Requirements for a Primary School Teacher When Entering Practice

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Abstract. School is a specific institution which is accountable to society, the state and educational service customers, education clientele. The main weight of responsibility for good functioning and school results lay on the teachers, in addition to the leadership. The aim of the paper is to highlight the requirements of leading teaching staff—Heads and Deputy Heads—which are placed on teachers entering the educational process. Based on the qualitative survey conducted by using semi-structured interview we show some aspects that play an important role in recruiting new teachers for primary education in schools. It turns out that the requirements are aimed not only at professional qualities, but also at personality and character requirements.

Introduction

The concept of teaching profession changes under the influence of social changes as well as the changes in schools. The traditional definition of the roles of teachers and the demands on the teaching profession ceases to meet the new requirements of society for training the next generation, the position of schools in education and society is changing. There are more sources of information. Families are less stable and less functional, children are different and the quality of relationships between people is also different. Knowledge about a child, about the educational processes further develops, a teacher must master new skills in difficult conditions. Increasing the requirements on education leads to the creation of new professions within education and schools, for example school psychologists, special education teachers, assistants.

For school work it is absolutely essential to have quality teaching staff and for its promising and stable operation also a team of teachers, who are "firmly attached" to teaching—with their roots, motivation, commitment, high level of professional identification or working prospects.

Upon their entrance to the practice, teachers can be supported by a pedagogical manager - school Head or Deputy Head. They also put demands on teachers, who has recently entered the educational process.

Theoretical Bases

The concept of teaching profession changes under the influence of social changes as well as changes in school. The traditional definition of the roles of teachers and the demands on the teaching profession ceases to meet the new requirements of society for training of the next
generation, the position of schools in education and society is changing. There are more sources of information. Families are less stable and less functional, children are different and the qualities of relationships between people are also different. Knowledge about a child, about educational processes develop, a teacher must master new skills in difficult conditions. Increasing demands on education leads to the creation of new jobs within education and schools, for example, school psychologists, special education teachers, assistants.

The main objective of the training of primary school teachers is to equip teachers with key professional competencies, which are viewed as comprehensive psychological-didactic skills facilitating coping with difficult teaching situations. A key trend in terms of the curriculum is strong professionalization of primary school teachers [1].

According to Spilková [2] it is possible to identify five basic tendencies of a primary school teacher’s preparatory study. The basis includes different professional profiles of teachers: a child-oriented, a curriculum-oriented, socially oriented teacher, teacher as a technologist and a "multi-profile" teacher. Nowadays the child-oriented curriculum of primary school training prevails.

Primary school teachers are undergoing a single-phase parallel (academic as well as vocational studies are conducted in parallel) or integrated programme (integration between subject, professional study and teaching experience). The specifics of primary school teachers vocational training is the contact with school environment since the beginning of the study. The Primary School Teaching study program is conceived as a five-year non-structured Master's degree study, which takes into account new challenges (increasing heterogeneity of the student population, increasing health as well as psychological problems etc.).

Outside the professional qualifications an important factor is also the personality of a teacher. From a psychological point of view we understand personality as a unity of perception and behaviour, or as a summary of congenital and acquired dispositions which ensure that every person is similar to other members of the community, but at the same time they also differ from them and are unique in something. Their personality is constantly evolving throughout their life, and there we can find inner conflicts and contradictions [3], [4], [5]. This is another element that usually plays a role in the assessment of a human - a teacher - as a complex personality responsible for the upbringing and education. This is a factor that also plays an important role in terms of senior teaching staff in assessing the quality of a teacher.

**Methodology**

At the beginning of this research there were a few basic questions that relate to the current debate regarding the use of ICT in education. Are interactive whiteboards really such a great contribution to teaching in primary schools so it is worthy to pay a considerable investment in their purchase and maintenance? Is a big boom of this technical didactic means adequate to what enriches and enlivens education? Can an interactive whiteboard be the reason why children could change their opinion regarding school and begin to look forward to lessons? How teachers view at the deployment of interactive whiteboards in teaching? Isn’t the operation of the whiteboard and preparation for individual subjects so complex and time-consuming, that they prefer to leave the benefits behind their traditional teaching methods?
With regard to the questions, the best approach to exploration seems to be qualitative methodology that helps to understand the essence of the phenomenon.

**Research Sample**

The selection of suitable respondents was conceived so that there is a representation of leading teachers from all types of schools, i.e. large urban as well as small schools. The reason was to cover the entire spectrum of school facilities, thereby eliminating the possibility of distortion of data by type of school. In total six semi-structured interviews were carried out.

**Instrument and Procedures**

A semi-structured interview was used as the research method. The respondents were not informed in advance about the specific questions used in the interview. The topic—"requirements for primary school teachers" was the only information they had, the reason was so that respondents didn’t have a chance to prepare the answers to the questions in advance and therefore they answered immediately and naturally. All interviews conducted were also recorded. The answers were then transcribed, while non-verbal responses of the respondents were also recorded [6]. To maintain anonymity, the interview transcripts uses changed the first names of the respondents and the primary school of the respondents was not identified.

**Data Analysis**

For analysis and data processing the constant comparison method was used, which is based on the constant comparison of responses obtained in the interviews, finding the differences and similarities [7]. This method is suitable for the analysis of the selected research and corresponds the most to the intention to compare the respondents’ answers and create a more general view of the question given.

**Limitation of a Study and Ethical Principles**

Like in any qualitative study, also here we can find limitations arising from the nature of the research survey. The biggest drawback, of course, is subjectivity of the responses. Although efforts were made to select a representative sample of respondents, their responses of course reflected the personal experience and the specifics of schools in which they work. As another element entering the responses, the respondent can perceive the overall approach of school management on the issue, which is certainly reflected in the overall perspective of the respondents. Limit also includes the impossibility of generalisation of the results to a broader population of teachers, although the data provides an interesting basis for a further, possibly quantitative study.

The ethical aspect has been outlined above. However, it is worth noting that with regard to the possible identification of the respondents, in the interview transcripts there are changed first names of the respondents and the primary school in which the respondent works was not identified.
The Results of the Research

It turns out that senior teaching staff pays close attention to the selection of job seekers in their school. Adoption of a new employee is usually a multi-round process that should show the applicant’s interest in the job, personality and teaching skills. The emphasis is placed primarily on meeting formal qualification requirements of the legislation. It is considered as the basic input parameter to become a teacher. Other findings take into account the necessary skills and character qualities of the candidates. This is a deeper analytical process, which should show the qualitative elements of teacher job seekers at primary school.

The selection procedure consists of three rounds at our school. The first round is that we receive a CV or a cover letter. If we don’t receive a cover letter, then we ask for it. From the applications, we have lots of those applications, I choose those people who are interesting for me, from the point of view of their studying field, or some other things. I invite these people to interview, where I talk with these people together with deputy head and then they have to demonstrate a demonstration lesson where we sit, as well as the school leaders and methodologist, or the teacher, who is teaching there at the time (Jiří)

The professional requirements therefore play an important role. In practical tests the professional core competence of teachers is verified, especially didactic, communicative and organisational ability. Great attention is given to the relationship side, not only in terms of teacher-pupil, but also vice versa pupils-teacher - how children respond to teacher in educational practice.

Although it might seem that previous teaching practice would play an important role in the selection, practically, this isn’t true. It turns out that senior teaching staff often use the opportunity to accept fresh graduates of teaching disciplines, who support the dynamics of the teaching staff and are also sufficiently adaptable to rhythm and school climate, where they enter to. Another great advantage is the fact that the applicants implemented mandatory practice at school, where they are seeking to work, within undergraduate training.

When selecting new employees it is important for me to know what these people are like, whether I know those people, if I know them and I’m glad to try them a bit, so I’m happy to accept trainees, who come to us to practice. I have the opportunity to learn how they behave in a team, how they behave towards children or people I know from the surroundings, and I know that they have a good attitude to children, they are an authority for them (Jana)

A demonstration of interest in the job is also an important element. It’s perhaps surprising discovering that when choosing new worker, it isn’t too important whether the candidates have prepared a professional portfolio. On the other hand, if a candidate submits processed preparations for teaching in advance, it’s an evident interest in employment, which is viewed favourably.

Outside the outer verbal manifestations the elements of nonverbal communication are often taken into account as well as overall behaviour. The teacher must be an example with their demeanour, they must respect the child, colleagues as well as parents. An important requirement is the need for team spirit.

I always say that one of the biggest problems for us adults is that we forget that we also used to be children, and I think that it should play a big role in teachers, because such empathy - to put themselves into the perspective of the child's parent is very important (Marie)
The Heads and their deputies greatly emphasise the personal levels. Yet they are not standard issues associated with friendliness, openness, and the like. Interest in further education is deemed to be a very important fact. According to the interviews, a teacher who will not pursue further education, has no place among school staff.

The age in which we live is I think is rapidly changing, so when I stop learning I will lack so much that my pupils will actually cease to completely accept me and I will become such a peculiar fossil dinosaur, so there is almost nothing to answer (Lukáš)

An interesting view is offered by answers to questions about how the private life of a teacher is important for educational management staff. Matters of a private nature are distinguished from the professional skills in the testimonies. However, with the condition that they will represent the school with their demeanour and behaviour even when they do not physically perform a pedagogical activity or activities related to teaching. However, the interest in teacher’s hobbies that may be beneficial to the school seems to be significant, which the teacher might use in elective courses in school. So it is not a priority for me to know their leisure activities. The priority for me is that they can also devote their free time to school (Jana)

If they don’t teach well, they leave immediately, or aren’t even accepted. This means that I’m interested in those circumstances around. And in particular, how they want to pursue school leisure activities, i.e. what more they can offer to the school, that’s what interests me (Jiří)

From the answers it is clear that the requirements for new teachers go further beyond the standard obligations, and that they also have an interest in work during leisure time is expected (we purposely do not say required). This confirms the assumption that a school is a living body, a community where they work doesn’t end by fulfilling the required working time.

**Summary**

Head teaching staff have basically clear ideas about the newly hired teachers. They primarily respect the legislative requirements for the qualification of teaching staff. In respect to the next steps of accepting they primarily take into account the professional preparedness and potential, which in most cases is tested within the model teaching. There rigorously analyse the presented performances, carry out analyses and follow-up evaluation. As part of these discussions, they assess verbal and non-verbal expressions of the candidates.

Besides professional dispositions, are also personality and communication skills are also important elements, as well as responsibility, teamwork and flexibility. There have often been mentioned words such as enthusiasm, empathy and teamwork.

As expressed in one of the interviews, teaching is not a profession like any other. A good teacher has to live their work, has to love it with everything that belongs to it. Without it they cannot be a good teacher.

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References


