

Novice Teacher Status in the Czech Republic

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Foreword

The issue of the status and working conditions of novice teachers is an important focus area of the trade union. The average age of teachers in the Czech Republic exceeded 47 years of age. For a long time, there have been discussions regarding the generational change of teaching staff and the lack of teachers. From various surveys and available data, it can be concluded that the resignations of novice colleagues after the first two or three years of experience in the field, and their departures outside the segment of education, can be considered a critical situation. I would like to thank Gabriela Tlapová, Czech and Moravian Trade Union of Workers in Education Lawyer and Secretary for International Affairs, who responded to the offer for cooperation extended by colleagues from the LIZDA trade union inviting us to join the Development of Support System for Novice Teachers (SupportTeachers), Project No. 2021-1-LV01-KA220-SCH-000024284 within the Erasmus+ Programme KA220-SCH – Cooperative Partnership in School Education. Under her leadership, a team was formed which drafted materials we, as employee representatives, want to use to contribute to the debate on support for novice teachers and help find solutions to improve their position and situation on the labour market.

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President
Czech and Moravian Trade Union of Workers in Education

In Prague, 31st July 2022

Introduction

In the Czech educational system, about 3.7 percent of all teachers are novices, which corresponds to approximately five thousand jobs. Of these, there are only three thousand fresh graduates employed full-time, which corresponds to 2.2 percent of teachers.¹ Given the relatively high average age of teachers being 47.2 years,² and the estimated high proportion of up to 60 percent of students of pedagogical faculties who are not looking for a job in regional education,³ the Czech Republic may soon be faced with the issue of how to cover the educational system's demand for qualified teachers in the near future. In addition, according to the statement by the Government of the Czech Republic, this problem has already partially occurred at some school levels, and it is proposed to solve it unsystematically by suggesting additional exceptions for the teacher job performance without the need to meet the qualification requirements required by law. Historically, however, various, albeit short-term, exemptions for teachers have not led to satisfactory results and have not motivated unqualified teachers to complete the required education.

In this context, it is therefore necessary to address the departures of teachers from the profession. According to research, the most common phase of the teaching career when notices to leave the teaching profession are submitted is the period at the start of the profession (from two or three to five years).⁴ However, it is worrying that teachers from the youngest cohort would like to leave the profession within two years, which is more often than teachers aged 50-59. In the other countries monitored, the situation is the opposite.⁵

Not all teacher departures from schools can be assessed as a negative phenomenon. It is not a question of every teacher staying in school, but of keeping quality teachers with the potential to further develop and positively influence pupils' learning.⁶ However, it is the state's responsibility to create appropriate conditions for such tendency through a properly set legislative framework, and financial, professional, and other necessary support.

The aim of this work is to describe the current legislative framework, and the tools employers (i.e., schools) can use to support novice teachers. The work will also focus on the attitude towards, and the possible future direction of, the policy concerning novice teachers. It will also present models and foreign examples of institutes or types of support, which could be beneficial within the educational system of the Czech Republic for the support of novice teachers. To conclude, on the basis of the identified problems of the Czech educational system, recommendations for future drafts of bills will be offered.

¹ Page 35, Main outputs of the Extraordinary Survey on the Status of Education Provision Assurance by Teachers in Preschools, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Universities from 2019.

² Page 8, Main outputs of the Extraordinary Survey on the Status of Education Provision Assurance by Teachers in Preschools, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Universities from 2019.

³ Page 9, Hanušová, Světlana, Píšová, Michaela, Kohoute, Tomáš et al.: *Chtějí zůstat nebo odejít?: Začínající učitelé v českých základních školách [Do They Want to Stay or Leave? Novice Teachers in Czech Primary Schools]*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2017. Pedagogický výzkum v teorii a praxi. ISBN 978-80-210-8889-4.

⁴ Page 2, Korběl, Václav, Gargulák, Karel, Prokop, Daniel: *Rozvoj pedagogických kompetencí jako nástroj prevence odchodu z profese. Srovnávací ministudie programu učitel naživo a PAQ. [Development of Pedagogical Competencies as a Tool to Prevent Profession's Departures. Comparative Micro Study of the Live Teacher and PAQ Programmes.]*

⁵ Page 2, Ditto.

⁶ Page 14, Hanušová, Světlana, Píšová, Michaela, Kohoute, Tomáš et al.: *Chtějí zůstat nebo odejít?: Začínající učitelé v českých základních školách [Do They Want to Stay or Leave? Novice Teachers in Czech Primary Schools]*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2017. Pedagogický výzkum v teorii a praxi. ISBN 978-80-210-8889-4.

Needs of Novice Teachers in the Czech Republic

The teaching profession is a job for which teachers should be sufficiently financially reimbursed. The salary level for the teacher's work is not sufficient in comparison with other university-degree professions, predominantly in larger-size cities, where students of teaching specialisations can find better financially reimbursed jobs. This is also implicitly evident from the main results of the aforementioned survey,⁷ showing the average number of unqualified teachers in the Czech Republic at 6.6 percent, and the average in Prague and Central Bohemia at 10.4 and 12 percent, respectively, with the area of concern being the capital and its immediate vicinity with ample faculties with programmes for future teachers. The fact that the progress on the salary scale, which forms a significant part of the monthly pay, is based on the principle of seniority in the profession also supports the argument of the negative impact of novice teachers' salary level. The employer has limited options with regard to determining the salary of novice teachers.

The salary of pedagogical staff has a significant effect on the cognitive competences of those interested in the profession, primarily applicants to faculties of pedagogy, novice teachers and teachers in general.⁸ Determining an adequate salary for novice teachers could therefore lead to an increase in the quality of teaching job applicants, and, possibly, that of the teaching direction of education in general. More men could also be motivated to practice the teaching profession. There are only 4,533 male teachers, compared to 40,875 female teachers, in the lower Primary School grades.⁹ In the higher Primary School grades, there are already 10,019 male teachers, and 31,406 female teachers,¹⁰ while the Secondary School ratio shows 18,052 male and 27,309 female teachers.¹¹ The proportion of men in the teaching profession increases with the level of school within the educational system.

The salary at 130 percent of the average gross pay in the national economy is to be guaranteed through a new provision of the Education Act, which is contained in the draft amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022. However, it should be emphasised that the proposed amendment does not explicitly set forth the teachers' salary or the salary scale. It forms the basis for an increase in funds for salaries based on the forecast of the Ministry of Finance. The amendment does not provide legal individual entitlement of the employee. It is but an expression of the entitlement to a certain financial amount which is to be allocated from the state budget.

In this context, it is worth noting that the proposal contained in the Parliament Press 503 was more advantageous for employees, and therefore also for teachers. It contained a "valorisation" mechanism for the salary scale of pedagogical staff. The proposed system would also constitute a claim for a certain amount of funds from the state budget, but concurrently ensure an individual claim of a pedagogical worker be guaranteed. However, the Press was not approved, and the sitting government decided to propose another regulation, which, however, may not be as beneficial, especially for novice teachers.

⁷ Page 32, Chart 21: Main outputs of the Extraordinary Survey on the Status of Education Provision Assurance by Teachers in Preschools, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Universities from 2019.

⁸ Page 10, The Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022.

⁹ Page 6, Chart 3: Main outputs of the Extraordinary Survey on the Status of Education Provision Assurance by Teachers in Preschools, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Universities from 2019.

¹⁰ Page 6, Chart 3, Ditto.

¹¹ Page 7, Chart 5, Ditto.

The proposed amendment does not stipulate an automatic change or increase in the salary scale. It only secures funds corresponding to approximately 130 percent of the average salary per each pedagogical worker. This means the funds will be used to a greater extent to cover the statutory and non-statutory (i.e., fixed and non-fixed) components of the salary of pedagogical staff, i.e., at the discretion of the employer, provided there is no amendment and/or increase in salary scales in the implementing legislation. In general, it is not expected that novice teachers would perform work which constitutes entitlements within the scope of the statutory component of the salary. Therefore, their salary amount is unlikely to change significantly compared to the state under the current legislation. The proposal lacks an instrument for employers that would allow them to provide novice teachers with a higher salary scale tier.

Alongside salary, school support is important for novice teachers. In particular, induction and mentoring programmes may play an important role. In the Czech environment, mentors, who are mainly teachers, introduce novice teachers to the profession. Induction usually takes place within a legislatively undefined induction period. Approximately 80 percent of novice teachers can rely on the help of a mentor teacher when starting their job.¹² A clear specification and implementation of the induction period and a legislative-based mentor teacher concept will thus be crucial for regional education in the Czech Republic.

The induction period represents the beginning of the professional life of novice teachers. Self-affirmation is an aspect of the role of a teacher, as is the application of knowledge from the study period in the practical performance of the profession, the crystallisation and consolidation of the didactic repertoire, etc.¹³ During the induction period, teachers get acquainted with the school climate, which is another important decisive factor when contemplating whether they want to continue performing the profession. The relevance of the culture and school climate is perceived differently by different authors. In general, the climate captures the overall perception of school culture.¹⁴

In addition to induction into the profession, the support of colleagues and school management is important at the beginning of a teacher's career. The support of the school management undoubtedly plays an important role in the induction of the teacher into the profession. Tackling highly demanding tasks together within a team contributes to the involvement of the novice teacher in the professional community.¹⁵

The qualifications of teachers and the initial level of pedagogical skills influence to the greatest extent whether novice teachers are to remain in the profession. This suggests that induction in schools cannot compensate for quality teacher vocational training.¹⁶ Therefore, it is important that the draft amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022 also regulates the position of the guide teacher. However, the proposal for a relatively broad autonomy of the school headmaster in authorising the qualification of employees who lack the required qualification, in particular in general education subjects, can be perceived as a negative step from this point of view.

A negative factor, predominantly for novice teachers, is the overwhelming amount of non-teaching obligations, mainly comprising the administration associated with the work, for which teachers are not prepared during their studies. Reducing the administrative burden on schools is one of the proclaimed goals of the Strategy of the Czech Republic's Educational Policy until 2030+.

¹² <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/novinar/petina-ucitelu-zahajuje-praxi-bez-uvadejiciho-ucitele>.

¹³ Page 4, JANÍK, Tomáš et al.: *Adaptační období pro začínající učitele [Novice Teacher Induction Period]*. Pedagogika [online]. 2017, ISSN 2336-2189.

¹⁴ Page 57, Hanušová, Světlana, Pířová, Michaela, Kohoute, Tomáš et al.: *Chtějí zůstat nebo odejít?: Začínající učitelé v českých základních školách [Do They Want to Stay or Leave? Novice Teachers in Czech Primary Schools]*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2017. Pedagogický výzkum v teorii a praxi. ISBN 978-80-210-8889-4.

¹⁵ Page 63, Ditto.

¹⁶ Page 67, Ditto.

Existing Support Tools

The Czech Republic legal norms do not regulate the novice teacher support tools. Some schools support novice teachers by assigning a mentor teacher. However, in the absence of general legislation, the aid timeframes vary.

Professional Development Support System for Teachers and School Headmasters

This project, which is abbreviated as SUSY (in Czech SYPO), is co-financed by the European Union, and implemented in the period from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2023. Its goal is to create, verify, and implement a system of comprehensive modular support designed to contribute to increased professional development of teachers in the field of subject didactics, and managers in the field of school pedagogical management. This is to be achieved primarily through professional communities using a wide range of forms of peer support and in-service teacher training with set quality criteria.

The new concept, which will systematically and comprehensively support professional growth with an emphasis on quality, is to be created with the help of methodological cabinets at the national, regional, and selected district levels, permanent conference of school headmasters, support for novice teachers, and transformation of the system of in-service teacher training.

One of the project's key purposes is to design and review the concept of comprehensive and continuous support for novice teachers in cooperation with mentor teachers and school management. The system model should be designed in close partnership with representatives of faculties and vocational teacher training schools, factor in different types of schools, and include 'guidance and recommendations' on how to proceed during the induction process. The project will also comprise the creation of a self-support support system aimed at the functional setting of the cooperation of the triad of a novice teacher – a mentor teacher – school management (educational programmes, online support, and implementation of workshops).

The project defines a novice teacher as a teacher with less than two years of professional experience who is to perform their pedagogical activity under the methodical guidance and with the support of their mentor teacher.

The induction of a novice teacher should take place during an induction period lasting one year. At this time, the competencies outlined in the competency profile of the novice teacher should be achieved and further developed.

The strength of SUSY is a more comprehensive view of the pedagogical staff follow-up training, including the support of teachers, novice teachers, and senior pedagogical staff.

Nevertheless, the project also has certain weaknesses, for example, the fact that it is a time-limited initiative that will not be repeated. Therefore, there is the question of what will happen to all the tools and support systems in place, such as the methodological cabinets and the permanent conference of school headmasters. As far as novice teachers are concerned, the implementation of the project already raises many questions which will need addressing after the project completion. At the time this paper was drafted, an amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff was proposed, which is to take effect no earlier than on 1

September 2023.¹⁷

Among other things, the draft stipulates the induction period and the position of the mentor teacher. However, the induction period is proposed at the length of two years. Naturally, a longer induction period is not a problem per se. However, the discrepancy between the project and the draft amendment points to the fact that at least some of the proposals or conclusions of the project have not been factored in by the legislator.

The proposed induction period is intended to support the teacher, in particular through the mentor teacher figure, appointed by the school. The task of the mentor teacher is to methodically guide the novice teacher, regularly evaluate their pedagogical activity and acquaint them with the school operation system and its administrative framework. It can also be deduced from the definition of the induction period that a teacher is considered a novice teacher from the beginning of the first 'teacher' type of work employment by the school until the end of the induction period, which usually ends after two years of duration of this employment relationship.¹⁸

In addition to the induction period and the mentor teacher, the position of the guide teacher is also regulated in the proposal. It can be deduced from the proposal that it should be a pedagogical worker whose task is to methodically guide a pupil or student at another school or university preparing for the teaching profession as part of standard teacher training, standard vocational teacher training, or internship. In order to perform this role, the teacher must meet all the prerequisites set forth for the performance of the teacher's direct pedagogical activity and at the same time have at least five years of experience in teaching.¹⁹ Therefore, employees performing direct pedagogical activity based on an exception pursuant to the Act on Pedagogical Staff will not be able to hold this position and perform the role. The purpose of this regulation is to unify the current internship practice of students and pupils of the teaching profession within their educational framework. The quality of internships should primarily be ensured by the consistent feedback provided by the guide teacher, effective cooperation of the guide teacher with the future teacher's educator, and the internship performance mainly, but not exclusively, in a concentrated network of faculty and teaching schools. Due to well-reflected internships, pupils or students gain enough experience to prepare for their work in everyday school practice.²⁰ The explanatory memorandum also criticises the insufficient or non-existent financial evaluation of the work of the guide teacher.²¹ Paradoxically, the explanatory memorandum also states that the introduction of the position of guide teacher will not have an impact on the state budget.²²

However, the draft amendment lacks coherence with other laws and implementing regulations, especially in the area of salaries, determination of the scope of direct pedagogical activity, more detailed specification of the mentor teacher's job subject, and the induction period. It also fails to propose the way the related legislation should be amended further.

¹⁷ Draft amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022.

¹⁸ See the Appendix.

¹⁹ See the Appendix.

²⁰ Page 9, The Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022.

²¹ Page 9, Ditto.

²² Page 13, Ditto.

Existing Legislation

The legal code of the Czech Republic does not yet set forth specific tools to support novice teachers. The amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff, currently in the internal comment procedure, is intended to address the support of novice teachers in but a partial way. This legal regulation is to enter into force on 1 September 2023 at the earliest.

Determining the Salary of Novice Teachers

The salary of a novice teacher generally comprises three components: salary scale, and statutory and non-statutory components of the salary. However, the most important part of the salary is the salary scale, which also usually forms its largest part.

The salary scale of an employee is determined on the basis of the pay category and pay grade in which the teacher is assigned. The employer assigns the employee to the category in which the most demanding work the employer requires of the employee belongs to, according to the job catalogue.

The employer assigns the staff member, i.e., the teacher, the grade based on the accountable practice, i.e., years of experience. The experience in the field of the required work is included in full. According to the established interpretation of the Ministry of Education, any performance of the work of a pedagogical worker is also counted as experience in the field of a teacher.

In the salary table, the employer then sets a specific salary scale based on the employee's pay category and pay grade.

Based on the aforementioned, the employee's salary scale can be influenced either by the performance of more demanding work included in the higher pay category or by reaching a higher pay grade. However, novice teachers will generally not have had extensive experience in the field and will also not be assigned more demanding work. Their salary scale, and therefore their initial salary, will be low.

Legal norms stipulating salary and its amount are mandatory. This means that the salary cannot be determined in any other way than as permitted by law and implementing regulations. In this sense, it would therefore certainly be helpful if an amendment was passed which would allow the employer of a novice teacher to set their salary at a higher level than currently possible. One of the possible solutions, which was also promoted by the Czech-Moravian Trade Union of Education Workers, is to opt for setting the salary scale range where the employer determines the teacher's salary at least in the amount that would correspond to the salary scale that otherwise belongs to a teacher based on the respective pay category and pay grade. In other words, the employer could approve a higher salary than the employee would get based on accountable experience. At the same time, however, the salary scale could not be set at a level lower than that corresponding to grading according to accountable experience. A similar arrangement already exists, for example, for employees of health care providers.²³

Novice Teacher Further Education

The Act on Pedagogical Staff stipulates the obligation for teachers to continue deepening their expertise for the entirety of their employment with the school. Teachers are also provided with the opportunity to

²³ Section 123, Paragraph 6, Letter e) of the Labour Code.

increase their professional qualification and can take time off for self-study, during which they choose how they want to proceed regarding their further education.

The developing of expertise means its upkeep, refreshing, and expanding. The nature of the qualification does not change. By way of developing their qualifications, the teacher maintains the expertise necessary for the performance of the assigned work. As this is an obligation of the teacher, the employer is entitled to order the teacher to engage in developing their qualifications. The time the teacher spends developing their qualifications is considered to be their work performance. Therefore, teachers are entitled to a regular pay for developing their qualifications.

An existing qualification is increased (i.e., improved) by its expansion and by gaining a new qualification. The value of a qualification changes as it increases. It is not the teacher's obligation arising from the employment relationship, which implies that the employer cannot order the teacher to improve their qualifications.

There are two models of qualification increases. Under the first one, the employer declares that the increase in qualification is in line with their needs. As a result, the employee is automatically entitled to paid leave of absence to take exams and attend lessons. A Qualification Agreement may also be concluded, which defines the compensation that the employer will pay to the employee in addition to the leave provided, alongside the employee's loyalty commitment.

Under the second regime, the qualification increase is not in line with the needs of the employer, but a personal decision of the employee. In this case, the employee is not entitled to paid leave of absence to attend the vocational training designed to increase their qualification and bears all the costs.

Self-study leave is a special leave of absence for the purpose of further education of pedagogical staff, i.e., also teachers. It usually comprises twelve days in a calendar year. As this is an obstacle to work, the employer cannot assign the employee what subject matter to study or in which area they are to pursue their further education.

Based on the above, the employer has no control over a part of the content of the pedagogical staff's further training. While they can determine in which direction the pedagogue will proceed within the framework of developing the qualification and possibly also increasing the qualification, the self-study leave is, due to its nature, practically out of the control of the employer. However, the self-study process should also be coordinated with the continued further education plan. In practice, it would thus be necessary not to determine the self-study leave of absence as an obstacle to work, to ensure the possibility of control of the further education direction and nature by the employer.

Novice Teacher Career Growth Options

Although the Act on Pedagogical Staff explicitly mentions the career system,²⁴ it is not a comprehensive system with close interconnections of the content of education, salary standards, and various career choices.

In the career system, as currently drafted, pedagogues basically have two directions of further development, namely 'managerial' and pedagogical. They can focus on the leading roles within pedagogical staff, such as deputy principals and school principals, or develop their pedagogical competencies through the study of specialised subjects or further qualifications allowing them to teach at another type of school.

However, there are many activities in teaching practice that are not explicitly defined in legal standards, have no set requirements for their performance, and employees are not entitled to any benefits for their performance.

It is worth mentioning that a comprehensive Career Code was drafted as an amendment to the Act on

²⁴ Section 29 of the Act on Pedagogical Staff.

Pedagogical Staff in 2016. As part of the proposal, most of the activities performed by pedagogical staff were enshrined in legislation.

The teacher's professional development was to take place on the basis of the school's pedagogical development plan and the teacher's personal professional development plan. It was therefore a form of further education in line with the needs of the school, aiming to respect the individual choices of the teacher. It also included the employer's obligation to create conditions for the teacher to pursue further education. Self-study leave of absence was also to have a more meaningful use. It should have been used for education pursuant to the mandatory part of the personal professional development plan.

The designed career system comprised three levels, with a set teacher standard for each career level.

To advance to a higher career level, the teacher had to successfully complete the attestation procedure. The first stage was intended to introduce the teacher to the profession, with a two-year induction period defined and a mentor teacher assigned, whose task was to methodically guide the novice teacher.

As a follow-up to and in support of the career system, the Labour Code was to provide the grounds for additional allowances for pedagogical staff, such as a bonus for the mentor teacher or extra pay for the performance of the teacher's activity within the third career level scope.

However, this ambitious proposal was not approved and since then only some of its points have re-appeared in the proposals to amend the Act on Pedagogical Staff. A comprehensive adjustment of the career system for pedagogical staff or teachers has not yet been proposed.

Policy Concerning Novice Teachers

Regional education has always been a priority for the governments of the Czech Republic. However, it was not until the last government when the priority began to be pursued on a greater scale, especially with regards to the salaries of pedagogical staff. The outcome is also due to a great extent to the Czech-Moravian Trade Union of Education Workers and its negotiations within the process. According to the speech by the MP Martin Baxa, for example, there is already a broad consensus regarding a teacher's salary, which should be at 130 percent of the average wage within the national economy. From a long-term perspective, only the salary issue has been addressed on the Czech political scene. The Career Code proposed in 2016 is therefore a rather unique attempt to comprehensively address the position of pedagogical staff.

We can get an idea regarding the direction of education in the Czech Republic from two fundamental documents. The first is the Programme Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic from January 2022, and the second is the Czech Republic's Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+.

In the Programme Statement, the new government committed itself to implementing the Czech Republic's Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+ despite the fact that it is a document approved by the previous government. This can be considered a very important step, as it is a certain guarantee of continuity within the educational system of the Czech Republic development trends.

In relation to novice teachers, the new government has committed in particular to expanding professional support for teachers in schools, including support for novice teachers, by 2022. Furthermore, in cooperation with pedagogical faculties and faculties readying teachers for their future jobs, the Government plans to increase the motivation to select the path of a pedagogical worker among students and promote a reform of teacher training with an emphasis on practical skills. The Government also plans to draft and implement a system of professional growth for teachers as a professional support tool.

In terms of salary development trends, the Government has committed to keeping teachers' salaries at 130 percent of the average gross monthly salary, with at least 20 percent of salary funds designated to cover the non-statutory components of the salary, and with the proviso that these funds should be used effectively.

It is important to note that the Government has already started to fulfil some of its goals. The submitted amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff contains a proposal to introduce an induction period and enshrines in legislation the role of the mentor teacher. In order to expand the internship during the study period, it is also proposed to define the role of the guide teacher as a person who methodically guides the student within the internship during their years of studies for the future role of the teacher. According to the RIA, it is also expected that other legal regulations will be amended in the future (especially the Education Act) to set rules for adequate funding of the role of guide teachers (especially factoring in their years of experience), and conditions for further education of guide teachers, including their support and liaison with teacher educators from the institutions which provide teacher training.²⁵

A more detailed concept is provided in the Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+ under the strategic line "3: Support for Pedagogical Staff". The strategy emphasizes the need for maximum support for teachers and principals throughout their careers.

²⁵ Page 11 of the RIA draft amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff from 28 February 2022.

Undergraduate teacher training is also to be amended, with an emphasis on targeted support for study programmes aimed at preparing their participants for the regulated teaching profession performance. With regard to the higher share of individual work with students, and the larger scope of reflected internships, the financing of study programmes should also be considered. Changes in study programmes should be based mainly on the research done by the faculties educating teachers.

It is planned to create a teacher's competency profile to be used for self-evaluation and the achievement, maintenance, and quality increases of their expertise. It should also describe the professional prerequisites and competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes) of a teacher who is able to manage the workload of the profession, apply modern forms of teaching, and respond to the changing needs of a heterogeneous population of children, pupils, and students.²⁶ Last but not least, the section covering novice teachers will also become a decisive criterion for the accreditation of other than undergraduate teacher education programmes. The competency profile is expected to include the professional prerequisites and competencies for all phases of the teacher's career, i.e., from their undergraduate education through the induction period to further education as part of the teaching profession continued progress.

Three other points covered by the Strategy are particularly important from the point of view of novice teachers within the system of comprehensive vocational training and support:

1. The support for novice and mentor teachers.
2. The goal to increase the attractiveness of the pedagogical profession, and to attract new high-quality teachers.
3. The change in the further education of pedagogical staff system concept and methodological support.

A comprehensive induction system should be the basis for supporting both novice and mentor teachers. Under this system, an induction period is to be specified in which intensive mentoring support is to be provided to the novice teacher. This is to be ensured in particular by the mentor teacher, who will also evaluate the induction course and development.

The change in the concept of further education of pedagogical staff should facilitate the development of the competencies defined in the teacher's competency profile. The transformation of the school into an educational institution for pupils, students, and teachers is one of the most significant changes proposed. This should ensure not only the personal and professional development of individual teachers, but also the alignment with the needs of a particular school.

One of the goals of the Strategy is to increase the appeal / prestige of teaching professions in order to attract new high-quality teachers. This is to be achieved through improved teaching at faculties specialised in teacher vocational training, and a strong interconnection between the theoretical and practical part of the study programme. A targeted campaign is also planned among pupils and students deciding on further educational paths, and among specialists who are considering a change of profession. The intention to make the teaching profession more attractive through salary increases and a revision of the salary system can be considered crucial.

The Strategy also envisages reducing the administrative burden on schools. However, it will be necessary to analyse this step before any of its parts are to be implemented. Based on the analysis of the obtained data, duplicities and unnecessary research are to be identified, alongside the possibility of linking data from various surveys. This should be facilitated by the proposed departmental information system, which will be designed to link and enable the sharing of the obtained data. It also aims to support the digitization of the agenda within schools and in their communication with the public administration. The aim is to ensure the data collection takes place in a way that puts as little burden on schools as possible.

Reducing the administrative burden will therefore consist primarily in eliminating duplication of unnecessary data in reporting, simplifying reporting through RIS, as well as optimizing administrative

²⁶ Page 53 of the Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+.

processes and digitizing agendas in schools.²⁷

In order to reduce the administrative burden on teachers, non-teaching capacities of schools should also be increased. To this end, it will be necessary to adjust the funding rules for non-teaching staff.

²⁷ Page 61 of the Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The Czech Republic has a system of further education of pedagogical staff implemented. The current legislation allows for further education of teachers during their employment with the support of the employer.

Weaknesses

There is no specific legislation or systemic support for novice teachers. Existing support consists mainly in various time-limited projects and voluntary, unregulated, and systemically unsupported school action.

Opportunities

The Czech Republic has a unique opportunity to adapt a comprehensive support system for novice teachers, as well as to draw inspiration and learn lessons from existing systems implemented abroad. It can therefore select and combine various elements of other systems that meet the needs of the Czech educational system.

Threats

If the support of novice teachers is not adjusted in the near future, it can be assumed that the already existing shortage of teachers will deepen, which may lead to further non-systemic changes consisting in the adjustment of exceptions from the qualification requirements for teachers.

Good Practice

Although the induction period of the teaching profession alongside the roles of guide and mentor teachers are currently not enshrined in legislation of the Czech Republic, there are schools that provide support for novice teachers or students in teaching disciplines. While approximately 80 percent of novice teachers are provided a formal induction through the mentor teacher, the number of guide teachers for students in teaching disciplines is unknown.

In the near future, an induction period is expected to be introduced in the Czech Republic, based on the “Scandinavian model”, which is defined in the northern European countries of Finland, Sweden, and Denmark, as well as in Austria. This model is based on relatively low volumes of internships, similar to the Czech system, but at the same time on a great emphasis on the quality of internships and their reflection. Internships take place in tandems, and each lesson is immediately reflected on by the supervisor. Supervisors and students also reflect on the lesson preparatory stage in a similar manner.²⁸

However, models with greater or lesser volumes of internship can be found abroad. For example, the German model is interesting and not only from the internship point of view. The *traineeship* lasts 18 to 24 months and ends with a second state exam, which is a condition for entering the practice to perform the profession.²⁹ Compared to other teachers, graduates as novice teachers have their salary as well as direct pedagogical activities reduced to about a half of the regular volume, and a mentor assigned and employed by the state.³⁰ It is interesting, however, that the introduction of novice teachers under the *traineeship* status does not take place solely in schools with the help of their mentor, but also through seminars of various forms at universities and colleges. The element of the support provided by the university could be implemented in the proposed induction period. In this sense, the involvement of universities could have a positive effect for universities alone, as this way they could gain feedback on the internship requirements.

Professional standards have a relatively long tradition, especially in English-speaking countries. They have been used there for several decades and have become an integral part of their educational systems.³¹ In recent years, standardization has also become a part of the German educational system. Standards are being developed as a kind of response to deficits, as pointed out by international comparative research of TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS / IGLU and others.³² Teaching profession standards could also be beneficial in the Czech environment, where they could, for example, facilitate improved evaluation of the teaching style of students of the teaching profession in relation to the professional standards of teachers.

Another inspiration drawn from abroad is the register or registration of teachers. Although this activity will

²⁸ Page 9, The Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022.

²⁹ Page 10, JANÍK, Tomáš et al.: Adaptační období pro začínající učitele [*Novice Teacher Induction Period*]. Pedagogika [online]. 2017, ISSN 2336-2189.

³⁰ Page 9, The Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff of 28 February 2022.

³¹ Page 118, STARÝ, Karel: Vybrané zahraniční programy hodnocení učitelů s využitím profesních standardů [*Selected Foreign Teacher Evaluation Programmes Using Professional Standards*]. ORBIS SCHOLAE, 2014, 8 (3) 113–131.

³² Page 48, JANÍK, Miroslav; PEŠKOVÁ, Karolína; JANÍK, Tomáš: Standardy pro učitelé jako cesta ke kvalitě: reflexe vývoje ve Spolkové republice Německo [*Teacher Education Standards as Path to Quality: Reflection on Development Trends in the Federal Republic of Germany*]. ORBIS SCHOLAE, 2014, 8 (3) 47–70.

impose administration burden on schools, it could offer a systemic solution to the needs of the Czech educational system. No review check regarding the qualifications and professional erudition or further education of teachers would be necessary. Such a system could also help monitor unqualified teachers and assist the state in better planning the teaching staff personal policies at the national level. A register or compulsory registration of teachers has been introduced, for example, in Wales³³ and Scotland.³⁴

³³ Page 77, PÁVKOVÁ, Karolína: Profesionální standardy učitele v Anglii, Walesu a Severním Irsku [*Professional Standards of Teachers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland*]. ORBIS SCHOLAE, 2014, 8 (3) 71–85.

³⁴ Page 94, VODA, Jan: Standard učitelství profese ve Skotsku [*Teaching Profession Standards in Scotland*]. ORBIS SCHOLAE, 2014, 8 (3) 87–112.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Novice Teacher Support System

The absence of legislation in the Czech Republic does not have to be perceived as but a negative fact. It can also be seen as an opportunity to make changes on the basis of best foreign practices adapted to Czech conditions.

One of the first steps, in addition to guaranteeing a reasonable level of teachers' salaries, for example, at 130 percent of the average wage in the national economy, should be a change in the salary system, which would allow a higher salary to be set, or a higher salary scale assigned to prospective novice teachers than that corresponding to their respective salary scale category pursuant to the current salary system. The possibility of higher financial rewards for work would also increase the competitiveness of schools in Prague and its surroundings. As a specific solution, similar provisions to those of Section 123, Paragraph 6, Letter e) of the Labour Code, could be considered.

Support for students of teacher-training programmes already provided during their studies and increasing the quality of internships can be considered crucial. The proposed position of guide teachers seems to be a step in the right direction. In order to prevent it from being but a formality without a real impact, there is a need to address the coherence with other existing positions, especially in secondary vocational training, and the financial and professional support associated with the implementation of this job / role.

A properly set induction process into the profession is another of the factors that can help retain capable novice teachers. The existing draft amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff incorporates the induction period and the position of the mentor teacher. Furthermore, it will also be necessary to define in greater detail the scope of work of the mentor teacher and the induction period details, i.e., mandatory components. The proposal, once again, lacks a more specific view of these facts and their direct link to salary regulations.

Alongside the aforementioned induction period, the Czech Republic should also focus on other factors influencing the stay / leave ratio of novice teachers in the job. These consist mainly in creating a favourable working environment with the support of colleagues and school management and a favourable school climate with the minimisation of non-teaching obligations.

The reduction of non-teaching and administrative obligations can be achieved in two ways. Schools will not be required to provide the current range of information, causing the administrative burden, and funds will be allocated to create a non-teaching position with the scope of work dedicated to administration. It is reasonable to suggest that this solution will require legislative regulation, at least in its second part.

Creating a favourable working environment will require rather non-legislative solutions and the support of individual schools. The goal could be achieved through the education of pedagogical staff and school management, and the support of schools through projects.

In terms of more systematic individually targeted work with teachers or pedagogical staff, a register of teachers could prove beneficial. In this way, the Czech Republic could obtain information on the degree, specialisations, qualifications and staffing needs of schools or regions. In this way, it would be possible to

avoid various exemption proposals which, in general, do not contribute to the teaching profession but rather reduce its prestige.

Further discussions with all stakeholders will be needed on the possible solutions outlined in this paper, in particular representatives of trade unions, professional teachers' organizations, local and regional authorities, and the schools concerned. Only in this way, will it be possible to reach a consensus and a wider acceptance of the necessary changes.

Resources

The Programme Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic from January 2022.

The Czech Republic's Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+.

Draft amendment to Act No. 563/2004 Coll., On Pedagogical Staff and Amendments to Certain Acts, as amended, and Act No. 561/2004 Coll., On Preschool, Primary, Secondary, Secondary Vocational, and Other Forms of Education (the School Act), as amended of 28 February 2022.

Korbel, Václav, Gargulák, Karel, Prokop, Daniel: Rozvoj pedagogických kompetencí jako nástroj prevence odchodu z profese. Srovnávací ministudie programu učitel naživo a PAQ. [*Development of Pedagogical Competencies as a Tool to Prevent Profession's Departures. Comparative Micro Study of the Live Teacher and PAQ Programmes.*]

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<https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/novinar/petina-ucitelu-zahajuje-praxi-bez-uvadejiciho-ucitele>.

Legislative Framework

Act No. 262/2006 Coll., the Labour Code, as amended of 29 April 2022.

Act No. 563/2004 Coll., On Pedagogical Staff and Amendments to Certain Acts, effective as of 29 April 2022.

Act No. 341/2017 Sb., On Salaries in Public Services and Administration, as amended of 29 April 2022.

Act No. 222/2010 Sb., On the Catalogue of Works in Public Services and Administration, as amended of 29 April 2022.

Appendix 1: Selected Provisions of Explanatory Memorandum to Act on Pedagogical Staff Draft Amendment of 28 February 2022

Section 24a

Teacher's Induction Period

The legal entity performing the activities of a school shall support teachers for the duration of their induction period, in particular by designating a colleague to perform the role of the mentor teacher. The induction period of a novice teacher is the period from the beginning of their first employment to the end of a two-year employment period with the legal entity performing the activities of a school. The induction period is extended by the time when there are all-day obstacles at work for which the teacher cannot perform work, provided these obstacles last continuously more than four (4) months.

Section 24b

Mentor Teacher

A mentor teacher is the teacher who leads the novice teacher, especially methodically, during their induction period, continuously and regularly evaluates their pedagogical activities, and introduces them to the school operation and its paperwork practice.

Section 24c

Guide Teacher

(1) A guide teacher is the teacher who methodically guides a student of another school or university preparing through their studies for the teaching profession as part of hands-on training, practical training or internship.

(2) The guide teacher meets the requirements pursuant to Section 3 of the Act and has gained experience consisting in the performance of direct pedagogical activities for a period of five (5) years.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire Survey Results – Heads of Educational Institutions and Education Policy Makers

A total of 52 valid responses were collected from this questionnaire survey from the whole of the Czech Republic, excluding the Pilsen and Vysočina regions.

The questionnaire was circulated primarily among Primary and Secondary school directors, alongside local government employees, state employees at the Ministry of Education and its subordinate unit. The vast majority of 92.3% of respondents were Primary and Secondary school directors.

The respondents to the questionnaire were asked 13 questions in which they were to comment on what support resources and tools are provided to novice teachers by the respective school, its founder, state, or undergraduate training.

The type of support available to novice teachers at the time they assume their new job has, for the most part, included information on an employment contract with a clearly defined remuneration and amount of work (94.2%), health and safety rules and regulations (94.2%), job description (92.3%), and information on how things work in the respective educational institution (92.3%) and its internal rules (86.5%).

Contacts for teachers, from whom novice teachers can seek pedagogical or practical advice, are provided by 82.7% of respondents, recommendations on teaching management by 78.8%, explanations on how to write entries in the class book by 75%, useful tips regarding communication with parents by 61%, and information on tools for successful communication with pupils and students by 53.8%.

Slightly more than half of the respondents, namely 57.7%, stated that they provide information on the office hours of the institution and its administrative staff. Roughly half of respondents, 55.8%, provide information on the place and time of meetings, and 53.8% inform about the steps to join the teachers' union.

It seems that all information that is directly linked to the provisions of legislation and provides the basic framework of the employment relationship (the Labour Code, the School Act) is provided in almost all cases. Information related to the teaching practice or specific work, which are more closely linked to practical daily work performance (tips on how to manage teaching, communication with parents and students, how to write entries in a class book, etc.) is provided much less frequently. This type of information goes beyond the provisions of the law and is more related to the school management and to the management skills and strategies of a particular school director. On the other hand, the school director cannot be accused of consciously neglecting the management of the staff by not providing such advice. The questionnaire survey showed that many directors assume this knowledge and skills are already acquired by novice teachers in undergraduate training.

Methodological Support

Nearly all respondents agree that teachers are assigned a mentor figure at school (30 strongly agree, 20 rather agree). They also agree that teachers need additional knowledge in positioning themselves as

teachers (29 strongly agree, 20 rather agree) and that novice teachers need additional knowledge about teachers' rights and responsibilities (28 strongly agree, 21 rather agree).

The vast majority also agree that teachers need additional knowledge to establish a positive line of communication with pupils and their parents (28 strongly agree, 15 rather agree), work with children with special needs (33 strongly agree, 13 rather agree), and gain knowledge in classroom management (32 strongly agree, 15 rather agree).

Interestingly, lack of digital tools and technological expertise, quite frequently mentioned in public debates on novice teacher additional knowledge, was felt as being key by only 16 respondents (strongly agree), with 16 respondents selecting the option they rather agree. Together, this constitutes an overall majority, however, compared to the previous categories, it does not seem to be a top priority issue.

The need for additional knowledge about trade unions and social dialogue is felt by slightly more than half of the respondents (a total of 27 answers).

Technical Conditions

The technical support and working conditions provided to novice teachers seem to be good. Unlimited access to computers and Internet was mentioned by 50 respondents, with 47 respondents stating novice teachers have the necessary software installed. The possibility of borrowing laptops during the Covid-19 period was confirmed by 41 respondents. Unlimited copy printer use by teachers was affirmed by 52 respondents, scanner by 40, and the interactive whiteboard by 48. The staff ability to use a school-provided smartphone for communication with pupils and their parents was only confirmed by the answers of 25 respondents. As many as 31 respondents do not agree that additional expenses (electricity, internet connection, etc.) be reimbursed when teachers are working from home.

Remuneration and Workload

Most, namely 48, respondents consider the tariffication process in educational institutions to be made objective and transparent, and 45 think that novice teachers are paid for all the duties they perform at school. On the other hand, only 29 respondents think that teachers receive an attractive salary, and as many as 22 respondents strongly disagree with this statement. Only 25 respondents think that pupils and their parents have a supportive and respectful attitude towards novice teachers, while 17 respondents do not agree with this statement.

Respondents are rather optimistic about the future – 33 of them are convinced that in the next five years, novice teachers will continue to work in their profession, compared to 9 respondents who do not agree with this statement.

Most Important Challenges Faced by Novice Teachers

As many as 96.2% of respondents see the lack of experience in working with students as the main challenge. The significant majority – 69.2% of respondents – mentioned there was no experience / information that novice teachers face problems, and 65.4% of respondents stated that the knowledge and skills provided at universities do not correspond to the practice.

This finding is interesting because it implies that internships during undergraduate training are either insufficient in scope (number of hours taught) or in their content or form. [Lessons taught during the internship do not seem to reflect the real teaching process. For example, an undergraduate student is asked to present and explain the curriculum during a lesson but does not get the chance to practice the curriculum with students or apply the learned curriculum with students in a hands-on scenario, namely in student projects.]

5. Jaké jsou podle vašeho názoru nejdůležitější výzvy, kterým začínající učitelé čelí na začátku kariéry? (je možné dát více než 1 odpověď):

52 odpovědí

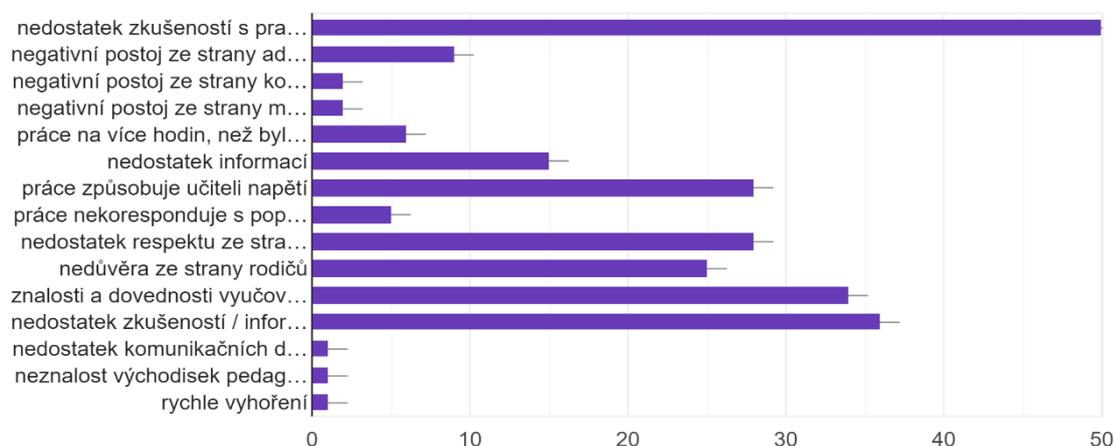


Figure Legend: 5. In your opinion, what are the most important challenges that novice teachers face when starting their careers (more than 1 answer possible):

- lack of experience in working with pupils
- negative attitude on the part of administration
- negative attitude on the part of colleagues
- negative attitude on the part of mentors
- working more hours than regulated in tariffication
- lack of information
- work creates tension for a teacher
- work doesn't correspond with the job description
- disrespect on the part of pupils
- mistrust on the part of parents
- knowledge and skills provided at the university do not correspond with the practice
- there is no experience / information that novice teachers face problems
- lack of communication skills with parents, lack of experience with various types of pupils, lack of ability to detect learning difficulties and behaviour problems, lack of knowledge of health and safety regulations and fire safety regulations, lack of knowledge of legislature
- lack of pedagogical work and interpersonal background / processes, therefore a very limited ability to set the processes well and thus an inadequate readiness to work due to superficial education of future teachers at universities
- fast burnout

The majority of respondents (67.3%) are satisfied with the support provided by educational institutions to novice teachers. Respondents have mentioned they make a great effort to ensure novice teachers are supported. According to one comment, *the faculty equips its graduates with encyclopaedic knowledge, but insufficiently prepares them for real life practice*. Although schools have, for example, a sophisticated and effective support system comprising their active involvement, they face the issues of insufficient equipment, insufficient staff capacity, financial resources, or a lack of time for consultations and mentoring. The comments also mentioned that their schools are enrolled in a pilot project called *Novice Teacher* or the *SUSY* project. The above suggests school managements are aware of the situation not being ideal and are trying to solve it in one way or another. Heads of educational institutions face objective obstacles, such as a lack of funds, staff, or time. It is not within their capacity to overcome these obstacles on their own, as they are linked to the entire management system of the education sector. To ensure the obstacles are no longer an issue, there would have to be systemic changes or changes in the school funding system.

Respondents also stated that it was very difficult to provide support to novice teachers during the Covid-19 period.

A total of 42% of respondents are disappointed or rather disappointed with the support provided to novice teachers by the state. Insufficient financial support and only a limited amount of methodological support have often been mentioned. According to one comment, *the state passes the burden on to individual schools*. According to the comments, there is also a lack of a clear definition of the support that should be provided, and the complete absence of real hands-on undergraduate training. [The training does not teach its attendees how to work with school administration programmes.]

According to the answers, mentors often provide their services beyond their reimbursed job responsibilities. It would be desirable to reduce their teaching workload. However, schools cannot afford this as they would have to hire another teacher to cover the extra lessons, and there are either no teachers available in the labour market or there are no funds left in the staff budget.

Additional Support Activities with Potential to Help Novice Teachers

Almost everyone (50 responses) agrees with the approach to mentoring as an important form of support. An overwhelming majority of 35 respondents have mentioned the need for an attractive salary. The financial contribution to those teacher students who work during their studies and agree to continue their teaching job with the same school after graduating from university would be welcomed by 41 respondents. The same number of 41 respondents believe that it would help if teachers' rights and the responsibility of pupils and their parents were strengthened. Information material for novice teachers about their rights and obligations and social dialogue would be welcomed by 42 respondents. Slightly fewer respondents (36) would welcome the possibility of summer schools for novice teachers, and the same number regarded the possibility of traineeships and induction periods for novice teachers as a good idea. By contrast, around half of respondents (29) think that novice teachers should have fewer contact hours, i.e., hours of teaching activities. Only 24 respondents would choose a one-time recruitment benefit as a form of motivation for novice teachers, and 31 respondents mentioned that the provision of a service apartment could also be motivating.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Results – Novice Teachers

A total of 150 responses were collected from this questionnaire survey, of which 133 were valid as responses submitted by teachers with work experience in excess of five years had to be excluded.

The collected responses were from the whole of the Czech Republic with the majority submitted by Primary School teachers (59.4%), followed by teachers from Secondary Schools with general education curricula (34.6%).

Non-union respondents comprised 85.7% of answers. Only 10.5% of respondents were trade union members.

The working hours of 33.1% of respondents were in the range of 31-40 hours, followed by 30.1% of respondents with working hours ranging from 15 to 30 hours, and 24.8% of respondents with the maximum number of working hours exactly 15. Only 12% of respondents indicated they work over 40 hours a week.

Motivation

Respondents described their professional feelings in more or less positive terms, namely 78.2% expressed their interest in the profession, 66.9% optimism, and 63.2% energy for work. On the other hand, only 33.8% felt supported, only 17.3% understood, and only 27.8% inspired. A total 47.4% of respondents were worried, 42.1% were overloaded, and 28.6% felt uninformed. In 15.8% of cases, the respondents felt helpless, and without emotional support in 10.5% of cases.

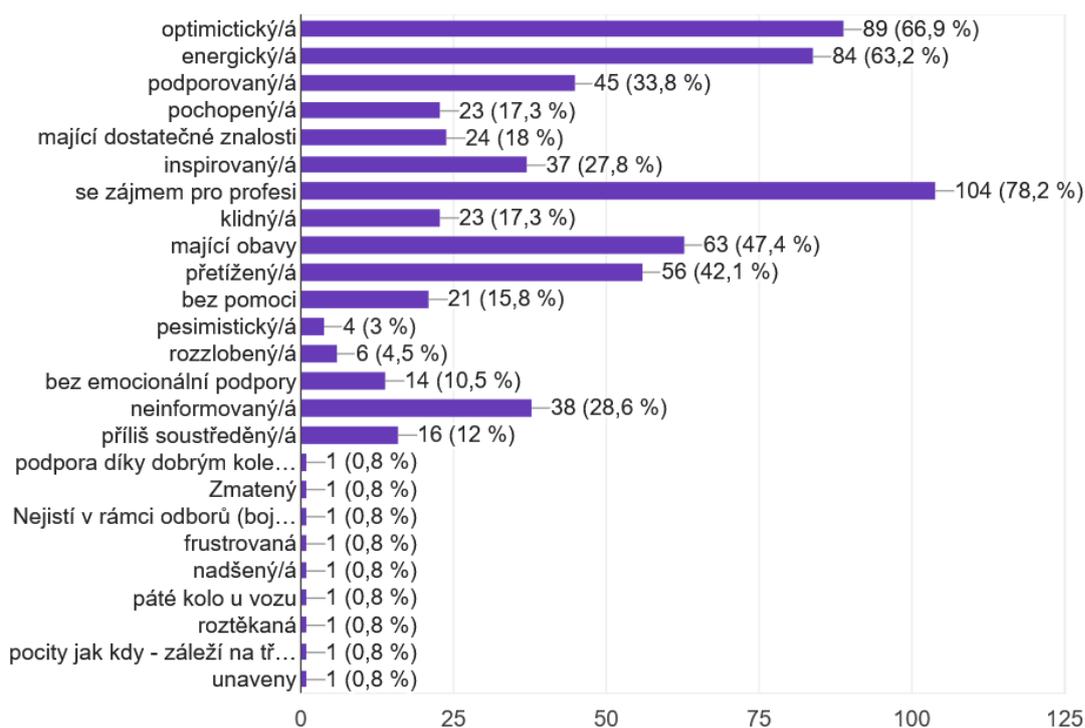


Figure Legend:

- optimistic
- energetic
- supported
- understood
- knowledgeable
- inspired
- interested
- calm
- worried
- overloaded
- helpless
- pessimistic
- angry
- without emotional support
- uninformed
- too concentrated / too intense
- supported by nice colleagues, but I know that it is not the rule
- puzzled
- uncertain as a trade unionist (I fear I might lose my job)
- frustrated
- ecstatic
- "a fifth wheel"
- absent-minded
- "so – so", depending on the class taught and on the topic. However, in general I can say, that this year I am literally struggling with everything.
- tired

It turns out that novice teachers enter the profession mostly motivated and interested in the job. This is also indirectly supported by data mapping respondents' motivation to study at Universities with a specialisation in pedagogy. Whereas 48.1% said they enjoyed working with children, 25.6% said they were inspired by one of their previous teachers. An interest in the field, an interest in self-education, the role of the teaching profession, or an opportunity to pass on knowledge and shape future generations were also often expressed.

Only 0.8% of respondents mentioned the prestige of the profession as a reason for their studies. It is also interesting to note that the answers included affirmations that the respondent did not dare to apply to a different school, or that the *“Pg was said to be easy”*, that their admission to the pedagogical faculty was a chance, or a purely pragmatic motivation, namely the need to obtain a qualification to join the profession.

Slightly over half of respondents (50.4%) chose to work in an educational institution because it was close to their place of residence, and 42.9% stated that there was a vacancy in the given institution at the time they were looking for a job. Only 26.3% were motivated by the professionalism of the school director, 18% by a good working environment, 15% by the amount of work, and 12.5% by an attractive salary.

The answers show that practical everyday issues, namely the time spent commuting, play an important role for the respondents, rather than professionally strategic ones, such as the way the school is run or the possibilities for further professional development. The questionnaire survey also more or less confirmed that University graduates do not accept jobs within the educational sector for financial reasons, but rather for their internal motivation to pursue a profession, and thus help future generations, or to focus on the development of young people in general.

The following comments were submitted

“Since my childhood, I did not see myself in any other role.”

“I enjoy working with young people to whom I can pass on my real-life experience.”

“For me, teaching is fun.”

“I wanted to work with children.”

“...[teaching is] a meaningful profession which goes beyond.”

The majority of respondents stated that in the workplace, they were motivated to develop personally (63.2%), increase their quality of work (48.9%), deepen their knowledge (53.4%), and work closely with other teachers (52.6%). Only 17.3% indicated they were not motivated.

Satisfaction with the choice of profession with minor reservation was confirmed by 21.8%, followed by 29.3% agreeing with reservation. No one was completely satisfied, and only a small percentage of respondents (6.1%) expressed a greater or lesser degree of dissatisfaction.

The comments appended to open-ended questions stated that, for the respondents, the work was satisfying, developing, not stereotypical, and made sense. However, some also stated that the work was demanding both in terms of the time spent lesson planning and mentally. According to the answers, not only children but also teachers need psychological support.

“I enjoy working with children as well as in the field (English) and constant development in both. I am glad that I can apply ample creativity and improvisation. I appreciate the immediate feedback from the students as to whether the lesson was successful or not. In the Primary School, where I had a week-long internship, I had a paired teacher who gave me all the support (especially psychological) and was of a similar mind-set as myself. I miss that in my current school, but I want to make up for it in a different way (I’m looking for an external mentor).”

Respondents often mentioned that no matter how much they love and are satisfied with their job, they are

bothered by low pay in relation to the amount of work and responsibility they have, the low prestige of the profession, and the administrative burden they face and are rarely advised upon. Last but not least, they also mentioned communication with pupils and parents beyond the scope of the subject taught.

“It’s more demanding (time, energy-wise) than I imagined. In addition to teaching my subjects, I have to discipline students and communicate with their parents, which is quite exhausting.”

“A lot of paperwork that takes a lot of time. Unfortunately, there aren’t many people or ‘sites’ where you can get the right information.”

It was interesting to learn that the respondents more or less agreed that no matter how time consuming, and professionally and psychologically demanding the teaching job was, they were determined to do everything in their power to manage it. However, in many responses, they also agreed that they could not rely on the help and support of older colleagues.

“Different expectations than reality. The lack of cooperation and reluctance to help on the part of some colleagues, who are just ‘doing their own thing’. No one took me under their wing to explain my role, hence I ‘wing it’ and resort to the experience I gained watching others during my student years.”

First Day at Work – Initial Support

As many as 75.9% of respondents stated that they received an employment contract with a clearly defined remuneration and workload, were acquainted with the occupational health and safety protocol (72.2%), were given a job description (67.7%) and the internal rules of the institution (57, 9%), told how things worked in the educational institution (57.1%), and provided tips on how to write entries in a class book (57.1%). Only 18% said they had received an Ethical Code from their educational institution, and even lesser number of respondents, namely 14.3%, received tips on how to communicate with parents, while 17.3% were provided recommendations for class management.

There were comments indicating the cooperation with the guide teacher did not work

“I didn’t get any useful information, I had to work hard asking around to learn everything I needed to know.”

“I was assigned a guide teacher, but I was not informed of the fact. The teacher did not show the slightest intention to work with me or advise me.”

*“They threw me in the deep end, leaving me to my own devices. They bet on how long I would last.”
“... (I had) a guide teacher colleague who devoted about an hour to me during the first year. The rest was more or less a hit and miss scenario.”*

In 86 answers, respondents strongly agree or agree that after graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy / pedagogically oriented study programme, they needed additional methodological support.

As many as 97 answers confirm that respondents were assigned a mentor by their educational institution. However, only 57 agree that the mentor provided innovative knowledge, methods, and support to help the novice teacher perform their tasks well. The obtained 43 answers, which do not agree with the questionnaire statement, can be interpreted factually that the respondents did not feel any support, or that the support provided was minimal.

The vast majority of 95 responses agree that they need additional knowledge to position themselves as teachers.

As many as 91 respondents believe that they need further knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of a teacher.

A large majority of 95 respondents indicated that they needed additional knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of pupils and their parents.

Exactly 82 respondents said they needed more knowledge about social dialogue and trade unions.

A total 56 respondents felt the need for additional knowledge in developing cooperation with colleagues compared to 68 respondents who did not feel such a need.

The ratio was similar in terms of the need for additional knowledge in developing positive communication with pupils and their parents. Here, 72 respondents agreed, compared to 57 who disagreed.

Novice teachers were rather confident in their skills to prepare teaching materials, with 65 respondents needing additional knowledge, compared to 71, who did not feel such a need.

Almost everyone agreed that they needed additional knowledge and skills in working with children with special educational needs. This need was felt by 104 respondents.

The need for additional knowledge in classroom management was indicated by 92 respondents.

To work with digital tools and technologies, 59 respondents need additional knowledge.

It may be concluded that the results of the questionnaire survey focused on school directors and educational policy makers were confirmed. There, respondents indicated that graduates of pedagogical schools were insufficiently prepared for real work at school, they lacked knowledge and experience on how to manage school administration and classroom issues, they were not aware of classroom management techniques. They were also insufficiently prepared to work with pupils with special needs. They demonstrated little or no awareness of their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of students and their parents, and they did not know how to communicate effectively with pupils, students, and parents.

Surprisingly, although the vast majority of respondents stated that they had a mentor assigned, their answers showed that they did not feel sufficient support.

Working Conditions

Most respondents stated that they had unlimited access to computers and Internet at work (110 answers), had access to a laptop funded by the educational institutions where they worked for the purposes of carrying out their duties remotely from home due to Covid-19 (106), had the necessary software installed on their computer to carry out their work well (113), had a printer and paper available (119), had access to a copy printer and paper (123), had access to a scanner (115), could use an interactive whiteboard and a projector during lessons (109), and were provided with technologies necessary for organising educational process (111). Significantly fewer teachers indicated they had a smartphone available to communicate with pupils and students, their parents or colleagues (66). As stated by 85 respondents, additional

expenses (such as electricity and internet connection) were not reimbursed during the remote educational process, i.e., when working from home. Most respondents also agreed that they had been provided with teaching aids to ensure quality teaching of their subject (87).

Salary, Workload

Most respondents agreed that the remuneration system (i.e., tariffication) in their educational institution was made objective and transparent (86 responses), that they were paid for all the duties they performed as teachers (96), and that they were clear about the principles on the basis of which their workload was determined (90). Most of the respondents were satisfied with those principles (79). There was less strong consent on whether they received an attractive salary for their teaching work (70 respondents thought so), or whether the workload pace was balanced with the adequate ratio of direct teaching and related pedagogical work (68 affirmative answers).

Interestingly, respondents agreed that pupils and their parents supported and respected them (92 responses), despite the fact that in previous answers they often perceived communication with parents as difficult and felt insufficiently prepared for it.

Most respondents felt very busy at work and performed their duties with great effort (85 answers).

On the positive side, however, most respondents did not indicate they would consider leaving the teaching profession over the next five years (86 responses).

Burnout Syndrome, Satisfaction Level

Most respondents felt positive rather than negative about their work, with 22% feeling the ability to accept their mistakes and improve their professional performance, 17.3% successfully coping with the challenges of teaching, 13.5% often being kind at work, 10.5% emotionally and mentally fulfilled at work, 9% full of energy for their job responsibilities, 12.8% have higher demands on themselves.

In contrast, 2.3% felt they were running out of strength, felt unwillingness to work, and experienced a sense of protest and anger. Only 3% felt overwhelmed by a feeling of helplessness, 3.8% felt that there was a loss of success in their working life, expressing a sense of failure. In 1.5%, respondents felt guilty about the fact they were unable to be kind, with 1.5% having a limited ability to be kind, and 0.8% of respondents suffering from professional burnout syndrome.

The majority of respondents stated that when they started working in an educational institution, they felt a lack of experience in working with pupils (69.2%). There was also indicated a lack of information (49.6%), lack of experience / information that novice teachers face problems (44.4%). The knowledge and skills taught at the university did not correspond to practice (43.6%), their work caused them tension (31.6%), it required more hours than indicated by the job description chart (32.3%), and they experienced a lack of respect from pupils and students (24.8%) or mistrust on the part of parents (18.8%).

Overall, more novice teachers stated that they were satisfied with the support they received as novice teachers from the educational institution (72.9%). However, it is also true that on a scale of 1 to 10, where ten represents the highest level of satisfaction, only 12% of teachers ticked this answer. The satisfaction of novice teachers in this respect is evidently more polarised. Comments on this question very often mentioned that the position of mentor either worked formally rather than practically, or that the novice teacher had to ask for support. However, when support was provided, it was no exception that the respondent mentioned that the support was not limited to the mentor but was often also provided by other colleagues.

“The institution did not provide me with a solid background in terms of information, and introduction to the aspects of this work. They didn’t treat me like a newcomer, but like someone who had many years of experience.”

“I am only provided support when I ask for it, and the offered support is very brief.”

“My mentor didn’t pay any attention to me, so I turned to colleagues who on one hand always had their door open but were busy with their own work.”

“Almost zero support. The director just wants the mentor’s work evaluation on a piece of paper. Then, he is satisfied.”

“Support is minimal, everyone looks after herself, the novice teacher is on their own, without feedback.”
“Almost zero help from the ‘guide teacher’. They were of no use to me in either of the two cases (two different schools). They didn’t even show me round the school. We never talked, I didn’t know which questions I could ask, and which questions were out of question. They were unpleasant and annoyed that they had to communicate with me at all.”

“At the beginning of my teaching practice, more experienced colleagues, including my mentor, were not at all willing to provide any information that could help (‘I also had to figure it out myself’). After an appeal from the school management, it is now (after 4.5 years of experience) much better.”

However, there were also positive comments submitted

“I have my two mentors, but also other colleagues with whom we consult on things.”

“Everyone has supported me from the beginning, but our school is truly exceptional in this respect.”

“At the first school (1st-3rd year of practice), the support was insufficient to none. At the new school, support from colleagues and management is significantly better. Nevertheless, it is not systematic in any of the schools, and it is strictly request-based.”

“The first year, I was assigned a colleague to help me. She was always helpful, but I wasn’t able to rely on her help much in distance learning. Then she went to a different school. I haven’t had anyone like that since. On the contrary, I immediately became an unofficial (unpaid) support to another novice teacher.”

In general, support, if established at the educational institution, is perceived by respondents as unsystematic, random, fragmented, and failing to cover all the needs of novice teachers (for example, the comments mentioned the lack of psychological and emotional support). Where support exists and is properly set up, it seems to be based on the overall set-up of the school and the school culture, which is based on support, collegiality, and friendship. In other words, it seems that a novice teacher must “hit” a good school, where the support of newcomers is part of the school’s strategy, and where there is a friendly atmosphere among the teachers rather than an atmosphere of hostility or antagonism.

When respondents were to define the additional support they would welcome, they clearly agreed with the following points: access to mentoring provided by experienced colleagues (130 responses), access to state-funded ‘summer schools’ (100), access to information materials on the teacher’s role, job rights and responsibilities, social dialogue, and digital tools for the provision and implementation of teaching (123), strengthening teachers’ rights and the responsibilities of pupils and their parents (114), providing teachers with an attractive salary (121), a financial contribution for on-the-job training if the student already works as a teacher and agrees to continue working as a teacher after graduation (101).

Consent, even if slightly less profound, was recorded regarding the following points: internship / induction period of up to three (3) years for novice teachers (82 responses), the need to teach no more than 80% of contact hours as set in the job description chart per the particular type of school (84), one-time recruitment benefit as a motivating factor (85), service apartment provided by a school for novice teachers (70).

Comments on this issue, as mentioned as desirable, were the introduction or strengthening of the following forms of support: mentoring, paired teaching, observations of lessons taught by colleagues followed by feedback, help from a psychologist, attractive salary, material comprising all the information needed by novice teachers throughout a school year, paid training, less contact hours, tandem teaching, a schedule that allows novice teachers to teach more parallel classes and thus recycle lesson plans, linking undergraduate training with practice, and greater cooperation with other supporting professions in education in case of pupils with behaviour issues.

“The main thing is the mentor (guide teacher) who should be willing to spend a lot of time with the novice teacher and explain everything to them, including the volume of the curriculum, schedule, field trips, etc.”

“More information, at least in the last year of the pre-graduate training.”

“A helpful, open and kind colleague would be enough, to whom I could turn for advice.”

“Good teachers will always leave within 5 years of their professional experience, because their salary will not be sufficient, and they will know that if they want to advance in the Czech educational system, they can do so, and even for more money. It just won't be in school. It is difficult to remain motivated and continue drafting lesson plans late at night, when my salary is half that of my friends who are just sitting in an office, are off at 5 p.m., and can take time off whenever they please irrespective of the time of year.”

Based on the questionnaire survey, it can be concluded that the moment of starting the first job after graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy is important, which may discourage even a very motivated adept teacher, should they feel denied help by the system or ignored. Both novice teachers and school directors have agreed in their responses that there was a lack of connection between the theoretical undergraduate training of future teachers and practice. A guide or mentor teacher could be an imaginary bridge between the Faculty of Pedagogy and real life (first job) at a particular school. The guide or mentor teacher could help the novice teacher to overcome the difficult start-up period while further developing their pedagogical knowledge and skills. At the same time, the guide or mentor teacher could also help the school to “shape” a teacher who will not only fit into the school and be a great match for its staff, but also develop a tendency to stay at the school. Naturally, all this, provided that the “shaping” of a new teacher is not limited to “the way things work at the particular school”, will help to develop and strengthen general knowledge and skills that would be transferable to other schools.

Just as there is a need to provide support for novice teachers, there is a need to ensure sufficient support for guide or mentor teachers. It is necessary to clearly define their position, powers, possible cuts in terms of the number of direct pedagogical activities (contact hours), and remuneration for the performance of this role. The current situation, where the support from guide or mentor teachers is more or less based on their voluntary commitment, enthusiasm, and altruism, results in different levels of the support provided and its different quality.