

PRIMARY EDUCATION TEACHES AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN A RESEARCH EXAMINATION

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Abstract: *Research on teachers offers quite a wide spectrum of topics but despite the quantity, the platform of systematic research into the teaching profession remains fragmented. The paper presents the outcomes of professiographic research. The primary objective of the research was to identify specific professional activities of primary education teachers within the real conditions of teaching practice, record and discover their structure, and to determine the ratio of particular activities in relation to full professional performance. Partial objectives included a professional activity profile of primary education teachers, the establishing of a time load of primary education teachers, and qualitative description and analysis of professional activities.*

Key words: *pedeutological, psychological and sociological research on teachers, primary education teachers, professional performance of primary teachers, professional profile and time load, professional activities and structure*

Introduction

Research on teachers is traditionally a very common tool and offers quite a wide spectrum of topics suitable and attractive for examination by research. These form the significant field of pedeutology (the study of the teacher) and act as sources and stimuli for consideration and thinking, inspire innovations in teacher training, and nowadays provide necessary support for the passing of legislative steps for the standardization of the profession. However, they do not always monitor the wide range of a defined research topic within all the categories of the teaching profession. This is quite natural, since the particular teacher categories differ significantly in their praxeologic form, as well as in the practice of undergraduate training. The main reason, though, is that our circumstances dictate that pedeutological research is mostly performed by academic experts, whose primary interest lies in

the theory and practice of the training of faculty teachers. At present, Slovakia has no facility with the objective of performing countrywide pedagogical research, not to mention pedeutological research. Thus we should note that despite the quantity of topics, the platform for systematic study of the teaching profession is fragmented. One attempt at a holistic examination of the teaching profession can be found in the research activities on the teaching profession carried out at the Faculty of Education of Matej Bel University in the town of Banská Bystrica. Since 2008 these have been supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the projects APVV-0026-07 *The Profession of Pre-primary Education Teacher and Primary Education Teacher within Dynamic Concept* (Cabanová, 2009) and VEGA 1/0593/08 *The Teaching Profession in the Elementary Education – Professiography and Professiogram*.

Theoretical Context: Research on Teachers from the Perspective of Research Topics and Problems

In general, the topics of pedeutological research can be divided from the perspective of individual scientific fields into the *pedeutological, psychological and sociological*. This division is sorted thematically according to the focus of research. The problem within pedeutological research lies in the very fact that it mostly involves pedagogues or teachers working in academe, where, after all, the methodological substance of research is conceived in a somewhat unilateral way. However, perspectives derived from psychological and methodological positions bring enhancing findings, even though their analytical results are less applicable for the pedeutological practice of teacher training as they offer rather stimuli than suggestions. From the point of view of a sociological treatment, we tend to receive descriptive probes of the existing professional status as seen from various angles, a few prognostic ones, while demographic perspective studies are missing entirely. The thematic summary is not a detailed balance but more of an outline, in which can be found reference to the sources of the particular studies: Hanesová, 2009; Cabanová in Kasáčová & Tabačáková, 2010).

The *pedagogical* research on teachers in the context of Slovakia in the last twenty years can be shown in a brief outline that gives thematic points of focus as follows:

- *The motivation for studying teaching and the performance of the teaching profession*. In essence, this topic contains two different problems – as usual the choice of studies is different where significant differences occur between teacher categories and the question of whether students want to study because they wish to engage in the teaching profession or merely want to study a certain field of expertise and teaching studies offer a more convenient way than studying a specific academic discipline. (Kariková, 2005ab; Lukášová, 2006, etc.)

- *Students' expectations of the studies and the educational needs of a student teacher.* From today's perspective, it is possible to follow this aim more as a part of the evaluation of the study programmes for the purpose of surveying students' satisfaction with their studies; it can also take the form of ascertaining a student's progress in the formation of the image the profession evokes. (Lukášová-Kantorková, 2003, Seberová, 2004, etc.)
- *Teachers' opinions on teaching, students and other phenomena connected with the performance of the teaching profession are frequent topics, yet they are not processed in self-contained form.* In connection with pedeutology, it is not possible to classify all of these here. These mostly include didactic and socio-educational problems and other sub-topics. (Doušková, 2006)
- *Working methods and forms applied by teachers (during the presentation of teaching content, assessing the student etc.) have become more attractive mainly through the advent of alternative and innovative pedagogical approaches to education and teaching.* In general, we can say that conceptually solid approaches are missing, not least in relation to professional activities. (Kosová & Pupala, 2004; Doušková, 2006)
- *Competences and pedagogical capabilities of teachers/students* have become a particular focus of interest since the 1990's as a reaction to the rising, "trendy" topic of *competence*. Today they are mostly connected with the development of competence-oriented education concepts of teacher training. It is necessary to highlight the terminological inaccuracies and confusion in what the term "competence" connotes in our own and an English-speaking context. (Kasáčová, 2005; Kosová & Pupala, 2004; Kosová, 2009; Doušková & Vančíková, 2008)
- *Teacher's concept of teaching, reflection and self-reflection on the part of the teacher.* These topics originated alongside the trend of qualitative research in the humanities and social sciences; they have phenomenological substance in their theoretical foundations and correspond to psychologizing pedagogical approaches. The utilization of the research findings has rather an individual and professionalizing character. (Gavora, 2009; Kasáčová, 2005; Porubský, 2007)
- *Pedagogical communication of teachers.* This research focus, which originated in the late 1970's and early 1980's, has found a very pragmatic application in teacher training; this example clearly shows how research results can serve for the development of a science as well as the preparation of new specialists for its practice. (Gavora, 2007)
- *Professiographic research on teachers* has appeared repeatedly in an international context since the 1960's; although it is inspiring in many ways, its problem lies in the fact that across the teacher categories according to level of school education, these findings differ to such a degree that it is impossible to draw general conclusions from the results; on the contrary, this diversity should be utilized for each specific teacher category. (Seebauer, 1997; Blížkovský, Kučerová, & Kurelová, 2000; Urbánek, 2005; Fülöpová, 1999)

- *Educational needs and teachers, society and school management expectations of continuing education* and the education needs of “in-service teachers”. Mainly in connection with international documentation concerning further and life-long or continuing education, these are becoming a traditional part of life-long learning activities, as they offer a more descriptive, rather than causal or correlative form. (Pavlov & Valica, 2006)

Psychological Research on Teachers. We can briefly say that while the pedagogical orientation of the research on teachers concerns rather the phenomenal, behavioural and pragmatic sides of the profession, from the psychological point of view, we examine problems that struggle to systematize the issue or examine personal aspects specific to the personality of a teacher, whether *ex post* (thus concerning those entering the profession) or *pro future* (concerning what the phenomena cause or what effect is to be expected). Here we need to point out that psychological notions, phenomena or features are examined by non-psychologists, very often by means other than psychological research (diagnostic tools). From a multifarious range we can quote the most frequent ones: typology of teachers and a teacher’s personal characteristics, professional contentment, creativity, critical thinking, stress and endangering factors (burnout, mobbing, bossing, etc.), feminization – problem or standard, attitudes towards various personal and professional phenomena, socio-psychological phenomena and a teacher’s relationships, such as professional satisfaction, a teacher’s status as a person, profession etc.

Sociological Research on the Teaching Profession Group. Typically, the subjects of sociological research are large research groups: in this case groups of professions. The results of sociological probes and the findings even of extensive international studies, such as those of the OECD, are becoming the basis or rather tool for comparison in other research aims. They also become the source (often interpreted in a very unfortunate way) of education policy, for the evaluation of education results, and for the formulating of performance standards. An example of these quite unfortunate interpretations can be given by international comparisons which work with phenomena stripped of any other context (national, culture-specific etc.). These comparisons then become the basis for the constructing of international standards or reforms without a pedagogical and historical context that is subject to adequate examination (e.g., the transformation of teacher training into two levels of study – Bachelor’s and Master’s – without the aim of retaining the national particularity of the non-segmented training of teachers at Master’s level that has a tradition of more than 50 years in our country).

- *Demographic research on teachers* observes full-area occurring phenomena concerning teachers as a profession group in relation to the population and its demographic characteristics: residence, education structure of the population, number of families, age, schooling, family-member traditions, the number of representatives of the teaching profession against other quantitative indicators etc. (Education at a Glance, 2005)
- *Professiographic research* studies the structure of work activities for the purposes of human resources management, acting as an applied discipline for the determining of work performance and work content. However, without an analytic pedagogical examination they have merely the character of insufficiently specified sample of a day or week, which lacks such associations like the nature of the profession, the transferring to the teacher's professional training of the needs of a changing social situation and problematic phenomena in society. (*How much time...*, 2008; Hilsum & Cane, 1971; Landert, 2006; McDaniel-Hine & Willower, 1988)
- *The working conditions of teachers* are these days considered the "Cinderella" of research aims. The teacher is expected simply to adapt to the environment of the school and to act as a participant in change, implementing the slogans and messages of reforms and transformations. Yet there is no real research on the school environment, from either the technical or material point of view, nor in the social and professional sphere. The fact remains, though, that apart from the accent on technologies, in terms of working conditions the schools show no change; this applies to the education process, working aids, division of labour, collegial cooperation and professional support. From this perspective, the teaching profession remains in the same state as it was during the initial formation process at the end of the 1960's, prior to the entry of de-professionalization, or at the end of professional autonomy development. (Walterová, 2002)
- *The Social Status of the Teaching Profession*. Profession scales are a very popular theme in arguments concerning the underestimation of the teaching profession (pay, social acknowledgement, leave). At the same time they are also applied to the proving and supporting by argument of how necessary the moral and economic renaissance of the profession is. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the teaching profession is highly regarded as an occupation that makes a social contribution, although seen from the perspective of financial rewards its real value is at the very opposite end of the scale. Another perspective is even more interesting: at the higher level, the teaching profession is held in higher regard by other professional groups than by the teachers themselves – i.e. they view themselves as being in a position worse than that perceived by members of other professions. This is quite an alarming fact in terms of the forming of a profession's identity, which we would like to build up and develop with the teachers through relatively thorough knowledge gained by the study of the above-mentioned research. (Hargreaves et al., 2007; Kariková, 2004)

The point of intersection between the sciences of pedagogy, psychology and sociology lies in the knowledge of, innovation in and development of the profession. Analysis of the specific *professional activities of a teacher* is the subject of a *professiography* of the teaching profession, which shows at what time and under what load the teacher performs which activities and what the level of their expertise is. There is a significant difference between the activities teachers perform, and they depend on various factors, such as type and level of the school, specific characteristics of the teachers who teach individual subjects, the time of the day, week or school year.

The outcome of this research process with pragmatic utilizability is a teacher *professiogram*, in our case of a primary education teacher. A *professiogram* is defined in literature as a synthesis of the basic pieces of knowledge on the work and a summary of all its key characteristics (Kohoutek, 2002). A *professiogram* includes two relatively independent components:

An analysis and a description of the actual profession is a written report rendering a profile of the job. It describes the classification of the job in the organizational structure (superordinate and subordinate position of the job), the purpose of the job, the key, specific and basic objectives, responsibility and power, the means of work and tools used, performance standards, working conditions (e.g., working routine, working hours, workplace, working environment etc.).

Specification of the requirements put on the job holder is a written report providing a profile of the person having the competence (professional, social and emotional) to perform the job in question. It is actually a profile of a person's capabilities and qualities. It includes: qualification and education, specific abilities, practical experience, physical and mental competence for the job, dispositions, interests etc. When processing this product we have to keep in mind that it should define the requirements placed on the person; in no case should it describe an ideal employee. That is why it is suitable to define requirements as essential (standard) and preferred.

When preparing a specific type of *professiogram* it is necessary to distinguish between the purpose and the level of *professiographic* analysis. *Professiograms* designed for professional information and professional orientation are called *classification professiograms* and the *professiograms* used as a basis for further detailed study within one profession are called *analytical professiograms*. *Professiographic* research with an analytical approach uses methods of induction focused on reflection of professional activities during as well as outside the teacher's working hours (Kohoutek, 2002).

Professiographic Research from the 1970's to the 1990's

Although *professiography* is a new topic, older literature, too, deals with the topic of teacher activities.

In the 1970's the area of research on professional activities in general was in the Slovak context covered by several authors including Baláž (1973), Špendla (1974),

Januška (1979), who tried to summarize the requirements placed on the teacher's personality and the distinctive features of the teaching profession. Špendla (1974) listed them in a well-ordered *professiogram* (p. 27–30) in the publication "Teacher and the Teaching Profession". In the outline of his *professiogram* (a product of its time) we find items like "scientific ideology, expert preparedness for Marxism-Leninism" etc. Baláž (1973, p. 124–125) used the term "focusing the teacher's activity" to describe professional activities. Despite the ideological background, this research (Baláž carried it out in 1971/72) acts as a valuable source of learning for the profession within a historical context and for the observing of changes in profession development. Januška (1979) developed a *professiogram* of the teaching profession, drawing on research in the defining of six basic levels which in his opinion were necessary for successful performance of the teaching profession: physical preconditions, personal qualities, relationships teacher–learner, teacher's didactic abilities, social-political level, professional consciousness.

Professiographic Research after the 1990's in the Context of Eastern Europe

After 1989 the development of modern *professiography* for the teaching profession gained a lot of support. Seebauer (1997) published an empirical study exploring the aim of recording daily work in a school class (work methods, temporal aspect) and the specific workload of teachers in selected areas of Austria. In the Czech Republic, Kurelová (1998a) and Vašutová (2007) performed this kind of research and Blížkovský, Kučerová and Kurelová, a Czech-Slovak-Polish collective of authors, published (2000) *Středoevropský učitel na prahu učící se společnosti 21. století (The Teacher in Central Europe: On the Verge of Studying 21st Century Society)*, which analyzed specific professional activities and working conditions among teachers at the 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels of school; this was the most important international research performed to date in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. A *pedeutological comparative professiography* as a primary research method was complemented by special questionnaires and examination by international experts. 1,100 voluntary teachers participated in the research and the research team processed 3,300 records of teachers' routine working days in three countries. The research provided authentic insight into the contemporary teaching profession, and at its end seven prospective reform strategies were specified. In Slovakia, Fülöpová (1999) was the first to attempt to produce a *professiography* of a teacher; the results were published as *Professional Activities of a Teacher in Slovakia*. This effort has proved inspirational as a research tool, and we have modified it in our pre-research examination and particularized it for use in research on the primary education teacher.

Theoreticians of *professiographic methodology* techniques indicate several factors which need to be considered during *professiographic* research. According

to Prášilová (2007) there are risks connected with the degrading of the validity of research findings and the discrediting of the reliability of the research methodology and the research tool:

- The school, the institution and environment for professional performance, finds itself involved in a dynamic process which is subject to constant change. That is why we need to regard the results of the professiographic examination only as one of many sources reflecting real teachers' activities.
- A teacher's performance depends on the length of his/her school experience. An individual's work performance improves in line with the length of his/her school experience. This does not mean that a lower time coefficient of performance affects the performance itself. On the other hand, a professional's lapsing into routine is accompanied by a lowering of the time coefficient; many activities dwindle, especially those not "directly indispensable". This can, and often does degrade professional fitness; there may, for example, be a decrease in or even the full absence of self-study, knowledge development, widening of one's professional horizons, etc.
- Professiographic measurement in a way reflects the specific environment in which teachers work (school culture, type, location etc.). This needs to be taken into account during the generalization of outcomes and differentiation of the typical vs. specific professiograms.
- The course of the school year, variability of the individual teaching professions (primary school teaching, secondary school teaching, etc., but mainly differences within the scope of the jobs of primary and secondary teachers). There is no doubt that the individual categories deserve independent examination, because teachers' activities show diametric differences depending on students' age and teaching subjects.
- Differences between teachers can also occur, perhaps depending on the scope of their workload, which is legally defined by the labour standards; in real school practice varies due to many factors: unexpected activities, current events in the classroom, substitution etc.

Problems of researching the reality of professional performance were depicted by Průcha (2002) in his chapter *Teachers' work field: education and the related activities*. He draws attention to problems arising during utilization of professiographic methods and the creation of professiograms, since there are significant individual differences in the workload of individuals as well as differences between the individual teacher categories. What is more, research based on autoscreening creates another risk in the form of subjective perception of time and demands. The Swiss pedagogue Landert (1999), who performed professiographic research in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, also provides a very interesting analysis. He used the methods of autodescription (autoscreening) of teachers and a control interview held with teachers. For his research a representative sample of his country was prepared. From this sample he selected a sub-set of teachers who were willing to cooperate and meet the given requirements.

The procedure of activity autodescription went as follows: in two succeeding weeks the teachers filled out a form. The form kept a record of the activity time demands according to seven categories. Individual teachers recorded the time of their activities across different weeks, so that the whole school year was covered.

An inspection through an interview showed that only 20% of the teachers proved the concordance between the activities recorded by autodescription and the statements. In this, as much as 37% of teachers recorded a higher time load than actually measured, while up to 43% of teachers in fact worked more hours than stated in their records.

The experience gained from the research described above provides impulses for our research examinations. The effort to perform a valid mapping of professional activities in real fieldwork requires the usage of more methods, not only for purposes of validity checking, but also to capture various points of view on the problem. It is important to objectify the subjective records of the persons taking part in the examination. Using an external observer is not the only nor the ideal method, as the natural environment and activities lose their spontaneous character and we face the question of whether we are recording reality or an exhibition.

Inspirations and Tasks for Research on the Profession of Primary Education Teachers

From the above it is more than obvious the topic is very inspirational, that it offers problems that experts engage with very intensively. Through the APVV-0026-07 project titled *The Profession of the Pre-primary Education Teacher and Primary Education Teacher within a Dynamic Concept* we try to enrich this topic with new knowledge. To recapitulate: What is the research on teachers lacking? From the perspective of the topic Research on Teachers – the need for interdisciplinary topics on teachers, so-called big topics and the merging of large interdisciplinary research teams.

If the object of pedeutological research is the teacher and the teacher's pedagogic deeds, personality, attitudes, opinions, expectations, social status and acceptance by the social milieu, students, parents, as well as by the expert public, the question is: *Where is the "blank spot" on the explorer's map?*

We have identified several subject areas, although a generally accepted impression suggests that everybody actually knows the teaching profession very well. However, do we really know what the work and activities of the children's teacher include when we speak of a teacher that guided the way of every one of us during the early years of our education? Seemingly useless questions – after all, these are the very professions we prepare and apply study programmes for, and we change and update them relatively often (up to 4 times in the last 15 years), we write for them and about them numerous studies and books. All of us who deal with these professions want with the best intentions and conscience to add to their training the aspects we consider the most useful, up-to-date and relevant. At the same time we would like to keep

the traditional nature of this profession, which apart from the function of mediating knowledge and developing children's personalities has the character of a cultural intermediary. The question might also read thus: Why do changes in teacher training programmes occur so frequently? Is it because someone dictates them? Someone who knows the situation so well that he/she tells us to make the changes together with the steps we should take? Is it because the existing programmes are so bad? Who reached this conclusion and what did he/she research? There may be even more questions, yet we need to point out what is essential, that there are many reasons for one's actions, but what currently is not mapped at all, is the reality of the profession, the reality of teachers' work. During the formulation of the research aim we asked ourselves: what is the nature of the job we prepare our students for, what does this job include? Many are quite sure about this, yet when we ask very specifically, even the teachers themselves have their doubts: Indeed, what is it that I do the whole day at school? Well, I teach... but what are the activities? In embarrassment they tend to enumerate the working operations; like laymen they name the work they do every day for children and society. It is these very opacities that led us to put together this research focused on the least empirically examined areas of professiographic research:

- The professions of early education teachers
- Recording particular professional activities in reality
- Categorization of activities: standard and non-standard

Based on the findings, the objective of this research is to compose a professiogram for these teacher categories.

Research on the Primary Education Teacher – Aim and Findings

The aim of the research presented was the finding and time/functional analysis of professional activities. The process of finding was performed through identification by the participants within the process of educational practice – through the procedure of the professiography of primary education teachers. The primary research issue was specified using the following questions:

1. How do the primary education teachers identify the professional activities within the real conditions of teaching service? (partial research results: Tabačáková, 2009)
2. What is the structure of primary education teachers' professional activities within the real conditions of teaching service in relation to professional standards?
3. What is the primary education teachers' real performance at work within the real conditions of teaching service?

In our research we monitored praxeological substance and meaning to create a draft of an analytical professiogram for the position of primary education

teacher. The structure of the professionogram presented is based on the concept of specific professional activities of the primary education teacher in relation to the professional standards which are already legally established in the real practice.

Research objectives

The primary objective of the research was *to identify the specific professional activities of primary education teachers within the real conditions of teaching practice, to record and discover their structure, and to determine the ratio of particular activities in relation to the full professional performance.*

Here we present a summary of partial findings reflecting only the overall structure of professional activities, load according to length of school experience and weekly profile. (For complete findings, see Kasáčová & Tabačáková, 2010; research report VEGA 1/0953/08).

Reflecting the research objective, we applied a complex research strategy combining quantitative and qualitative processes during the analysis of phenomena. We further specified the primary objective in several partial objectives, which were divided into areas according to the character of data interpretation:

Partial objectives

1. The professional activity profile of primary education teachers is
 - to illustrate the structure of activities and their average duration in relation to week, working week, working day etc., and to determine what the professional activity profile of the primary education teachers is like during the working day;
 - to determine how the professional activity profile of the primary education teachers varies during the working day, depending on the seasonal period of research being monitored;
 - to determine what the professional activity profile of the primary education teachers is like during the working week (Monday to Friday);
 - to determine how the professional activity profile of the primary education teachers varies during the working week, depending on the season period of research being monitored;
 - to determine what the professional activity profile is like during days off (Saturday and Sunday);
 - to determine the profile of professional activities performed after 4.00 pm;
 - to determine how the profiles of all examined categories vary for all the primary education teachers' professional activities depending on the length of the proband's school experience.
2. The time load of primary education teachers:
 - to determine how the time load of primary education teachers varies depending on the research stage being monitored;

- to determine how the time load of primary education teachers varies depending on the particular working day;
 - to determine how the time load of primary education teachers varies depending on the length of their school experience;
3. Qualitative description and analysis of professional activities from the selected categories:
- to determine which activities are regarded by the primary education teachers as extracurricular professional activities connected with the profession;
 - to determine which activities are performed by the primary education teachers beyond the framework of the activity structure provided by the profессиography sheet and which the teachers include in the "other professional activities" category;
 - to determine which one-off activities the primary education teachers perform from March till October (untypical activities - not present in common daily practice).

The main phase of the research was carried out in 2009 in two stages. *During the spring stage* we captured 14 days in the months of May and June; *during the autumn stage* we captured 14 working days as well as days off work. The research set included in-service primary education teachers, who in terms of the issue under research are considered to be insiders. An insider can be defined as a person who is highly cognizant of the issue and knows the ropes of the research area as well as the reality that is the actual subject of the research.

The Strategy of proband recruitment and administration of research tools

The information required from each of the probands was so complex and extensive in terms of the keeping of a daily record that the process of recruiting teachers was very demanding for both them and the research team. For this task we were able to cumulate two grants awarded by the APVV and VEGA agencies within two concurrent projects. We used an "avalanche" system for recruiting the co-operation of the probands (Wright, 2008) within the PAR procedure. The first level of co-operators included members of the VEGA 1/0593/08 and APVV-0026-07 project research teams. Both projects involved the formal education activity *Training of teachers with the role of a researcher*, which focused on training the second level of co-operators-teachers-researchers, giving us a very solid advantage during fieldwork. Apart from the research-methodological knowledge and skills, these participants acquired the instructions, guidelines and competences to lead other probands during the research – the third level. The objective for course participants in the initial stages of research was to find co-operators. They also received instructions on how to use the research tools and provided contact and means of communication with the research team. They submitted the completed research tools and handled the distribution of the next tools.

The first and second phase included 124 primary school teachers. A proband completed 14 professionography sheets during each phase, covering 14 recorded days in the life of each teacher during which he/she performed professional activities. The days and weeks recorded thus build the set of the research for examination, comprising a total of 2,520 days, where 1,800 days (71.43%) applies to working days and 384 days (28.57%) to the weekend.

Table 1

Profile of the set of the analyzed captured day images for examination

Number of examined day images	working days		weekend		Total	
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%
Spring stage	960	71.43	384	28.57	1344	100
Autumn stage	840	71.43	336	28.57	1176	100
Total	1800	71.43	720	28.57	2520	100

Research sample profile

At the time of the collection of research data, all probands had a master's academic degree in the relevant discipline. The research sample consisting of 124 probands included one female headmaster, four female deputy heads, 115 female primary teachers and 4 male primary teachers. These data might lead to distortion of the data acquired, albeit only marginally, when one takes into account that these non-standard members of the profession comprise only 4.3%. The low proportion of male respondents did not allow us to perform an inter-gender examination. The probands' average age was 40.38 years, with ages ranging from 24 to 56 years. The average length of our probands' school experience was 17.71 years.

Before proceeding to the interpretation of the research findings, it is necessary to describe the data analysis process and the approach to the statistical processing of data. The research strategy of our professionographic research features several particularities:

- The method of data processing influenced the selection of a method of data collection using the autorecording of work activities. In this process the primary education teachers kept a record of all the activities performed during their working hours as well as those performed away from the workplace. This means that the teachers recorded all their activities, including those beyond standard duty but whose performance is governed by labour rules that apply to employees in the teaching profession.
- Taking into account theoretical knowledge, research findings and empirical experience, and the fact that the work performance of any worker can vary depending on the season, we carried out the research in two phases (spring and autumn) in order to guarantee the higher objectivity of the data acquired.

- Although we are fully aware that the time spent by teachers on professional activities can vary depending on the school grade the teacher works in during the year, these features were not monitored and the findings are interpreted from a global perspective.

The research instrument was very specific in its structuring (see Babiaková & Tabačáková, 2009). In four of the categories, the teachers were given pre-formulated professional activities with the instruction to fill in the number of minutes in a one-hour interval, which was delimited from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm and from 4.00 pm till the late evening hours. These categories did not allow the possibility of filling in any other activity which the teachers might think should be recorded. They did not have the option of a corresponding category despite the fact that they performed the activity during the monitored day. We realized that the respondents might be missing this option and that is why they were provided with the (non-structured) F category "Other activities", where they could freely write in an activity they considered worth registering. These activities then underwent analysis and categorization. The method of classification and categorization was applied also to the (non-structured) E category "extracurricular and public activities connected with the profession".

Since the task of the research insiders was to estimate and record in the most objective way the number of minutes spent on the professional activities during the day, all numerical data presented represent estimated average times for particular categories (working day, working week, Saturday, Sunday etc.) calculated based on the sum of minutes for all probands in the spring and autumn phases of research and then rounded into whole numbers.

With the first questions, which had the nature of a basic survey for the acquiring of descriptive data, we worked with open presumptions. As regards the research question concerning the average weekly time of the primary education teacher's professional activities, we formulated a presumption: The time primary education teachers spend on all professional activities during their working hours within the working week will correspond (+/-5 hours) to the usual weekly working hours of an employee in the teaching profession (37.5 hours). Apart from the fact that the weekly amount of working hours is defined by the applicable law, the time teachers spend on professional activities is regulated individually by each school institution. This regulation is performed by the labour rules of the school's teaching employees and by the central collective labour agreement. The terms of the agreement can then be modified again specifically for a particular school facility. This also determined the selected time range of data collection, which meant recording the whole week (Monday to Sunday), where the daily duration was set by the interval from 7:00 am until late evening. The time after 4.00 pm was not precisely specified by hours. This time range allowed us to process the findings from several perspectives. Table 2 includes the average times processed for the categories of the week and working week of primary education teachers from two aspects; namely when counting in times from the whole day and subsequently when including times in the interval

from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm. When assessing these categories we allowed for two more approaches. The first approach includes the number of minutes calculated from the average times of all the activities recorded in the professiography sheet; in the other approach we processed only the times for activities a1–a25. The reason for the use of this system was the already combined character of the research tool, specifically its structural form, which meant that the numbers of minutes the probands stated during the activities in the non-structured categories E and F could be perceived by the teachers from a different angle (concentration on one activity etc.). At the same time we must explain that the activities within these categories were not considered to be a part of work performance, and in this light the category was calculated according to the purpose of data processing.

Table 2

The average weekly working hours of a primary education teacher

	a1–aF (min. / week)	hr. / week	a1–a25 (min. / week)	hr. / week
week (Mon–Sun)	2614	43.56	2375	39.58
working week (Mon–Fri)	2354	39.24	2164	36.06
week (Mon–Sun), 7:00 am – 4:00 pm	2063	34.38	1895	31.59
working week (Mon–Fri), 7:00 am – 4:00 pm	1957	32.61	1815	30.25

Table 3
Average times of a primary education teacher's professional activities during the working week

Professional activities	whole week (min.)	%	working week 7:00 am – 4:00 pm (min.)	%	difference: performance outside working hours (min.)	%
a1 projecting and planning instruction	184	100	100	54.26	84	45.74
a2 Checking if a pupil is prepared for instruction	96	100	96	100	0	0
a3 activities inducing pupil activity and motivation	127	100	127	100	0	0
a4 presenting and explaining new teaching content	128	100	128	100	0	0
a5 managing and coordinating learning activities of pupils	317	100	317	100	0	0
a6 testing learning results	114	100	114	100	0	0
a7 assessing in contact with pupils	101	100	101	100	0	0
a8 preparing and implementing the IEP (Individual Education Program) for pupils with SEN	42	100	38	91.09	4	8.91
a9 inducing and addressing educational situations	78	100	77	98.18	1	1.82
a10 correcting and evaluating pupils' work	109	100	80	73.43	29	26.57
a11 creating teaching materials, aids etc.	96	100	51	52.62	46	47.38
a12 activities connected with diagnosing pupils	40	100	36	92.01	3	7.99
a13 meeting and cooperating with parents	44	100	37	85.06	7	14.94
a14 keeping pedagogical documentation	72	100	67	92.22	6	7.78
a15 Consultation on pupils with teachers and other experts	52	100	50	96.13	2	3.87
a16 consultation sessions and meetings at school	48	100	46	95.81	2	4.19
a17 supervision in the classroom, corridor, school lunchroom	171	100	169	99.16	2	0.84
a18 working on methodological, consultative and school bodies	15	100	13	87.41	2	12.59
a19 library management	8	100	7	91.88	1	8.12
a20 school club management	58	100	53	90.56	6	9.44
a21 keeping the school chronicle, album etc.	6	100	3	55.5	3	44.5
a22 teachers' room/teaching room management	20	100	19	96.78	1	3.22
a23 participation in education	109	100	58	53.04	51	46.96
a24 self-study	126	100	26	20.93	100	79.07
a25 teaching other colleagues	2	100	1	61.8	1	38.2
aE extracurricular and public activities connected with the profession	66	100	45	68.24	21	31.76
aF other activities	125	100	97	77.5	28	22.5
TOTAL (min.) a1–a25	2164	100	1815	83.88	349	16.12
TOTAL (hr.) a1–a25	36.06	100	30.25	83.88	5.81	16.12
TOTAL (min.) a1–aF	2354	100	1957	83.12	398	16.88
TOTAL (hr.) a1–aF	39.24	100	32.61	83.12	6.63	16.88

The average time spent by the primary education teachers on all professional activities during the week (working days and days off) is approx. 2614 minutes, i.e. 43 hours and 34 minutes. When compared to the research of Fülöpová (1999), in which the average time spent by the Slovak teachers (1st, 2nd and 3rd level) on all professional activities during the whole week (Monday to Sunday) was 2508 min, i.e. 41 hrs. and 48 min, this is 1 hour and 46 minutes more. This difference can be influenced by several factors. In our case these include the focus solely on primary education teachers, the very detailed structure of our research tool, and the types of professional activities that were counted into total time, because in the above-mentioned research by Fülöpová (1999) the average weekly time included the time teachers spent on commuting to and from school. We rejected this type of activity at the very beginning, since we do not regard it as a professional activity of a teacher.

We tried to find out how much the official working hours teachers fill with professional activities are dependent on the length of their school experience. There are statistically significant differences between these times, with respondents divided by the criterion of length of school experience. We formulated the following hypothesis:

We presume there is a statistically significant difference within the time load of primary education teachers during the working week depending on the length of their school experience.

We presume that the group with the highest time load will comprise teachers with more than 30 years of school experience.

In this case we included only working hours from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm for all the professional activities a1–aF and then solely for the activities a1–a25.

To monitor the teacher's professional activities exclusively during the time from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm would not be objective and complete. Some of the standard professional activities necessary for the teaching profession are special in terms of the time they demand outside given working hours (e.g., projecting and planning instruction (a1), correcting and evaluating pupils' work (a10), production of didactic materials (a11), teacher's self-study (a24) etc.). Table 3 includes the average times for professional activities within the working week from two aspects, and these are presented in terms of their relative as well as their absolute frequency. At the same time it provides a calculation to show the difference in the time teachers spend on professional activities after 4:00 pm and later. The percentage shows the time division for particular professional activities within working hours, as well as in time off. The time differences between the particular professional activities were not tested statistically from the perspective of seasonality. As shown below, a significant portion includes time spent on these activities during weekends. However, when breaking down the activities into an average we came across a statistical error that averaged work performance using the two extra (non-working) days. That is why the work performance on Saturday and Sunday of selected activities, whose frequency was worth monitoring, was interpreted separately.

Professional activities a2–a7 are directly connected with the teaching process, and logically did not apply in the time spent away from the workplace. The teachers spend most time during the working week on managing and coordinating the learning activities of pupils. The second most frequent activity mentioned by the teachers is supervision; during the working week this comprises 3 hours on average. The probands reported almost the same number of minutes spent on activities focused on pupil activity and motivation and explanation of curriculum. Similar times are recorded for activities a6 and a7 focused on testing pupils' knowledge and their evaluation, while the time indicated shows that almost the same effort as put into explaining new curriculum details was put into testing pupils' knowledge and their evaluation. A substantial proportion of working hours within a week is saturated with activities focused on projecting, planning and preparation for the instruction process. Here we see considerable differences between performance during working hours and performance during time off the work. Time off involves activities like projecting and planning instruction, correcting and evaluating pupils' work, creating teaching materials, aids and visual demonstrations, working on methodological, consultative and other school bodies, keeping the school chronicle, album etc., participation in education, self-study and education of other persons.

The work of a primary education teacher also includes activities a8 focused on preparing and implementing of the IEP – Individual Education Program – for pupils with special educational needs. This, however, is not a standard activity performed by each teacher (50.2% of teachers reported this activity in our research sample), and for that reason the reported number of minutes lacks explicitness when looked at through the average values. The average time spent on this activity solely by these teachers comprises c. 83 minutes a week, while from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm it is approx. 76 minutes. This is also related to the diagnosing of learners, on which 75% of teachers spend 53 minutes during their working hours. The time required of a teacher for the identifying of a pupil's evolutionary and individual characteristics and the psychological and social factors of his/her learning, and not least the occurrence of this with some teachers only, is very surprising. Other activities related to education (a13, a14, a15, a16) and their duration reflect the reality within a school. We find it very interesting that although teachers constantly report high workload in terms of administrative tasks, the records showed only about 70 minutes a week spent on these, which is definitely necessary for the keeping of standard teaching-related documentation. This works out at around 14 minutes a day, which is not unusual, and suggests that such tasks are unpopular from a subjective point of view.

Professional activities related to other teacher functions a18, a19, a21 (working on methodological, consultative and other school bodies, library and school club management) are specific and individual, thus making the reported values, acquired as average of times from all probands, merely statistics and from a logical perspective a nonsense. At the same time, we are not able to observe their regularity, as the teachers generally do not perform these every week. So in this

case it is better to consider using the ratio of the probands who recorded these activities. During the spring research phase the occurrence of the activity „working on methodological, consultative and other school bodies“ was recorded by 32% of probands, while during the autumn phase it was only 26%. For this activity, they reported an average time of 50 minutes during the working week (even when including times after 4:00 pm). Library management during the spring phase was performed by only 12% of the probands (during the autumn phase it rose to 18%), whereby their average for this activity on working days equalled 48 minutes a week. Records in school or classroom books during the spring phase were kept by 16% of the teachers (in the autumn phase this went down to 13%), i.e. 41 minutes a week. Teacher’s room/teaching room management is an activity not directly connected with performance of the teaching process. The teachers spent around 20 minutes a week on this activity. Another activity that demands a teacher’s time during the working week is school hobby club management. The probands spend almost an hour on it, which in our opinion is an optimal value necessary for preparing and carrying out this activity.

Table 4

The average performance of professional activities during working hours in relation to the length of the teachers’ school experience

Length of school experience – interval	< 10 N=30	SD	[10, 20) N=70	SD	[20, 30) N=50	SD	≥ 30 N=22	SD	test (P)
Working week a1–aF (7:00 am – 4:00 pm) (min.)	1810	717.5	2141	1123	1957	795.9	2144	920.6	0.64209
hrs. / week	30.2		35.7		32.6		35.7		
Working week a1–a25 (7:00 am – 4:00 pm) (min.)	1633	668.3	1972	1145	1780	740.4	1960	874.3	0.59052
hrs. / week	27.2		32.9		29.7		32.7		

SD = standard deviation

The professional activities a23–a25 were introduced in order to record the time teachers spend on their education and self-education. The primary education teachers spent in the whole week an average of 109 minutes participating in education. This output includes 48% of teachers during the spring phase and only

40% of teachers during the autumn phase. If we are to calculate the mean value solely for the data provided by these probands, we come to the conclusion that the teachers spend 247 minutes a week on educating themselves (c. 4 hrs. for the entire week, divided by half into working hours and time off work). The teachers spend in the whole week approx. 126 minutes on self-study (2 hours, mainly outside their working hours). The education of colleagues is a special activity which during the spring phase was performed by 7% of the teachers and in the autumn phase by 11% of the teachers, resulting in very low average values. This is not a standard activity for most teachers. In reality those who educate colleagues reported performing this activity for c. 20 minutes a week, divided by half into working hours and time off work. The profile of the professional activities of primary education teachers is complemented by extracurricular and public activities, which will be interpreted in detail within the monograph. (Kasáčová & Tabačáková, 2010)

The teachers with the highest time load during the working week are those with 10–20 years of school experience and senior teachers who have been teaching for more than 30 years. As the findings do not prove unambiguously that the highest time load is recorded by teachers with more than 30 years' school experience, we cannot accept the hypothesis H_{9b} . Younger teachers with not more than 10 years' school experience face the lowest time load. This finding corresponds with the results of research performed by Urbánek (1999), who also worked with the length of monitored respondents' school experience and discovered that teachers with 5 years' experience or less reported the lowest time load, while the most experienced teachers (with more than 31 years' experience) reported the highest time load. When comparing the youngest teachers with the oldest, there is a difference of more than 5 hours in working time. Such a time layering might be influenced by the probands' private lives – which are a topic for a socio-psychological study. We can only make the assumption that the young people are starting families and thus spending less time on their work. However, the reason for this might also be the fact that the data acquired was calculated based on the teachers' subjective assessments. This could have led to overestimation of the time of performance, as Landert (2006) points out.

We measured the average time spent by the probands on professional activities within one working day, taking into account the above criteria.

Table 5

The average duration of the working day of a primary education teacher

Activities performed during monitored time	a1–aF		a1–a25	
	(mins. / week)	hrs. / week	(mins. / week)	hrs. / week
working day till evening – hour unspecified	471	7.85	433	7.21
working day – working time (7:00 am – 4:00 pm)	391	6.52	363	6.05

We can assume that the working time of the research probands in one day is on average 391 minutes, which equals 6 hours and 31 minutes that are spent on performing all the monitored professional activities. In terms of the legal definition of the working time per one day (7.5 hours) this is approx. one hour less. However, this capacity fills the workday without a time limitation (7 hr. 51 min.), and thus we can assume that the primary education teachers continue to fill working-time capacity after 4.00 pm and into the evening. In any case, we can state that the load of teachers monitored during the individual activities does not dramatically exceed the usual working-time capacity. Hence the arguments claiming that teachers are overloaded are not justified; if they are, then this burden is caused by factors other than performance, such as bad organization, psycho-hygiene etc. This again might be a topic for further research.

In spite of the different times recorded by the four groups of respondents divided by length of their school experience, the testing did not prove in any of the categories that this variable had any influence on the time spent by the respondents on performing professional activities during the working day. It is very interesting to follow the shape of performance curves throughout the working week for the particular groups of respondents. Although these differences are not statistically significant, there is a certain level of differentiation in terms of length of school experience (Figure 1).

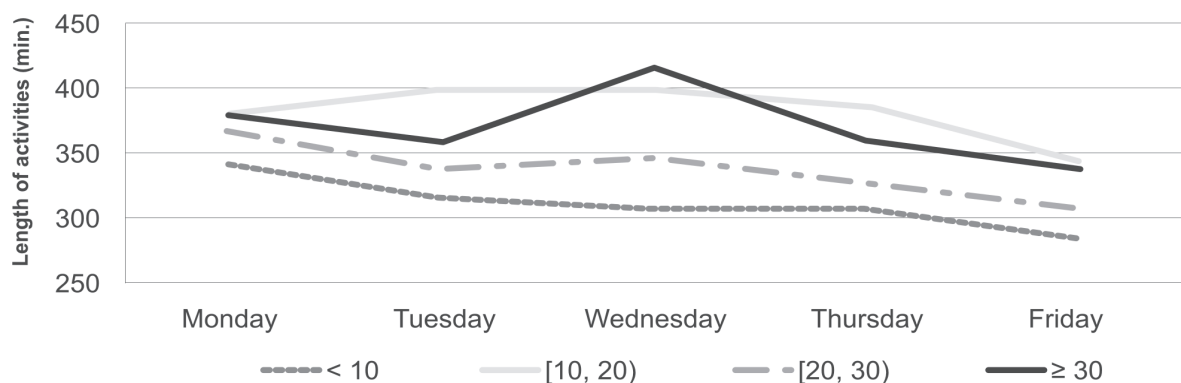


Figure 1. Performance curves within the working week and length of school experience (act. a1–a25; 7:00 am – 4:00 pm)

It seems that the teachers with the lowest time load are those with up to 10 years' school experience. Their performance curve declines evenly as the week progresses from Monday to Friday. A very similar profile of the weekly performance curve can be seen with teachers with 20–30 years' school experience, with insignificantly higher performance on Wednesday. The profile that best matches the general working week profile is the performance profile for teachers with 10–20 years' school experience, where performance is relatively the most stable of all. The most significant differences between performances during working days are seen in teachers that have been in service for more than 30 years. The day with the significantly highest time load is Wednesday, but this only applies for senior teachers.

The Significance and Objectives of Professiographic Research

In general, the main objective of professiographic research is to produce, through professiographic methods, a *professiogram* as a structure compilation of a professional's activities and the occurrence of these throughout the day/week, with the possibility of comparing seasonal differences. Therefore it is recommended that images of several days are captured at different times of the year.

The importance of a professiogram is founded in the possibilities for its utilization (supplemented as per Kurelová, 1998b, p.37).

- for human resources management – setting the content of a job description, inspections of classes and employee assessment
- for the pedagogical employee – selection for standard and specialized posts related to work positions
- for defining and completing evaluation criteria
- for managing the adaptation of novice teachers and their integration into the continual education system in connection with the evaluation criteria
- for the career development of teachers, formulation of priorities within teaching staff development and their goal-specific education
- for the modification of job tasks for specialized functions, following on from performance specifics within the conditions of a particular school and classroom
- for the area of teachers' undergraduate training – creation of study programmes and their evaluation
- for the specification of the content and objectives of teaching practice during studies and the setting of required performance capacities for students of the teaching profession during and at the end of their training for the profession
- for the formulation of professional standards at the national level and performance standardization at the level of schools
- for the monitoring, evaluation and remuneration of employees

Conclusion

In the above we present the findings of part of professiographic study that was recently carried out. We provide possible methods of application for actual practice and indicate potential drawbacks of these research types. In conclusion, we need to point out that research on the profession of teacher (in this case the primary education teacher) is closely connected with a discussion that has been held for decades about *Profession vs. Craft, Art or Mission*. While specialist literature and journalism continues to show a certain oscillation between trends of how the teaching profession is perceived by an other than strictly professional eye, professiographic research proves that it is a profession built on a requirement for clear structures for the defining of professional activities. Absence of these

boundaries would always leave the process of professionalization (Spilková, 2004; Walterová, 2002; Kosová, 2009 and others) open to doubts in its very essence: Do we know what teachers do when “teaching”? We need to answer this when constructing a concept of the profession and for training for the profession, for defining the personal qualities required of its members, and when creating the profession’s code of ethics. Professionalization in occupations, including the job of teacher, is given by the concept of the profession, requirements for qualification and training of its representatives, personal qualities and ethical requirements placed on professionals and their performance (Troman, 2007). That is why research into the profession, its standardization and converging of theoretical and practical concepts including professiographic research can help bring the process of professionalization from academic discussion a step closer to reality. Perhaps this research, as a part of professiographic research focused on in-service teachers, will place a new focus on today’s primary school teachers as experts in early education. In common with other analogical researchers who have followed this topic more closely (Urbánek, 2005; Blížkovský et al., 2000, Fülöpová, 1999), we have drawn several parallels. In their general view of professional activity profiles, the findings of these studies are consistent. However, our research offers a more thorough and plastic image of the teaching profession. It is unique in its detailed focus on the profession of the primary school teacher, which has been marginalized in existing studies.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the contract No. APVV-0026-07.

Translated by Mgr. Peter Jurčík

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