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify with role, vision and declared values of school, • perform as a presenter of profession and of school, • identify with the role of facilitator, effectively communicate with social partners.

Indicators – verifiability of competence		
Independent teacher of second degree of elementary school	Teacher of second degree of elementary school with first certificate	Teacher of second degree of elementary school with the second certificate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In professional performance performs as a supporter of learning of pupils, example of values and cultivated, ethical behavior. • Performs as a representative of a profession and of school in relation to legal representative and further partners of school. • Keeping and developing the value system of school and school facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides feedback to colleagues in the area of their pedagogical activity and career growth that leads towards its improvement in relation to program of development of school. • Presents own pedagogical expertise in specialized press, publications and on specialized forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides help and counseling to pedagogical and specialized employees and participates in the creation of projects of development of the school. • Coordinates the preparation of education and further activities of teachers in the area of program of the school development, create projects of cooperation with various partners.

Source: authors' own work.

The third dimension (application-regulating) presents teacher's initiatives involving professional needs and interests and consensual acceptance of ethical obligations in the form of a code of ethics of the profession of nationally designated authority which will deal with contentious cases. It also includes the provision of education for future teachers and teachers that use teaching ethics. The study of teaching ethics should be an integral part of initial training as required by Marta Černotová (2005) and Marta Gluchmanová (2008), but in particular, it has become part of a continuous lifetime support for teaching. From this point of view the analysed theme has highly interdisciplinary character, because here the knowledge of adult psychology, teacher's andragogy, school management (eg. school culture as a prerequisite and a consequence of the application of ethical principles in teaching activity) and possibly others overlap.

It should be noted that there is a lack of knowledge about the specifics of the development of moral consciousness in the profession and we do not know means of intervention in ethical decision-making process and acting of teachers and teachers in variable and dynamic teaching situations. Research of aspects affecting accepting ethical decisions of teaching presents the unknown factors in the reasoning and assessing the moral behavior of schoolchildren in the educational process, but also questions a group responsible for ethical decision-making in the performance of educational activities (Bavoľár 2012).

Until 1990 in Slovakia a profession was controlled by ideological understanding of ethics of the work of the teacher, significantly affected by Marxist-Leninist worldview and socialist ethic (i.e. Grišin 1978, Budinec

et al. 1986). Gluchmanová (2013) is presenting an overview of the development of teaching ethics in Slovakia, until societal change after the year 1989, when a fundamental change in the understanding not only in teaching professionalism, identity, but mainly of ethical principles in its performance appeared. In the strategic document about the development of Slovak education – a request was in the Miléniu in the part 5 about teachers, formulated: “develop and establish into practice a control of compliance with code of ethics of the teaching staff” (Milénium. Koncepcia... 2002, pp. 51-54). Švec (2003, pp. 1-4) justified the need of the code of professional ethics as a part of characteristics of a helping profession and laid out for discussion a proposition of wording of code of ethics (taken from the USA). Jozef Gál (2000, 2003) processed a brief proposition of code of ethics in Slovakia (after the commenting of teachers from elementary and high schools), in three parts: preamble, rules of conduct towards pupils and towards own profession. Ľubomír Pajtinka (2003, p. 5) introduced in the discussion a proposition of code of morals of a teacher, which contained besides general obligations also declaration of relations towards profession, pupils, colleagues and society, but some of the principles had legal-labor character, rather than ethical. His proposal was followed up in the year 2010 by Civic association – Slovak chamber of teachers (civic association), which has submitted as its own initiative a proposition of code of ethics (<http://www.komoraucitelov.org/sekcia-6-kodex.html>) and opened a discussion about it. This proposition, however, does not have the features comparable with professional code of teaching (i.e. applied abroad) and is missing clear name of moral (value) aspects of performance and instruments of decision making in the contentious cases. None of these initiatives raised interest and reaction of teaching community, or decision making sphere responsible for realization of National program of education until the year 2015, hence the code of the code of ethics remains on the margin of interest of teaching organizations and pedagogical practice. Discussion about the need of the code is occurring sporadically, only if there are medialized sensitive cases of unethical conduct of the teachers in the pedagogical process or, if the need arises to react to unlawful proceedings of actors of education (i.e. initiative: www.zberstrachu.sk). Ministry by publishing the manual for the protection of the rights of teachers (procedure in cases of rights violations) has at the same time advised to unions, professional assembly and organizations to accept own code of ethics (MŠVVaŠ SR 2015). Our teaching reaction towards the principles of professional ethics as a source of professional honor, pride towards belonging to profession and conscious fulfillment of moral obligations is lukewarm, which may be due to the strong

ideological indoctrination from the past or a resignation in the present. It is as if the basic values of teaching profession, such as universal human values and rights, respect for equality and the freedom of rights for learning and confidentiality of information, personal professional integrity (autonomy and responsibility for accepted decisions) do not contain adequate response. From the impulse of schools arises so called a “code of education” (school schedules) enshrining moral principles of conduct of teachers and pupils in school or codes that arise for specific professional groups for specific types of school (code of ethics of christian educator (https://pasaca.edupage.org/files/Eticky_kodex_krestanskeho_pedagoga_pdf)).

Teachers (even in Slovakia) make a numerous and differentiated group. They differ according to the types, degrees and types of schools, degree and quality of initial training, approbation, differentiate itself politically, ideologically, in worldview, morally, in relation towards past and future, in relation toward pupils, school, money, material possession and in other ways. The more crucial the importance of place in life of teacher and his value orientation, the more visible is displaying his career in given direction (Beňo 2000, pp. 24-25). This heterogeneity is natural and unavoidable part of professional specialization accountable to the structure and needs of schooling, education. In the same time it creates fragmentation, which does not allow the creation of professional organization bringing together and representing interests of all professional groups. Only in this way would be possible to initiate public discussion that would lead towards unity and harmonization of the opinions of various categories in the teaching pertaining to the norms and demands of teaching elite, which meaning should be its codification (Darák 2001, p. 355). It is significant that the same societal (school) events teachers perceive and assess in optics of suggested specifics, which in principle does not allow to accept propositions expressing common professional interests. We assume, that this area is touching mainly expertize department of performance of the profession, but it is not clear to what extent it threatens acceptance of consensus in the area of ethical norms of a teaching job.

Conclusion

We have suggested in the paper some aspects, which are at the forefront of interest of teaching ethics. Various other as, for example, the issues of teacher’s identity, integrity, processes of forming ethical norms and decision making about their enforcement in pedagogical process or appearances of professional standard of Slovak teaching and its code of ethics remain still open and are a challenge for teacher’s andragogy.

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Eva Vincejová
Ivan Pavlov

SLOVAK TEACHING IN THE DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Keywords: teacher, teaching profession, professional ethics, teaching ethics, code of ethics.

Teaching ethics belongs among applied – professional ethics. The subject of its examination are ethical questions concerning the performance of teaching profession. One of the assumptions of professionalization of the Slovak teaching is theoretical study and praxeological suggestions for improvement of the preparatory education and support of the professional development of teaching, its professional identity, value orientation and code of ethics.