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## Beliefs of student of teaching: A case study

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### Abstract

This contribution is part of the research project “Teachers’ beliefs on the pedagogical use of children’s preconceptions”. The paper presents some of the principal outcomes of the research study focused on the beliefs of a student of teaching. The main objective of the research was to ascertain motivations for study and then for work as a teacher and identify the key factors which affect this role. The means for this identification was a qualitative design case study. The results of the analysis of data obtained lead to a representation of a teaching student, his motivations for working in the teaching profession and his convictions on the teaching profession.

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### 1. Introduction

This contribution presents the first of the outcomes of qualitative research whose objective is to investigate the convictions of teachers on the pedagogical use of children’s preconceptions. As the first probe into the research, we decided to investigate the conviction of students of teaching, their motivations for studying teaching and then for the selection of teaching as a profession. The study focuses on the motivations for study and path to study for our student Petr, who is in the first year of a master’s degree following on from bachelor’s studies at the Faculty of Education in Olomouc.

*“The teaching profession is a profession in which there are not solid security, but rather fragile compromises, professions in which teacher should have themselves himself under control: it is therefore a much more demanding than other more reputable ones. professionals, more reputable called”* (Štech, 1994. In Švec, 1999, p. 10).

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According Švec (1999), teacher training is based only on theory disciplines, theory of teaching these disciplines and the psychological and pedagogical theory, but for the profession itself is inadequate and can not adequately prepare teachers for their demanding profession. Contents of pedagogical training does not correspond with the needs of today's schools. "The faculties preparing future teachers of the pedagogical and psychological subjects only limited account the real pedagogical problems and situations faced by the teacher." (švec, 1999, p. 12).

The aim of the contribution is to outline the problems undergraduate teacher preparation by student Petr, describe the process and results of entering the field of qualitative research dealing with the motives for study and student teacher beliefs and discuss these findings.

## 2. Theoretical basis

The demands on teaching work are increasing. And yet it is teachers' convictions which play an important role in organising pupils' knowledge and information. It could be said that teachers' convictions fulfil the role of a kind of filter through which the phenomena of children's perceptions of the curriculum or other information acquired by the pupil in the course of learning can be interpreted.

### 2.1. Teachers' beliefs

We can encounter many terms in the literature which define or present teachers' beliefs. For illustration, Janssens et al. (1997) use the term subjective educational theory, which views the matter prescriptively, i.e. as a desired, stable and functioning state. As such it does not represent a neutral concept of the personal ideas of a specific person. A similar term used domestically is učitelovo pojetí výuky (teacher's teaching concept) in Mareš et al. (1996).

The term beliefs is also described as a system of values and positions (Rokeach, 1968). We can also understand belief as positions based on the faith that a certain set of information and opinions is true and correct. Together, convictions form our image of the world, and we are then ready to act on their basis (Hartl and Hartlová 2000).

Bandura defines teachers' belief as a personal belief in their capability to organise and deal with specific tasks (Bandura, 1997). He further says that beliefs govern our emotions, objectives and decisions. Teachers, as people responsible for the organisation, structure and method of learning and social development, rely on their implicit and explicit convictions in order to work within the complex context or a class group which belongs within a larger national and diverse culture.

In the submitted contribution, we assume that if we can better understand teachers' beliefs, and likewise the beliefs of students of teaching, the formation of beliefs and motivations for studying teaching, we can subsequently make a significant contribution to improving teaching methods and the potential success of reforms (Sang et al., 2009).

### 2.2. Research into the beliefs of students of teaching

The oldest Czech research found on a similar topic was the research Personality and Self-knowledge amongst Students (Kohoutek, 1998). At the current time, a number of specialists are looking into this field (Wiegerová, 2011). For example, they research novice students of teaching and investigate their personal perception of professional skills through differences in motivations for selecting the study of teaching.

The beliefs of teaching students are investigated much more extensively in non-Czech sources than they are domestically. Some authors say that the practice of students of teaching has little impact on the development of their beliefs (Mtika & Gates, 2010). A number of authors say that beliefs can be significantly influenced over the course of study, but only under specific conditions (stressing the impact of a constructivist approach and systematic reflection on practical experience), Korthagen, 1992, Valli, 1997, Pollard, 2001. Rimm-Kaufmann et al., (2006) discuss formulating optimal conditions for changing convictions amongst students of teaching.

### 2.3. Undergraduate teacher preparation in the Czech Republic

Basics of gaining professional skills of future teachers in undergraduate studies teachers at teacher preparation colleges. As reported by Mareš and Beneš (2013), it is mostly about the pedagogical faculty, although studies of teacher are also taught still studying on other faculties (philosophical, scientific, theological, artistic, economic, etc.).

Each teacher preparation program must be accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, on the basis of the Accreditation Commission (Bendl et al., 2011). Possibilities of gaining how to gain professional qualifications of teachers in primary school, are determined by section 7 of Act no. 563/2004 Coll., On teachers. Methods for obtaining professional qualifications of teachers of secondary school are provided for under Article 8 of the same Act.

The law also imposes an obligation to teachers in further education for workers to renew, maintain and complementary skills. Further education is organized by school director on the basis of consultations with the competent professional authority. When drawing up the plan of further education to take into account the learning needs of teachers and needs of the school and society are taken into account. (Act no. 563/2004 Coll.).

### 3. Entry to field

According to Švaříček, Šedřová those researchers who have a personal relationship with researchers have the easiest entrance into the research field. It is recommended such environment that will not only open, but is also willing to share information. The way of entering the field might affect the author's access to research data obtained (Švaříček & Šedřová, 2014). That is why the author chose as the first participants research student teacher, whom she knows personally and who volunteered to participate in the research.

The main aim of entering the field was to ascertain motivations for study and then for the profession of a teacher, and to identify key factors which affect this role.

The research was undertaken using a narrative interview conducted by the author with a student named Petr, with the author striving to elicit trust and a feeling of safety, which are an important precondition for the validity of its findings (Dvořák et al., 2011).

Narrative interview we specific a form of interview, when an individual is prompted to talk freely talked about a subject, about life events, experience, story and so on. well. His narrative builds the information segments at each other meaningfully linked either chronologically, content or otherwise and therefore these statements about everyday personal lives, they have a constant and general structures. It is believed that the free narration reveals subjective experience, which by means of direct questioning not (Reichel, 2009).

This method is based on the above assumption that the experience is naturally organized in the stories. Thus, if the person examined is stimulated to narrative, we get experience in their natural form. Structured here - rather than the interviewer's activities - from the very form of narrative (Hendl, 1977).

#### 3.1. Research participant

Student of teaching, Petr<sup>1</sup>

Faculty of Education student Petr, 24 years old, studies Special Education for the upper level of elementary schools and for secondary schools in combination with Foundations of Technical Sciences and Information Technology for Education. Petr studied at a secondary school for the hearing impaired, although he is not hearing impaired himself. Petr is now in the first year of his master's degree, following on from his bachelor's study.

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<sup>1</sup> In the standard sense of the phrase, student of teaching describes a higher education student preparing to work in the teaching profession.

### 3.2. Interpreting the research findings

Four categories were reconstructed from the recorded and analysed in-depth interview with Petr, given the working titles Why study (personal preference, family, faith in God, experience from secondary school), Getting to university (regional preference, lack of belief in his abilities, teaching as a way out, communication with people), I am a student (personal disappointment, efforts to succeed, not wanting to disappoint parents, difficult practice), What next (preference to work with hearing impaired, the desire to return, practice vs. the academic environment).

The following is an overview of the categories which most governed Petr's acts and his explanatory comments.

#### a. Why study

In this category, important phenomena were perceived to be: a) personal preference, b) family, c) faith in God, d) experience from secondary school

In his narrative, Petr often noted the influence of family on his decision. Hlad'o (2012) discusses the part parents play in deciding on a future career, noting that parents are the first and most important consultants in this decision. Petr also spoke of his interests, which crystallised during his studies at secondary school and likewise on the strong influence of his Catholic upbringing. Since Petr went to a secondary school for the hearing impaired, he saw a certain way forward in focusing on special education and linking it up with his interest in computing.

*"... when I was deciding what to do next, I found that computers are the kind of area which I might find interesting and fun."*

*"... also important was the fact that applications are quite expensive and I didn't want to be too much of a financial burden to my parents..."*

*"... I looked more for Catholics amongst fellow pupils as friends because I knew I could trust them and rely on them..."*

*"I probably chose special education and computing teaching because I know that my school for the hearing impaired gave me lots of experience..."*

#### b. Getting to university

We chose 'Getting to university' as the second category, in which Petr spoke of his motivations and path to admission to teaching. The selected codes are: a) regional preference, b) lack of belief in his abilities, c) teaching as a way out, d) communication with people.

Again, Petr demonstrated a strong bond to his family and home. Likewise, it was demonstrated that studying teaching for him was a kind of way out, as he did not particularly believe in his capability of getting to a different university, so he was particularly happy (he says) to get into the teaching degree.

Blatný (2010) discusses ambitions in regard to further study, where he mentions the link between further education and the socio-economic status of the family. The level of parental support and an individual's demands on himself have an impact.

*"... I admit I am a kind of home guy; I didn't want to go too far away from home, ..."*

*"... so there were some creative exams which I couldn't do at all, I suppose I didn't have the skills."*

*"... so I was quite, no, I was very pleased that I got into teaching."*

#### c. I am a student

In this category, phenomena perceived were: a) personal disappointment, b) efforts to succeed, c) not wanting to disappoint parents, d) difficult practice

This category proved to be of most importance. Petr spoke most about this, and described his experiences most strongly, which got the code personal disappointment. In his narrative, Petr spoke of the very difficult practice, which was very difficult, but which he also considers the deciding factor of when he stopped feeling like a pupil but rather like a teacher. We can term this event a watershed event (Lukas, 2007).

*"... the method of teaching annoyed me, which is generally weak throughout the Faculty of Education, ..."*

*"... I told myself I'd sacrifice everything to remain at this university."*

*"I didn't want to go home ashamed, with my head down you might say."*

*"... the first week (of practice), that was totally crazy..."*

#### d. What next

We determined these codes in this final category: a) preference to work with hearing impaired, b) the desire to return, c) practice vs. the academic environment.

Petr speaks of his future as if he would like to make use of his experience of secondary school and would like to return to his secondary school. Again, the connection to his family is clear. Petr often said he no longer wanted to be a student, but rather than seeing himself as a future teacher he appears to be looking forward to independence, a salary and employment.

*“... , but I'd rather focus on those children with impairments.”*

*“... and I've been thinking for some time I'd like to go back to my home town, because there is a prestigious school there, the one I went to as a student, so I'd like to go back there as a teacher.”*

*“... and because I'm already looking forward to the school, so I'll finish university here and go straight to work, ...”*

#### 4. Conclusion

With some simplification, it can be stated that the typical approach for the undergraduate teacher preparatory study is a gradual development and maturation of the teacher's personality, which transforms through continuous reflection on their teaching activities – from student to teacher, an expert on learning and developing other people. All models presented share a socio-constructivist basis which consider the teaching student as a 'subject under construction' (Kosová et al., 2012).

Looking at motivations for selecting the study of teaching, such motivations cannot be perceived as identical to the motivations for selecting the teaching profession. Some students choose to study teaching aware they do not want to teach in future. As such, they are motivated to study the subject of teaching at university, but not to dedicate themselves to the teaching profession in future. It should be noted, however, that for a large proportion of students preparing for the teaching profession, these motivations are the same, as their choice of higher education degree was clearly motivated by a desire to become a teacher (Straková, 2014).

Kaganová (1992) draws attention to the many teachers who go into practice, and teaching them self from undergraduate training has changed. Or we can say that the way a novice teacher thinks about himself, about his profession, what they believe, what are the values and attitudes, all have an impact on how they will decide on as a teacher.

According to Průchy (2005) it can be assumed that the motivation to join the teaching profession is domestically today – despite a marked interest in studying teaching – fairly low and superficial. At the same time, the question is posed as to how to find high quality students who aren't just interested in the teaching profession, but also have the prerequisites for doing so.

According Pravdova (2013), if experiences of students that received both as students and then through their own teaching experience, are reflected and professionally developed within the undergraduate teacher education is a way of creating to create a positive professional self open.

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