Abstract

The current changes made in the state curriculum, designed for primary and secondary schools in Slovakia, opened the possibility of changes in curriculum innovations in educational ethics and its effective management of pedagogical teaching at the level of the school curriculum. An innovative didactic model of teaching ethics has been developed by the research team aimed at implying expectations for the ethics teacher competence as a basis for its targeted and effective professional development through the self and continuing education. As we define the theoretical framework of the ethics teacher professionalization, we also present competency profile of the ethics teacher created by an expert and principles of continuous learning paradigm based on humanistic and constructivist pedagogy.

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1. Introduction

The integral part of the Slovak educational system transformation is a normative definition of a competency profile / professional teacher’s standards related to changes of the state curriculum based on humanistic educational paradigm. The teaching is a creative and reflective profession, which assumes that the teacher is able to reconcile the normative demands that are placed on his professionalism with a dynamically varying situation in the educational reality with regard to the transformation requirements for humanization and personalization of the state curriculum. The process of a professional development of the mature teacher represents a secular upward cycle of the permanent linking of ones theoretical knowledge, experiential learning in practice and didactic reflection and its integration into the context knowledge and didactic teaching concepts. The integration is possible only under the condition of theoretical reflection of the teacher’s pedagogical practice where the teacher examines and reflects his own teaching activities critically and thinking based on the scientific theories. Without this fact the teacher's pedagogical decisions only become some kind of intuitive act and teaching innovation just a random process (Kosová, 2011). Reflection and self-reflection is leading to self-understanding, because their goal is to get to know your own reflection and interpret your own actions and intentions. It is a tool for understanding, evaluating and reshaping of teacher in relation to the educational process and the curriculum (Kasáčová, 2004).

Our main objective was to create a model expert manner competency profile of the ethics teacher reflecting on curricular changes and requirements for educational innovation in teaching this subject in the context of transformational changes of the state curriculum and legislative codification of “national” standard of a professional teacher. This proposed competency profile is the outcome for the targeted and effective professional development of the ethics teachers through the self-education and continuing education focused on innovation and changes in terms of the quality of teaching ethics.

2. The model of competency profile of the ethics teacher

The teaching subject of ethics has broaden a traditional composition of mostly doctrinal oriented subjects at primary and secondary schools on educational subject aimed at developing ethically valuable pro-social attitudes and behaviour in students. Emphasizes are placed on the development of social and moral capabilities (virtues) aimed at promoting ethical goals and mental hygiene as primary prevention of behavioural and learning problems of children. Social and moral competence factors represent personality development of the child (communication, positive evaluation of oneself and others, social creativity, expression of feelings and empathy, assertiveness, pro-social behaviour), while the ability of students is accentuated so that they can apply acquired social and moral competences in different life situations.

The curricular changes are opening the possibilities in terms of the change and innovation in ethics curriculum its effective teaching management on the level of the school curriculum. Based on the analysis of the current trends an innovative didactic model of teaching ethics was designed by the research team aimed at the facilitation of an active social learning of the students, leading to the development of the key personal, social and moral responsibilities, pro-social action in different social and cultural contexts (Valica, Fridrichová et al., 2011).

The teacher of ethics is interpreted as a professional who is qualified for theoretically profound and critical analysis of educational phenomena, processes in the teaching of ethics. This allows him to design the content and educational policies and procedures in the way so that they lead to the objectives set by the educational objectives without the ethics teacher manipulating his students and therefore creating optimal conditions for their moral development and self-development. At the same time he is able to explain his pedagogical practices as well as
defend in argumentation, nevertheless, to modify and successfully implement. Having define the competence profile of the ethics teacher we have reflected on a new public educational program and the teachers’ professional standards, the concept and the new curriculum ethics for elementary and secondary schools, an innovative teaching model, which implicates requirements for the competence of the ethics teacher. These were formulated by the addressed teachers of ethics in our study (Poliach, Valica, 2010) and the experts (Korim et al., 2010), who not only placed the emphases on the inter-founded theoretical training component but also highlighted the great importance of a pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodical as well as the personality - ethical components of professional competence of the ethics teachers.

The proposed model of the teacher’s competence profile consists of the following components (Valica, Fridrichová et al., 2011):

- Expert competences
- Moral and ethical responsibilities
- Pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological competences
- Self-developing competence

The expert competence of the ethics teacher consists of the content knowledge base, which needs to be given the complexity and multi-factor nature of the educational process. In our opinion, the ethics education is designed multidisciplinary in five related areas:

- The philosophic science is enabling teachers to understand objectives, goals and core values defining value-moral education of students in ethics education.
- The education sciences is enabling knowledge of the state ethics curriculum on the level where the ethics teacher is capable to design, implement and evaluate teaching ethics on the level of the school curriculum.
- The psychological science is enabling the teacher to get familiar with students and their individual developmental characteristics, developmental opportunities for each student in the ethics education.
- The sociological and cultural-logical science knowledge accentuating socio-cultural contexts of education in students in ethics education.

The knowledge base is becoming the professional competence of the ethics teachers in a case there is a multidisciplinary integration of the knowledge structure and its "transformation" into theoretical concepts, ideas and practices which prove to be useful in a practical teaching. The condition is a reflection and introspection of the meaningfulness of the integrated knowledge base which is by confronted by the efficiency and effectiveness of educational activities of the ethics teaching in pedagogical practice.

The personal and ethical competences of the teacher consist of the personal and social skills, attitudes and values of the ethics teacher, which reflect in its ability to implement its own positive personality characteristics and social-moral characteristics (such as: value orientation, personality traits and behaviour) in the teaching of ethics in relation to the educational principles and interventions that form the basis of the professional ethics teacher. Educational style of the ethics teacher is grounded in the application of educational principles in the teaching of humanizing teacher-pupil relationship and based on unconditional acceptance of his personality and attribution of positive qualities, positive evaluation of student preferences and practices of inductive discipline, encouraging pupils to sociability, creating clear rules in the classroom and creating educational community out of the class. The precondition for the exercise of personal ethics and responsibility is a personal maturity of the teacher, which is manifested in the ability to accept itself, others, as well as to identify and change its position in the given reality based on the attributes that are (Kariková ,1999, p.45-85) specified in the following paradigm:

- an adequate assessment of reality
- the pursuit of self-knowledge
- ability to control your actions
- the ability to create a positive emotional bonds with others
- vigour and creativity
- resistance to stress, morality and character
- sense of humour and optimism
- an adequate communication ability.

Unlike the "classical" expectations where the teacher will be particularly effective in terms of the knowledge transfer to the student, the emphasis is now placed on the responsibility for the personalization and socialization, culture personality of each student. The ethics teacher is a professional, an expert possessing such professional pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological competencies that enables him to manage the cognitive and affective learning of students, diagnose, design and creatively look for different variations and alternative educational strategies and procedures appropriate for the moral development of students. Increasing demands on his professional self-reflection call for a theoretical reflection in their pedagogical experience and correction of their pedagogical approaches in ethics education.

The pedagogical-psychological and educational-methodical competence of the ethics teacher enables the following:

1. To identify individual psychosocial and moral characteristics of the student

The precondition is to:
- be aware of the patterns of psychosocial and moral development and personality of the pupil in given age period
- have the ability to identify individual psychosocial and moral characteristics of the pupil
- accept the individuality of each student

2. Identify psychological and social factors of students learning

The precondition is to:
- know the learning styles of students
- have the ability to identify individual learning style and educational needs of students (intact pupils, pupils with special needs)
- accept different styles of pupils learning depending on the mental, physical and social conditions

3. Identify socio-cultural context of pupils’ development

The precondition is to:
- be aware of the differences between cultures in a multicultural environment and their impact on the learner
- have the ability to identify the individual characteristics of the learner, based on the socio-cultural environment
- accept student’s differences without prejudice and stereotypes

4. Control the content and didactics of teaching ethics

The precondition is to:
- have acquired knowledge of their field, including inter-disciplinary linkers and reflection on the development of relevant disciplines
- navigate the educational documents (national educational program, school educational program, curricula, educational standards, ...) and compulsory pedagogical documentation
- have some knowledge of the methodology of the school curriculum
- have the ability to choose the content of ethics in accordance with the required and expected educational goals and enrich by schooling and regional specificities
have the ability to identify and explore links within and between teaching subjects or areas of the curriculum
have the ability to form a school educational program
have the ability to make didactic content analysis of the ethics education

5. Planning and designing teaching ethics
The precondition is to:
• be familiar with theoretical planning and design of educational process
• have the ability to plan and design educational process of ethics in accordance with the school educational program and individual needs of students
• have the ability to define learning goals which are student-oriented in order to develop their skills and formulate them in the form of educational requirements
• have the ability to provide a didactic analysis of the curriculum - use the content of the curriculum for basic elements (facts, concepts, relationships, procedures), be able to choose basic and developing curriculum in the context of the educational objectives of ethics and individual needs of students, choose tasks and activities for students
• have the ability to provide curriculum design of ethics teaching, tasks for pupils and pupil success criteria in order to meet the challenges
• have the ability to reflect on the actual process of learning and compare it with a process that is designed to make corrections
• have the ability to develop an individual educational plan for students with special educational needs in collaboration with colleagues
• have the ability to use, develop and provide material and technical base of educational process in teaching ethics
• have the ability to use the activity and creativity of students in planning of educational process in ethics education

6. Implement the teaching of ethics
The precondition is to:
• know the methods and forms which support active learning of students
• know the methods and strategies of a personal student development (self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-regulation and self-actualization)
• know the methods and strategies of pro-social development of students (communication, empathy, assertiveness, mutual help, donations, sharing, and cooperation) and their application to application issues of ethics
• have the ability to select and utilize methods and forms when it comes to learning objectives with regard to ethics and individual educational needs of students
• have the ability to manage learning groups and classes
• have the ability to design effective strategies for teaching pupils with behavioural problems
• have the ability to communicate effectively with pupils, to influence positive atmosphere in the classroom environment and encourage the development of pupil’s personality
• have the ability to change the planned action flexibly in regard to the current situation in the classroom
• have the ability to recognize the socio-pathological behaviour of students
• have the ability to use the activity and creativity of students for effective lesson implementation
• to appreciate the personal and socio-moral character of students

7. Evaluate progress and results of teaching and student learning
The precondition is to:
• be familiar with theoretical evaluation of psychosocial and moral status and development of the pupil
• have the ability to establish criteria for evaluation of the progress and results of student learning, the ability to develop self-esteem of students

Self-developing competence of the ethics teacher is reflected in his motivation and capability to design his own professional development, gradually identify the professional role of the teacher and the school culture. These competences are stimulated by reflection and a systematic teacher’s self-reflection. We understand it as a part of all teachers’ professional activities related to the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own teaching activities as well as position of yourself in your professional development. It’s involved in shaping their own didactic teaching as well as concept of a teacher in a professional, personal and ethical component of their competence.

Self-developing competences of the ethics teacher enable the following:

1. Plan and implement professional growth and self-development
The precondition is to:
• know their personal dispositions, values, strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate their use in teaching activities
• know the trends of the development and trends in the field of education
• know the system of career development of teaching staff and career opportunities
• have the ability to set goals of self-development of professional competencies

2. Identify with a professional role and school
The precondition is to:
• be familiar with the mission and goals of the school
• have the ability to identify the mission, vision and school values
• have the ability to act as a representative of the profession and schools
• have the ability to identify the role of facilitator, to communicate effectively with social partners, schools
• maintain professional ethics at a high level

Self-development competencies form the basis for the teacher while identifying their learning needs, comparing their real professional competencies expected by the competence profile of the ethics teacher.

3. Continual education of ethics teachers

The teacher of ethics is in the role of a reflexive professional who evaluates curriculum and teaching, their teaching experience determining his own teaching activities and new solutions to educational situations and problems. It also reflects the assessment of his teaching by getting students, colleagues, school management and parent’s feedback. It reflects himself in the role of a teacher and also the transformation of the educational context of the school in relation to their own teaching. Based on a comprehensive reflection, an autonomous teacher can take a full responsibly for making decisions regarding objectives and content of the school curriculum, plan, implement and evaluate teaching. The teacher, who is able to reflexively "process" his practical experience in confrontation with pedagogical theory, can create a professional autonomy, allowing him to apply its own individual concept of didactic teaching ethics.

Generally speaking, the teachers of ethics reflect on their teaching. Their teaching is adapted to individual particularities of their students, their learning needs and interests, create favourable condition for their learning, monitor the progress continuously as well as give results of teaching. Based on this feedback they draw conclusions for themselves, reflect the educational context of the school and adapt their teaching approaches to new conditions and requirements for education accordingly. It is a reflexive teacher who takes into account the choice of instructional strategies and learning objectives as well as the need for structuring curriculum, teaching
activities and tasks of student’s motivation to learn and create conditions for effective learning of students and mode of interaction and communication in the classroom (Vašutová, 2004).

However, according to Š. Porubský (2007 p. 131) the current Slovak teacher:

- doesn’t have a comprehensive, paradigmatically clear and specifically applicable individual pedagogies in practice
- perceives educative reality as "given" (curricula) and his own position only as an interpreter and not the creator
- fails to perceive the relation between educational theory and its potential impact on increasing the efficiency of their own educational efforts

The teacher should enter into educational situations with own didactic concept, which is based on knowledge of educational theory. Its practical application in educational practice should be validated by action research of specific educational phenomena binding in its imagination "as it should work". If a teacher doesn’t have a clear teaching paradigm he is resorting only towards elimination of unforeseen circumstances in the learning process. He either reduces the tuition to the level of only transmitting the information, where the pupil becomes only the recipient, or resigns to his educational and formative position according to slogan "humanization" and leaves everything up to pupils (Porubský, 2007).

Designing own career move as an ethics teacher is associated with its own self-education and continual training of teachers. In the ethics, the teacher’s continual education is necessary to create a learning environment where a mechanical application of theory to practice is rather regarded as "wishful thinking" then a pedagogically viable role. The current trend in teachers continual education is a preference of those educational strategies that place emphasizes on theoretical reflection and practical experience of teachers in the way where a constant interaction in the world of theory and practice takes place. Therefore, it is necessary to promote a culture of reflective practice and active educational research in order to help teachers raise ethical education distance from their own practice and experience, which leads to improving the quality of authentic "practical" teaching theory, forming the base for deepening professional identity.

In the continual education of the ethics teachers executed by universities and institutions of continual education we propose the following principles to be applied based on paradigm of humanistic and constructivist pedagogy:

- Reflect on new approaches in adult education (transition from transmissible to proactive education) so called transmission of knowledge in completed form without relation to the specific context of school reality and own experiences of teachers to change it to the approaches which is prioritizing exploration, discovery and designing of new knowledge based on its own activities and the acquisition of new experience for teaches in modelling and actual teaching situations,
- apply constructivist and reflexive approaches in the development of professional identity as an active designing and creative development of teachers professionalism based on reflection of own activities, experience, own search for self-discovery and the role of the teacher based of collaboration with colleagues,
- integrate theoretical and practical knowledge component of the ethics teacher by precise practical work and life experiences of teachers that need to be analyzed, interpreted, moreover, to broaden, to link with the theory, generalize and create or broaden their own didactic teaching concept of ethics in the educational school context, in other words to apply the approach from the practice to theory and from the theory to practice,
• prioritize strategies and methods of active teaching and learning of the ethics teachers (dialogic ahead of monologue methods, methods of problem, experiential, reflective and cooperative learning), organizational forms preferring individual and group lessons ahead of class teaching, self-education
• apply the block or modular approach along with a designing content of continual teachers education by using cross-curricular and interdisciplinary integration in the educational process and evaluation of learning outcomes, which means creating a coherent part of the program, which are arranged in the way so it would enable the compilation of consistent training units,
• link teaching and research in a conduct of the ethics teachers, which means to create a research culture associated with the creative teaching work - learning the role of a "researcher" knowing how to systematically analyze their own practice - particular teaching situation by an active research and based on that modify their teaching strategies, propose alternative solutions and measures in order to improve the quality of teaching,
• apply new approaches in assessing professional competencies of the ethics teachers projected in the presentation of competency teacher profile of the given teacher, focusing on their ability to examine own teaching activities critically, analyze it, interpret it, evaluate it, be capable of theoretical reflection of practical experience (place them in the context of theory),
• apply methods of distance education leading to active self-studying and in a contact study, strategy and methods of active teaching and learning of teachers should be preferred (more seminars and trainings).

4. Conclusion

In the context of transition state curriculum in primary and secondary schools, an innovative model for teaching ethics was created by the research team as a tool and a theoretical framework for teachers of ethics for the purpose of improvement and innovation in ethical education. The presented model of the ethics teacher competence profile is the base for the meaningful and targeted continual education and professionalism heading towards achieving individual didactic concept of teaching ethics.

In continual learning, there is a necessity to form learning situations leading towards enhancement of professional set of values, beliefs, opinions and skills of the ethics teachers, which are sufficiently theoretically founded. It is a creation of academic space aimed at the role acquisition, strategies and methods that allow them to "self-construct 'own professional identity of the ethics teachers defined by competency profile. The point is that teachers of ethics would constantly be aware of the self-reflection and routinely clarify their "teaching philosophy", professional attitudes and personal beliefs leading to their own conception of didactic teaching ethics generating conditions for innovation of ethical education.

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