TEACHER EDUCATOR'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
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This study examines the stages of teacher educators' professional development. In a framework based on the literature on teacher professional development, we focus especially on the stages/levels of teacher educators' professional development. The Results of an empirical study conducted at the University of Maribor in February 2012 indicate that there are no differences between the stages of professional development of teacher educators and non-teacher educators.
Key words
Non-teacher and teacher educators, stages of professional development

1. Introduction

As many researchers (Snoek et al. 2009, 2011; Barber Mourshed 2007, Hattie 2009) point out, the teacher is among the most important factors that affect the quality of a student's education. As Snoek and his co-authors (2011, 651) note, it is ''/.../ therefore appropriate to assume that teacher educators have an important influence on the quality of the learning of student-teachers.'' Although the amount of international literature has grown in the last five years – as noted by Murray and Harrison (2009, 109) – teacher educators do not receive enough attention in the framework of empirical research; furthermore, policy documents about teacher education rarely include a strong focus on teacher educators' professional development.

In the present article we focus on teacher educators as a professional group. The category "teacher educators" is defined and labelled very differently in different countries (ETUCE 2008). The term encompasses different groups, e.g. academic staff in higher education who are teachers of education, academic staff in higher education who are teachers of school subjects, education researchers, supervisors of practice in school etc. (Report of Peer Learning Activity 2010). Teacher educators are a very heterogeneous group: they work in a variety of environments, come from different educational backgrounds, have different levels of qualification and possess different types of competence to different degrees (Report of Peer Learning Activity 2010). We should point out that only university- based teacher educators were included in the present research.

We first introduce some models of teachers' professional development within a theoretical framework based on the literature about professionalism. In the second section, we present the results of a study about Slovenian teacher educators' professional development and make recommendations for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

In the course of his professional development, every teacher goes through certain stages, and each of these stages has its own characteristics, role and consequences. There have been many attempts to shed light on these stages from diverse conceptual starting points. Zuzovsky (1990) distinguishes between two different views of professional development. In the first, the teacher's professional development is perceived in the form of steps in a hierarchical structure, granting him progressively more authority. The second view emphasises the teacher's inner development, which leads to autonomous thinking and actions (in this case, professional development represents only one aspect of the teacher's comprehensive personal development); the teacher develops from the level of conformity, through the level of conscientiousness, to the level of autonomy. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) list three approaches to teacher professional development, as follows:
> – the model of change, linked to teachers' dilemmas, concerns and aspects of thinking (e.g. F. Fuller's model);
> – cognitive and developmental theories (e.g. Berliner 1992, 1994);
> – teachers' professional growth through additional training, which is based on the teachers' assessment of their needs and the problems they face, and is developed on the basis of action research.

F. Fuller (as cited in Veenman 1984, Kagan 1992 and Eraut 1997) developed a three- stage model of teacher professional development, which was based on the teachers' dilemmas and concerns at particular stages. Huberman (1993, 1995) expanded the model and diversified it on many different levels. In the context of teacher professional development, Dreyfus (as cited in Elliott 1991) emphasised the significance of possessing the skill of understanding through interpretation. This skill changes during the course of an individual's professional progress, and significantly affects the perception and overall assessment of a situation, as well as the decision on which course of action to take. Chickering (1991) linked a teacher's development to his personal growth, whereas Sheckey and Allen (1991) – similarly to Kolb (1984, 1991) – linked it to the process of empirical learning.

In the next section, we shall present the Fuller model in more detail, since it represents one of the first empirical attempts to define teacher development. Furthermore, the author linked teacher development to changes in thinking about professional dilemmas and concerns (Veenman 1984, Feiman, Floden 1986). Teacher development progresses through three stages (as cited in Veenman 1984, 161), as follows:

1. Survival
S. Veenman (ibid.) speaks of "reality shock". At this stage, the teacher is faced with managing a class for the first time, and, above all, focuses on the issue of professional survival – he is concerned with his own role and position, as well as with questions about his qualifications, adequacy and suitability (Eraut 1997: 72):
   – How can I survive in class?
   – Am I suited to be a teacher?
   – Am I sufficiently qualified?

2. Mastery/expertise
At this stage, the teacher focuses on the teaching process, becomes self-assured, clings to routine and uses traditional methods. He is apprehensive about trying new approaches, and ascribes this state-of-mind to external factors. He asks himself the following questions (as cited in Eraut 1997):
   – How can I establish a relationship with the students?
   – How do the students perceive me?
   – Am I accepted by the students?
   – Did I explain the teaching contents well enough?
   – Did I have control over the class?

3. Professionalism/renewed receptiveness to change
In this stage, the teacher focuses especially on the impact ofhis actions on students. The teacher is mature, and because he wants to get rid of routine, he is receptive to innovation. He trusts in his ability to assess the situation. He is concerned with the following questions (as cited in Eraut 1997):
   – What kind of role do I play in the students' learning process?
   – How do the students learn?
   – Are the students acquiring the knowledge they really need?
   – What and how much can I contribute to transforming the students?

In their later research, F. Fuller and Brown (as cited in Kagan 1992) stressed that the boundaries between the stages in the model are not clearly defined and that the

stages are not isolated. They perceive professional development as constant, continuous self-confrontation (ibid. 160).

In this section, we first briefly present some stages/models of teacher professional development, and afterwards focuse on the Fuller model, because the empirical research that presented later in the paper – is based on this model.

3. Empirical research

Our study titled Teacher Educator's Professional Development examines university teachers' professional development. We were interested in how the professional development of teacher educators differs from that of university teachers who do not educate teachers (referred to as "non-teacher educators"). Our main hypothesis is that professional development of teacher educators will differ from that of university teachers who do not educate teachers.

4. Methods

The research was based on descriptive and causal non-experimental methods of empirical pedagogical research (Sagadin 1993).

4.1 Sample
The main participants in the study were university teachers at the University of Maribor. At the level of inferential statistics, a simple random sample was used. 115 university teachers from the faculties of Natural Sciences and engineering (37 teachers: 32.2%) and from faculties of social sciences and humanities (78 teachers: 67.8 %) were included in the sample. Fifty teachers (43.5%) were male and 65 teachers (56.5%) were female. Fifty university teachers (43.5%) were teacher educators, whereas 65 teachers (56.5%) did not meet the criteria of the teacher educator definition, and were thus treated as non-teacher educators.

4.2 Instrument and procedure
Data was gathered via an anonymous questionnaire in February 2012. Requests for participation were sent to 350 randomly selected university teachers at the University of Maribor.

In an introductory section, the university teachers were acquainted with the aims of the survey and were asked to participate by filling in the questionnaire. 350 questionnaires were distributed, of which we received back 115 (32.9 %) questionnaires.

The questionnaire for the university teachers dealt with the concerns and issues that they are most frequently face the course of their work. In the introductory section, the purpose of the survey was presented. There were instructions for completion and general questions about the participant (gender, faculty, work experience). In the second section, there followed the list of issues based on the F. Fuller model of professional development which was presented in the theoretical framework. The respondents chose what they considered to be the most present in their work.

The data were processed with the statistical programme package SPSS, version 20, using the $\chi2$ test for checking the differences between teacher educators and non-teacher educators.

5. Results and discussion

We used the χ2 test in order to determine the differences between the two groups of university-level teachers: those who educate teachers and those who do not. The results did not show any statistically significant differences between the two groups. For the present sample, we can only say that the majority of university teachers (55.7%) fall into the second stage of professional development, in which they focus on students and ask themselves how they are perceived by students. However, if we examine the differences between the two groups in closer detail, we see that more teacher educators (44%) than non-teacher educators (38.5%) are in the third stage of professional development. We could thus presume that teacher educators are slightly more receptive to change. This information is encouraging, since research shows that receptiveness to change and tolerance of conflict and uncertainty are significantly linked, as was established by Bolhuis and Voeten (2004) with reference to process-oriented instruction. One characteristic of "process-oriented teaching" (Vermunt & Verschaffel, 2000) or "student-oriented teaching" is the stimulation of students' mental activity.

Tab. 1: Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in teacher educators' and non-teacher educators' stage of professional development.

| | | | University teachers | | Combined |
			Teacher educators	Non-teacher educators	
Stages/levels of professional development	Survival	f	3	1	4
		f (%)	6.0%	1.5%	35%
	Mastery/experience	f	25	39	64
		f (%)	50.0%	60.0%	55.7%
	Professionalism/ renewed receptiveness to change	f	22	25	47
		f (%)	44.0%	38.5%	40.9%
	Combined	f f (%)	50 100.0%	65 100.0 %	115 100.0 %

χ^2 – test: $\chi^2 = 0.011$; g = 1; P = 0.918.

As the results of research conducted by Huber and Roth (1999, 2003) show, teachers with lower thresholds of tolerance for conflict and uncertainty more often use the established methods and strategies to which they are used. Moreover, these teachers do not stimulate individual learning. Also crucial is personal growth, which means that the teacher develops into a reflective practitioner, characterized by flexibility, the ability to distinguish between emotions, respect for individuality, tolerance of conflict and uncertainty, cultivation of personal relationships and a broader perspective on society (Witherell Erickson 1978; quoted in Zuzovsky 1990, 4).

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we discussed the stages and models of teacher professional development. We focused mainly on the three-stage model of teacher professional development, which is based on the dilemmas and concerns that teachers face in a particular period, and which was developed by F. Fuller (as cited in Veenman 1984, Kagan 1992, Eraut 1997). Three stages are characteristic for this model: survival;

mastery/expertise; professionalism/renewed receptiveness to change. It is characteristic of each stage to show a variety of dilemmas, concerns and crucial issues that the teacher faces. These issues were the basis for our research, using a sample of university teachers. We tried to determine and assess the differences in the stages of professional development among university-level teachers, according to whether they do or do not educate future teachers. The results of the study indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between the two groups of educators, most of whom are in the second and third stages of professional development. A closer comparative analysis of the results nevertheless indicates that more teacher educators than non-teacher educators fall into the third stage of professional development. Professionalism – along with a renewed receptiveness to change – is characteristic of the third (and highest) stage of professional development. This shows that university-level teacher educators are more process-oriented than their non-teacher educator counterparts, and also that a positive quality level of professionalism is characteristic of the former group. There are undoubtedly diverse reasons for the differencies, among which we must include the fact that teacher educators have more theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning and can more readily practise this knowledge, in comparison to university teachers of other disciplines. On the other hand , both categories of university teachers must also fulfil the role of researchers, so they might see their teaching role as merely one role among many or perhaps even less challenging then their researcher role. Nevertheless, as university teachers in general deal with students and through them with society's future, they should highly value their teaching profesionalism, and there should be mechanisms that help university teachers to develop their teaching profesionalism.

As was noted by Snoek et al. (2011, 662), ''the quality of teacher educators is not yet an area in which there is active international policy exchange. Although there are interesting policy practices in some countries, these are not shared between countries or between professional associations of teacher educators.'' So far, this field has not received much attention from researchers. Thus, on the one hand, our study can form the basis for future research. On the other hand, it can help to bridge the gap between teacher educators and policy-makers, so both – as Snoek (2011, 662) also points out – ''/…/ can gain better understanding of effective measures and conditions to strength the professionalism of teacher educators.'' We must realise that only quality education of teachers (in which teacher educators play a very important role) leads to quality professional development throughout all stages of a teacher's professional socialisation within continuously evolving schools. Only this can lead to (higher) quality education in schools.

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Summary

This papers examines the stages of teacher educators' professional development. In a framework based on the literature on teacher professional development, we focus especially on the three-stage model of teacher professional development, which is based on the dilemmas and concerns that teachers face in a particular period, and which was developed by F. Fuller (as cited in Veenman 1984, Kagan 1992, Eraut 1997). Three stages are characteristic for this model: survival; mastery/expertise; professionalism/renewed receptiveness to change. It is characteristic of each stage to show a variety of dilemmas, concerns and crucial issues that the teacher faces. These issues were the basis for our research, using a sample of university teachers. We tried to determine and assess the differences in the stages of professional development among university-level teachers, according to whether they do or do not educate future teachers.

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