

Editorial

This monothematic issue focuses on teachers and the teaching profession. The title *Towards Expertise in the Teaching Profession* suggests that it attempts to tackle two interrelated burning issues – professionalisation of teachers and their professional development. Both of these represent a sine qua non condition for the raising of quality in education, a social demand which may be considered a pedagogical evergreen, which has, however, acquired new importance in the context of the dynamically evolving socio-political environment.

Back in 1998, in a presidential address that has become famous, President Clinton said:

Teaching is the essential profession, the one that makes all other professions possible. Without well-qualified, caring, and committed teachers, neither improved curricula and assessments, nor safe schools - not even the highest standards in the world - will ensure that our children are prepared for the challenges and opportunities in America's third century.

This statement applies universally for education in the third millennium; it fits only too well the contemporary situation in the Czech Republic as a member of the European and global family. Yet the discourse concerning a crisis in the teaching profession is still alive and, indeed, seems to be growing in the light of results pertaining to Czech pupils in international comparative studies.

In the search for improvement, the pace of educational reforms has accelerated. Contemporary teachers may well describe their professional trajectories as periods during or between educational reforms. In the Czech Republic, for example, we are currently witnessing certain reservations in relation to neo-liberal trends underlying curricular reform processes and a silent "retreat" to more conservative approaches in a number of areas of educational policy. If we wish to use a metaphor, it looks as if the pendulum has already begun its backward swing.

Thus, many questions related to a reflection of current educational realities and scenarios for the development of education and schooling including the new roles of teachers, remain open. It is the duty and mission of educational research and theory to offer solutions and responses to these questions. In this monothematic issue *Orbis scholae* hopes to contribute to the mosaic of the complex problem of teacher professionalisation.

The issue includes a representative collection of eight articles written by a range of authors from various European countries. In his paper the outstanding British scholar Christopher Day focuses upon external and internal challenges for the research and teaching communities, upon the perils as well as excitements of "border crossings" in research conducted on and in the policy and practice contexts which are associated with what he calls "the new lives of teachers". Fred Korthagen, who is renowned for his contributions to the theory of the teaching profession as well as to the practice of initial teacher education, presents the principles of the so-called realistic teacher education approach as well as the results of several

evaluative studies into its implementation. Pertti Kansanen, well-known (not only) to Czech readers for his numerous publications in the field of pedagogical theory and practice, outlines conditions necessary for the guaranteeing of sustainable teacher education and summarises them in five theses. Michaela Gläser-Zikuda, whose main research interests include cognitive and emotional processes of self-regulated learning and innovative learning environments, offers together with her colleagues three studies that deal with the implementation of portfolios which are perceived as a driving force of change, a manifesto for a new type of teacher professionalism. Last but not least, leading Czech and Slovak specialists contribute to the palette of texts in this issue of *Orbis scholae*. The breadth and depth of insight into the teaching profession is complemented by two papers highlighting specific dimensions of teaching expertise: Peter Gavora describes the construct of teacher self-efficacy and discusses methodological aspects of its measurement, specifically the process of adaptation of the Slovak version of Gibson and Dembo's Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES). The paper by Michaela Píšová and Tomáš Janík addresses the role of knowledge as one of the sources of teaching expertise, focusing mainly on the phenomenon of theory-practice gap, on the role of theoretical or academic research-based knowledge and teacher-based practical experiential knowledge and on the need for linking the two. Two large-scale research projects conducted in each of these countries are presented: Vladimíra Spilková introduces partial results of the project called *The teaching profession in the context of changing demands on education* carried out at Charles University in Prague and aimed at teacher education, while Bronislava Kasáčová shares the outcomes of a professionographic research project focusing on primary education teachers and their activities, which is carried out at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica.

The aims with which this monothematic issue of *Orbis scholae* was conceived, namely the problems of teacher professionalisation and teacher professional development, were stated in the introduction. It is up to readers to decide whether and to what extent these aims have been met.

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