The Theoretical Nature and Practical Necessity of Pedagogical Supervision

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Abstract: Nowadays the teacher's professional activity is the basis of the quality of Education in Latvia and in the world. The European Union views the role of teachers and their lifelong learning and career development as key priorities. Beside the high demands that are set for teachers, they have been facing numerous problems and challenges in their professional activities. One of the most serious problems that ask for immediate solution is the on-going gap between the teacher's theoretical basis and praxis – the "real" classroom teaching situation. This problem is also described as "the Achilles heel of teacher education". Teachers gain theoretical knowledge on treatment of different situations in professional development courses. However they lack skills (competencies) to put the acquired knowledge into practice. This situation causes the main classroom problems teachers are facing – the discipline problems, the low level of students' intrinsic motivation and communication problems with the students' parents. The issues mentioned above require new supporting forms for the teachers' professional development that not only improve their professional skills but also *full development* of the human *personality*. The results of the research show that the teachers need regular and deep support that would offer a transformative learning environment characterised by reflection and self-evaluation. Pedagogical supervision is reflective by nature and is one of the support forms stimulating development of reflexive skills and can help teachers to solve problems in their professional work. The aim of this article is to study the theoretical nature and the practical necessity of the Pedagogical supervision.

Key words: pedagogical supervision, pedagogical activities, professional development, school education.

Introduction

Guidelines for strategies of sustainable development of Latvia by 2030 and development of education 2014 – 2020 indicate a people-centred development model the tool of realising which would be select and accessible life-long education. The European Union considers educators to be the main factor in fostering development of the system of education and achieving the goals of education. The role of educators, their life-long education and career development is a priority in the EU (Common European Principles…, 2005).

This framework demands serious assessment of support given to continuous professional development of teachers. Teachers in Latvia have a wide choice of opportunities for professional development today. Nevertheless, it appears that educators still encounter many problems in their pedagogical work. The research of DNB Baltic Barometer "Lack of discipline in Latvian schools, teachers have to be stricter" studied the most urgent problems in Latvian schools in 2014. Discipline problems in school (57%) and shortage of teachers as well as their small salaries (46%) were presented as the essential problems (Pētījums: Latvijas…, 2014).

The research *Teachers' work-related stress* of The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) discloses that teachers have the highest work- related stress level in comparison with other professions, which increasingly affect their health and wellbeing. In its turn work-related stress level in Baltic schools is one of the highest in Europe. Educators surveyed in the ETUCE research admit that 49% of teachers are on the verge of burning out (Teachers' work-related…, 2014).

The broadening of the gap between the theoretical basis of teacher education and the practice in school is also mentioned as a serious problem by Teacher Education Policy in Europe Network (TEPE) (Adubra, 2014).

The above mentioned problems show that besides the existing support measures like various professional development courses there is a necessity for new forms of assistance that would help

teachers to successfully join theoretical concepts with their practical application, to overcome contradictions between the demands of current laws and regulations and the frameworks of the new paradigm of education (Blūma, 2010), to create a social dialogue between the sides involved in education to search and find the ways of acquiring the knowledge.

Accordingly, on the one side there is a necessity for continuous development of teachers and on the other side there should be effective good quality and variegated support forms for professional and personal growth of teachers since it is the possibility for growth that is the main stimulus that cultivates positive motivation for professional work.

In discussions and publications concerning professional development of employees of different spheres more and more frequently we encounter the term supervision. Currently in Latvia this form of support for educators is not a common phenomenon, yet it is effectively applied by psychologists, psychotherapists and social workers.

Therefore the aim of the research under discussion is to establish the particularity of professional needs of teachers of comprehensive schools and to investigate the possibilities offered by supervision as transformative educative environment to professional development of teachers.

The aim of the article is to study the theoretical nature and the practical necessity of Pedagogical Supervision.

Research questions:
1. What is the character of professional needs of teachers?
2. What is the theoretical nature and practical significance of the pedagogical supervision?

Methodology

The theoretical basis of the research consists of analysis of literature about contemporary educational process (Mezirow, 1991; Barr, Tagg**,** 1995; Rutka, 2009; Andersone, 2009; Blūma, 2010; Burceva, 2010; Davidova, 2010; Kalniņa, 2010; Lanka, 2010; Mackēviča, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ducommun, 2010; Briška 2011; Lāce, 2014; Mardesic, 2014; Latkovska, 2015, and theoretical nature of pedagogical supervision and its practical facilities in the professional development of teachers (Proctor, 1984; Kadushin, Harkness 2014; Carroll, 2011; Creaner, 2011; Āboltiņa, 2012; Hawkins, Shohet, 2012; Truskovska, 2013).

The empirical basis of the research comprises results obtained from 71 respondents. The research has been done in two Secondary schools in Latvia. Research consists of quantitative and qualitative methods. Methods include analysis of scientific literature and resources, questionnaire for teachers and in-depth interview.

The method of data analysis –Frequency analysis for aggregating results of questionnaire, and correlation analysis for clarifying connection of work experience with different pedagogical problems and peculiarities (Pearson's Correlation Coefficient).

Results and discussion

The term *supervision* is used and explained in many ways (Pertoft, Larsen, 1991; Holmberg, 2001; Inskipp, Proctor, 2001; Wilmot, 2011; Āboltiņa, 2012; Truskovska, 2013), however, there is no essential contradiction in the explanations, yet there are conceptions for strengthening common ideas of the notion instead. In scientific literature supervision is defined as a process of alteration (Pertoft, Larsen, 1991) for development supervision of *participants' competences* where the learning situation or learning enviroment promotes the professionalism of participants and reduces professional uncertainty (Holmberg, 2001). In the learning process supervision is actualized development of emotional competence and empathy skills as well as development of emotional intelligence of the whole person (Āboltiņa, 2012). Supervision is a reflective process (Inskipp, Proctor, 2001), space and possibility for deep conversation and creative thinking (Wilmot, 2011, 69), that helps to recover self-confidence and promotes personal identity transformation into professional identity (Truskovska, 2013).

Almost in all definitions of supervision such words prevail as *learning, learning environment, learning situation, dynamic learning, learning environment,* etc. It means that supervision has always been connected to learning and development. K. Fielden (2008) has noted that scientific literature does not state explicitly what sort of learning supervision supports and facilitates. Transformational learning in supervision is mentioned as the latest kind of learning in supervision (Mezirow, 1991; Carroll, 2010; Wilmot, 2011; Adamson, 2011; Creaner, 2011). According to M. Carrol (2010, 17) transformational learning is „ the deepest form of learning" in supervision, because it accommodates both personal and professional learning. Transformation can occur at a cognitive level when perceptions are changed through deep learning, critical reflection and when change in perspective occurs. It can also occur at an emotional level, a „metanoia", a change of heart and leads to a change the way we interact in the world and supervision relationship. All human nature is present in supervision relationship (Creaner, 2011, 150), transformational learning involves body, mind, soul and feelings and it is work for a lifetime (Adamson, 2011, 91-100).

M. Creaner (2011) refers to J. Mezirow (1991) and R. Boyd (1991) and describes transformational learning as: a cognitive process that involves imagination, intuition, dreams, myths and metaphors (1); intensive and personal process (2); a reflection about past, present for future, who I am today based on all my experiences to date and who I want to become (3); a passionate move towards endless possibilities with a compassionate acceptance of limitations (4). J Wilmot (2011) points at the reflective nature of the supervision and possibility to look on things and processes, accepting the present situation not as bad or good but rather as a new opportunity for new development. M. Carroll (2011) describes reflection as purposeful focusing on thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviour in order to make meaning from those fragments of experience. The outcome of this reflection is to create a new understanding which in turn may lead to increasing choice, making changes or reducing confusion. T. Dinkelman (2009) stresses that knowledge and skills without reflective practise don't contribute any professional benefit therefore reflective practise is considered as the most important concept in professional development of teachers (Rutka, Andersone, 2012) so a reflective approach to action has been viewed as one of the main activities in the development of every professional (Killeavy, Moloney, 2010).

Therefore supervision as a *reflective process* (Inskipp, Proctor, 2001), as *reflective forum* (Āboltiņa, 2012) offers the save environment**,** supportive and transformational learning space (Truskovska, 2013), where solving problems occurs by learning from experience and realisation of a regular interpersonal exchange of knowledge and supporting development of professional skills and empathy in the mutual reflective process (Āboltiņa, 2012).

The empirical part of the research analyses teachers' viewpoint and reflections on problems they face in the pedagogical process and what kind of support is required for their professional development.

The highest necessity for educators is the need to develop professional zeal. Since one of the greatest problems today is encouragement of student motivation, the said necessity is self-evident, because a student can only be motivated by a zealous and motivated teacher. This leads to a need for such form of support that would motivate teachers, as it is only by liberating them from routine one can develop and foster their professional enthusiasm. Teachers also point at overload, tiredness, and professional burnout symptoms that manifest themselves as finding fault with other people like students, parents, management, local council and the whole society.

The least necessary point marked by teachers turns out to be necessity for reflection on their pedagogical work. Summarising the problems indicated by teachers one chiefly observes three problems:
- lack of student motivation 27%;
- problems with discipline 24%;
- problems connected with parents of students 22%.

10% of educators point out burnout symptoms. 7% present time shortage as a problem implying that there is no time to contemplate end evaluate work experience.

The results of research in the particular school correspond to the overall situation in the country, where the main problems are those of student discipline and low motivation as well as communication difficulties with parents and colleagues.

Empirical analysis reveals the complexity of the situation of educators despite the awareness of mission and job satisfaction granted by association with students. On the one hand the educator faces very high demands from society and on the other hand the educator meets lack of uniform demands and values in school and among parents, the low esteem of teacher's profession and low student motivation, problems of discipline, which are related to disorders of learning and behaviour and integration in the study process.

An in-depth interview with the school director discloses an increasing number of situations with incomprehension and confusion as to the right way of action in the case. Also, teachers' questionnaires reveal failing confidence in efficiency of applied methods as well as a high necessity for acquisition of effective methods of student motivation. This indicates that methods successfully used earlier do not work anymore.

This has been asserted by the survey results, where teachers consider reflection to be unimportant in their work, even though it is recognised that forming a reflexive approach is to be regarded as one of the main activities in every professional's development. Reflection in contemporary education process is acknowledged as the main concept in preparing teachers and their professional development. Knowledge and experience alone without reflection present no professional gain at all; therefore formation of reflexive approach to operation is to be considered one of the main activities in the development of every professional (Killeavy, Moloney, 2010, 1070).

Therefore teachers need forms of assistance that would develop and foster their self-reflection and contemplation of their pedagogical work forming their "ability to step back and pose hard questions about: why are things done this way? How could I do it differently?" (Carroll, 2011, 18).

As a consequence there is a topical and urgent task of constructing technologies for development of reflective skills and professional competency of teachers. Analysis of professional literature led to a conclusion that supervision, which is reflective by nature, is one of the support forms stimulating development of reflexive skills and can help educators to solve problems in their professional work, as supervision tends to look for sources of problems through reflection and self-evaluation (Rutka, 2009).

Supervision is a significant mechanism in teachers' professional development and it has several functions. A. Kadushin (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014) declares three main functions of social work supervision educative, supportive and managerial. Hawkin and Smith (2006) writing about coaching supervision describe developmental, recoursing and qualitative as the three main functions. B. Proctor regarding supervision of counselling uses the terms formative, restorative and normative. A. Kadushin's (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014) function focus on the role of the supervisor and B. Proctor's (1988) on the supervisee benefit but P. Hawkins and N. Smith (Hawkins, Smith, 2006) focus on the process in which both supervisor and supervisee are engaged.

Knowledge of classification of functions of supervision is necessary for clearness and understanding the duties of a supervisor, for tackling problems and determining the concept of the formation of a joint workspace (Āboltiņa, 2012).

Supportive function. The main question of the supportive supervision is the employee's moral and his satisfaction at work. The basic task of supportive supervision is practical and psychological support to employee by developing his ability to manage stress efficiently. The supportive function is the sustaining form of supporting action. And it is suitable for competent and qualified employees as well as for young employees.

Managerial function. The basic task of managerial supervision is improvement and maintenance of professional standards and co-operation with the administration. This function helps to notice mistakes, to uncover principal stereotypes and prejudices, it identifies weak points and oversees adherence to ethic principles in professional work (Āboltiņa, 2012).

Educational function. The main task of educative supervision is to ensure personal and professional development of an employee to the extent of their perfect fulfilment. The primary focus of educational function is to provide safe environment where employee can obtain necessary knowledge, skills and experience through encouraging reflection and accurate explanation of tasks and specifications of their

work (Truskovska, 2013). As professional development is an obligatory demand in all professional spheres the role of educational function of supervision is highly significant in maintaining professional standards.

Table 1

Statement of reasons of necessity of supervision as a support form attested by theoretical and empirical research

Necessities and problems of the teachers	Supply of pedagogical supervision	Functions of Supervision
Promotion of teachers' professional zeal.	Supervision offers time, space and possibilities for the teachers to rise above their daily routine and see new solutions to problems (Creaner, 2011).	Developmental (Hawkins, Smith, 2006)
Development of overall intelligence of teachers.	Transformational learning in supervision is „the deepest form of learning" in supervision, because it accommodates both personal and professional learning (Caroll, 2010). Transformational learning involves body, mind, soul and feelings and it is work for a lifetime (Adamson, 2011).	Developmental (Hawkins, Smith, 2006)
Lack of student motivation.	Supervision is a reflective process (Inskipp, Proctor, 2001), space and possibility for deep conversation and creative thinking (Wilmot, 2011).	Educational (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014)
Problems with student discipline. Problems connected with students' parents.	In the learning process of supervision development of emotional competence and empathy skills as well as development of emotional intelligence of the whole person are actualized (Āboltiņa, 2012).	Developmental (Hawkins, Smith, 2006)
Symptoms of professional burnout.	Supervision helps to notice symptoms of professional burnout and prevent them (Āboltiņa, 2012).	Supportive (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014)
Lack of time to think over the teaching praxis.	Supervision is essentially is a space and time to foster transformative learning that is critical reflection about teaching praxis (Creaner, 2011). Supervisees learn from practice through reflection and become reflective practitioners (Carroll, 2011).	Educational (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014)
An increasing number of situations with incomprehension and confusion as to the right way of action in the case.	The learning situation or learning environment in Supervision promotes professionalism of participants and reduces professional uncertainty (Holmberg, 2001).	Educational (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014)
Teachers consider reflection to be unimportant in their work.	Reflection is tied closely to mindfulness, paying attention and being perceptive and becomes a rational and emotional focus that delves deeply into all aspects of our work (Carroll, 2011).	Educational (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014)

The Table 1 shows the main necessities and problems of the teachers in their professional practice and possibilities for problem solution offered by developmental, supportive and educational functions of Supervision.

Conclusions

The conjunctive key words in various definitions of supervision are *learning, reflection* and *development*. Supervision attracts attention to daily activities and fosters development of an employee's professional and emotional abilities and empathic skills by elaborating emotional intelligence in general. In education one increasingly encounters discrepancy between theory and practice. Teachers are unable to apply their knowledge in practical work, which is testified by problems of discipline, the low level of motivation as well as communication difficulties with pupils' parents. These and all results mentioned in the research specify teachers' requirements that cannot be met by just 36-hour further education courses. Teachers need regular and deep support that would offer a transformative learning environment characterised by reflection and self-evaluation. It has been stated that supervision is reflective by nature and will thus promote teachers' skills of reflective activity. Thus Pedagogical supervision is one of the support forms stimulating development of reflexive skills and can help teachers to solve problems in their professional work, as supervision tends to look for sources of problems through reflection and self-evaluation.

This theoretically obtained conception coincides with the idea acquired during in-depth interviews that educators need assistance in the form of Pedagogical supervision.

Consequently, the research has confirmed that the supply of Pedagogical supervision is consistent with the indispensable demand of present-day educators. So there is an importunate need to scientifically acknowledge Pedagogical supervision as a valuable and indispensable form of assistance in teachers' professional development. Understanding of Pedagogical supervision as a support form has to be fostered as it helps accept challenges, overcome difficulties and solve problems, and eventually develops teachers as persons and professionals.

Although the empirical research was carried out within two secondary schools in Latvia, it can be considered that the conclusions drawn from it are topical throughout the country in general as certified by the compliance of the results gained by both empirical and theoretical research. Further investigation could be a deeper study of Pedagogical supervision as a new form of support in teachers' professional development. It is important that Pedagogical supervision on a scientific level make headway   for comprehensive school teachers just as it has been for social pedagogues.

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