

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN TEACHING CURRICULA

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Abstract: Besides a lot of positives, after the year 1989 the dynamic development of our society has brought also some negative features to our life – here we can mention new ethical and moral problems of all society inclusive education and the teacher profession. Ethical and moral problems concerning children and teenagers appear more and more in schools and in out-of school environment and their solution can be hardly successful without integration of such problems and their solution to the context of the whole society. School environment is not an isolated space that eliminates problems of all society – on the contrary, all society events and social climate are demonstrated by ethical and moral problems in school institutions. For this reason I consider ethics in teaching to be an important part of education curricula of future teachers; this subject could help in solution, reduction or elimination of negative effects mentioned above.

KPúčové slová: ethics in teaching curricula, norms of teacher profession, undergraduate and further training of teachers

Ethics of teaching for solution of ethical and moral problems

In the present time a decline of moral values, intolerance, increasing trend of aggressiveness and violence, vandalism and other negative phenomena are discussed in connection with Slovak school system (and not only with that). The topic “crisis of school system and education“ is broadly discussed. During their studies future pedagogical workers should be more focused on solution of ethical and moral problems connected with their profession, inclusive solution of negative effects that appear in teaching daily practice.¹ Increasing aggressiveness seems to be one of manifestations of globalization of human society (inclusive culture and interpersonal relations). Human-

¹ Urgency of this need is confirmed by the project realized at FF PU in Prešov dealing with practical fulfilment of pedagogical graduates and their reflection of pre-graduate preparation. Teachers of primary and secondary schools see the most complicated problems in work with problematic pupils, difficulties in mutual communication because they have not been prepared for solution of conflicts – educational problems. In their studies they were not prepared for mutual communication not only with problematic pupils but also with their parents, Romany pupils, problems connected with unemployed parents (Černotová, 2006: 52).

kind, our society, our school system and teachers come face to face with urgent need to find adequate answer for the problem of the early 21st century.

School should support intellectual freedom and tolerance, strive for creation of good forms cooperation between teachers and pupils, school representatives and parents. Magdaléna Spilková is of the same opinion; she emphasises that teacher should help pupils in strengthening pupils' moral and personal characters, not only by teaching principles but mainly by giving personal example. It is important that not only the teacher would be the evaluating person but also pupils would be substantially supported in possibility to evaluate what is good or bad, right or wrong (Spilková, 2004: 157–181).

Importance of ethics in teaching curricula

For the above mentioned reasons, in my contribution I would like emphasize need of implementation of ethics of teaching in the pre-graduate and the additional education of teachers; in this ethics education also a solution of problems of the teaching profession would be included, which is often only discussed now but only few actions are realized for its appropriate implementation into the teaching practice. In this contribution I would like to explain and substantiate importance and need of implementation of ethics of teaching into education of teachers. I would like to contribute to forming ethics of teaching as the sort of professional ethics belonging to applied ethics branches that have been intensively developed mainly in the 80ies of 20th century. I am of opinion that just in ethics of teaching there is a capacity (in interdisciplinary cooperation with other disciplines – philosophy, pedagogy, psychology and probably also sociology) to improve readiness of teachers for solution of new educational (and often also moral) problems that are connected with the teaching profession in contemporary conditions. Ethics in teaching is in a starting position in our country (both its theoretical and practical aspects) and it is often marked by “misusing“ of ethics in titles and terms that can “hidden“ various very different items that are connected with real ethics and morality only slightly. In a broader context the subject of ethics education could be such example; this subject is taught at primary and secondary schools (Gluchman, 1996: 419–421). Solution of education problems is often reduced to existence of a code in the teaching profession.²

With start of democracy many ethical and moral problems seem to appear more often; they need solution and must not be ignored because neglecting could have great consequences. By my opinion ethics of teaching is necessary as a subject included in education of teachers which enables them to identify properly problems of their profession and find possible ways of solution of moral problems. Other reason for ethics of teaching is to bring teachers to knowledge how to teach pupil to evaluate their own behaviour, to distinguish good or bad manners, right or wrong behaviour etc. Pupils

² Also other authors give notice to a need of the ethical code for teachers and responsibility for its fulfilment in education of future teachers (Černotová, 2006: 187–188; Kosová, 2006: 4). Paradoxically Martin Žilínek presents ethical codes of the pedagogical profession in his book *Ětos a utváranie mravnej identity osobnosti* (1997); however it is only translation of the ethical codes of American organization of teachers National Education Association, transferred by Žilínek from Luknič (Žilínek, 1997: 201–203).

should recognize impact of their own deeds on other moral subject and consequences of their activities and behaviour. In this context Beáta Kosová stated that people not interested in a certain problem often criticise teachers' inability to solve newly developed problems of pupils that are caused by economic and social reasons and also by political decisions. By Kosová (2006: 2), in spite of very serious consequences, teachers feel unconcern and indifference from public, government and school representatives as for real problems (inclusive ethical and moral questions - as noted by M.G.).

The issue of the term 'ethics of teaching'

We can also state as a fact that ethics of teaching has been elaborated only minimally or such elaboration practically does not exist.³ Therefore we see as urgent the need of existence of ethics in teaching and to make this subject visible in our milieu. In this consequence we can ask question whether faculties responsible for education of future teachers and their additional education emphasise awareness of own duties, possibilities of their own rights, responsibilities for their problems connected with the teaching profession, fulfilment of moral and ethical criteria in future and others. What scope and importance are given to education of ethics and moral issues of future teachers? In essence, our task is to prepare students, during their studies and then in practice, for responsible solution of moral and ethical issues, for making proper decisions, for considering impacts of deeds and behaviour – that concerns teachers, children, adults and other colleagues and moral subjects involved in education process.

Taking into account modern problems of education and upbringing, I suppose that it is necessary to consider ethics of teaching as an inevitable subject⁴ in education of future teachers and their additional education; this subject would also solve problems of the teaching profession that are more and more discussed in the present time without firm fixing this profession and its sufficient support in Slovakia.

In this connection Černotová expressed a real fear that students learn only few facts or nothing about difficulties in development of teacher personality, what roles are they expected to play in teacher's life and work, what moral and ethical criteria should they fulfil, what consequences can be to expected by breaking those criteria and similar issues (Černotová, 2003: 181–184). The author also specifies that in Slovakia ethics of teaching as the educational subject is implemented only rarely, depending on personal possibilities of a particular faculty. She believes that a synthesizing discipline could exist in the curriculum of teachers' education for achievement of all above given goals

³ By searching in specialized journals I found that in Slovak conditions there are only few contributions to ethics of teaching problems, either translations from foreign language texts (Brezinka, Homplewicz) or those based on foreign titles; several of them bring interpretation of one of the mentioned authors (more Brezinka than Homplewicz). Also in Czech Republic the situation is not different. Philosophers and specialists in ethics have practically not dealt with these issues and among pedagogues ethics of teaching is not a frequent problem, many of them are lacking adequate philosophic education.

⁴ Based on the survey of secondary school teachers Mila Darák found that "all teachers understand that ethics of teaching must be codified and its basic items should form ethical requirements for professional, personal and moral capability" (Darák, 2001: 354).

and tasks of the mentioned code of ethics for teachers, which would be included by the end of studies.⁵

Almost in daily practice we can meet acting of many moral subjects, that are not answerable and do not correspond e.g. with a principle of humanity. They produce tangible negative consequences resulting in pain, suffering, fear, sadness, humiliation. Here I see palpable negative impacts within all society that need to be seriously considered also by means of ethics of teaching and must not be omitted. Many authors dealing with ethics of teaching put emphasis on well-being of pupils and students (Brezinka, 2002: 167). By my opinion, teachers must not be also omitted and their well-being and protection are to be considered, too. What protection does an employer ensure for a teacher? Does society consider also his well-being? I think, such questions also belong to ethics of teaching and they should be included also in the code of ethics for teachers.

In our discussion of education problems in the teaching profession, first of all we should identify ethical and moral aspects, i.e. bring moral subjects to a reflection and consideration, why deeds and behaviour of some individuals are right or wrong, what is good or bad. In this context also the 'gold rule' could be used: "Do not do to others what you do not wish to be done to you". We know that negative acts have an impact on other people; they cause pain, sadness, depressive states, humiliation etc. Subjects participating in such acts must be brought to thinking about questions e.g.: Can I cause anybody a pain? What could be consequences of my behaviour? What can I improve? Do I behave well? Am I acting responsibly or humanely?

Ethics of teaching could give teachers suitable „tools“ for solution of ethical and moral problems of their profession, also by means of various ethical theories (consequentialistic and deontological ethical theories, ethics of virtue, discursive ethics etc.) or by stimulating approaches that could motivate teachers to thinking of the problems and their solution in teaching practice.

Ethics of teaching investigates ethical and moral aspects of teachers' work in the education process; it characterizes his/her position in the education system, also with his/her moral attitude in issues connecting ethics and morality with this profession. It is focused on moral characteristics of a teacher, his/her ability of ethical and moral thinking and making decisions, behaviour and actions, his/her ability to anticipate consequences of acting in relation to all relevant subjects and ability to take moral responsibility for own decisions and actions. Besides that, ethics of teaching examines personal, character and pedagogical-psychological characteristics that play important role in pedagogical activities of teachers, mainly in relation to pupils, students, in the

⁵ In this connection Černotová comes with a proposal for Slovak and Czech pedagogical community to create, within grants and grant works, drafts of contents, methods, forms of studies, didactic materials for a subject that could integrate philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, didactics of branches, training practice of students (Černotová, 2006: 187–188).

By Spilková, similarly in Czech Republic in 1998, primary school teachers answered the question "how are you satisfied with preparation of future teachers for teaching?" as follows: "...it is preparation of scientists, no teachers; there is a little focusing on problems of teaching at primary schools, on child psychology, mutual relationships pupil-teacher-parents" (Spilková, 2004: 236-239).

same measure to colleagues, superordinates and parents. Ethics of teaching works also with analysis of moral problems of teaching and tries to find solutions and give instruction for solution of real moral problems that can exist in daily practice of the teaching profession. It is also often resulting in formulation of codes of ethics for teachers, for the teaching profession.

Summary

Our considerations could be summarized as follows: *ethics of teaching is one of branch sorts of professional ethics and its subject is theoretic reflection of ethical and moral questions in the teaching profession (inclusive formulation of moral values, principles and norms of the teaching profession into the code of ethics for teachers); its part is also looking for answers or solutions of practical moral problems of the teaching profession. Basis of ethics of teaching is an interdisciplinary approach based on interaction of philosophy, ethics, pedagogy and psychology.*

For this reason, ethics of teaching should be implemented to curricula of future teachers and also to additional education of pedagogues; the role played by this ethics should be in solution and evaluation of particularly topical problems that appear in school and out-of-school environments.

On this base it would be suitable to consider – in cooperation with similar disciplines, namely pedagogy and psychology – arrangement of methodological materials for teachers that could serve as a guide in solution of ethical and moral problems of a similar type.

I suppose that this contribution could inspire you to discuss ethical and moral problems of the teaching profession and to contribute to development of ethics in teaching as a professional branch of ethics in Slovakia and also in Czech Republic, because our professionals (philosophers, pedagogues and other specialists) have fallen behind contemporary trends developed by specialists in over the world.

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DÔLEŽITOSŤ UČITEĽSKEJ ETIKY V PROGRAMOCH ŠTÚDIA UČITEĽSTVA

Súhrn: Okrem mnohých pozitív priniesol dynamický rozvoj v našej spoločnosti po roku 1989 i niektoré negatívne stránky života, ku ktorým môžeme priradiť aj nové etické a morálne problémy v celej spoločnosti, vrátane výchovy a vzdelávania, či učiteľského povolania. Riešenie etických a morálnych problémov, ktoré sa v poslednej dobe čoraz častejšie rozmáhajú v školskom aj mimoškolskom prostredí u detí a dospelujúcej mládeže, môže byť len veľmi ťažko úspešné, ak nedôjde k ich riešeniu v celospoločenskom rámci. Škola nie je izolovaným priestorom, ktorej sa nedotýkajú problémy celej spoločnosti, ba práve naopak, celkové dianie a klíma v spoločnosti sa prejavuje v podobe etických a morálnych problémov v školských zariadeniach. Práve z toho dôvodu predpokladám dôležitosť učiteľskej etiky v programoch štúdia učiteľstva, kde by mohla prispieť aj k riešeniu, redukovaniu, či eliminácii spomínaných negatívnych javov.

Kľúčové slová: učiteľská etika, normy učiteľského povolania, pregraduálne a ďalšie vzdelávanie učiteľov