

ICEEPSY 2014

Teachers' and Teacher Educators' Attitudes to Educational Changes: an Insight to the Czech Educational System

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Abstract

The paper is a presentation of an analytical-comparative insight into the contemporary Czech educational system from the perspective of educational changes via teachers' assessment and attitudes. This view is rooted mainly in the following aspects: a. permanent flexibility of the contemporary society, human being as well as schooling, b. heterogeneity of educational change and its reception, c. teachers (both prospective and in-service, as well as teacher educators) being key agents of the teaching- learning process representing a process of educational change. The paper follows the author's experience and results from/of: 1. teaching at, and innovating, teacher education study programmes, 2. quantitative research in the field of teacher as an innovative agent of education with further ongoing theoretical studies (2007 – 2010), 3. active participation in an applied research (2012) in the field of school self-assessment, which in the Czech Republic substitutes an educational change having been implemented since 2005, 4. 2014 survey mapping teachers' subjective view of educational changes in the Czech Republic

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of ICEEPSY 2014.

Keywords: educational change; types of changes; educational system; Czech Republic; teachers; teacher educators; attitudes

1. Introduction

The contemporary Czech society faces a wide variety/ comprehensive set of educational changes. This paper provides an insight into the educational changes that seem to be prevalent in the contemporary Czech education system, in particular, since the beginning of the third millennium. The insight into the Czech educational change environment is realised by a survey monitoring in-service/practicing, prospective/pre-service teachers' and teacher educators' attitudes to 9 changes or specific key innovation content of the education changes: framework

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educational programmes (FEPs), school educational programmes (SEPs), pupils' key competences, electronic evidence of pupils, state-level of maturity examination, school optimization (merging and closing down of schools), school self-evaluation, teaching standards, innovative teaching technology.

Those current educational changes or key aspects of innovation content represent the main current issues in the Czech educational system and are viewed from the perspective of three subtypes of Czech teachers: a) in-service/practicing secondary education teachers, b) pre-service/prospective secondary education teachers (students of pre-graduate teacher study programmes), c) teacher educators (teaching at pre-service and in-service programmes). The sample is divided according to a combined criterion: the stage of professional career and type of educational institution where respondents work or study. Teachers stand in the centre of attention particularly due to the fact that from the perspective of the theory/theories of educational change/s teachers represent one of the key factors of whether a kind of equilibrium and balance between the necessity of innovation and necessity of continual development, and tradition will be achieved or not.

The paper follows some theories of educational changes and focuses on the following issues:

- What educational changes seem to prevail in the contemporary Czech society and Czech educational system from the perspective of theories of educational changes?
- What is the role of teachers' resistance vs. innovativeness/pro-innovative involvement in terms of attitudes to changes?
- How are these changes perceived and assessed by a sample of pre-service/prospective and in-service/practicing secondary education teachers, and their educators at the Faculty of Education (University Hradec Králové)?

2. Theory of educational change: relevant concepts and a view of Czech educational changes

The key concepts from the theory of educational change, relevant to the aim of the paper, appear to be: meaning and types of educational changes, heterogeneity during the process of educational changes, and resistance to educational changes.

2.1. Educational change/s: meaning and types

Educational changes represent one of the key phenomena in the contemporary educational systems as well as an inseparable, integral part of modern pedagogy. The key instruments and dimensions of educational changes include: 1. teaching materials, 2. teaching methods, 3. teaching conceptions and theories, including opinions and attitudes (Fullan, 2001). Educational changes stand for the compendium or a system of: a. theoretical plans, projects and visions, b. activities necessary for implementing the innovations into practice, and c. implementation outcomes (Průcha, et al, 2009). Briefly said, educational change might be viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon and heterogeneous process with mutual reactive responses of change agents, recipients, and change content – innovation, process, and resistance (e.g. interfering factors), as well as the environment, and conditions (Ellsworth, 2001).

As to basic typologies of educational changes, according to the focused component of educational change, we can differentiate between: a. content-oriented changes, b. structure-oriented changes, c. methods-oriented changes, d. complex changes (oriented on combination of at least two above mentioned criteria or types), e. product-oriented changes, f. process-oriented changes (Hall, Hord, 1987).

Apart from these types there might be classified two different types according to the extent, initiative, and way of dissemination; they are called: innovative changes, and reform changes (Vrabcová, 2007). Innovative educational changes mostly represent a change of only a part (or some parts) of a system to be improved (innovated). Innovative changes are initiated at the micro level of national educational system, by expert groups, individual teachers, parents etc. Some typical examples of this type of change are bottom-up established alternative schools, or new teaching methods employed of a teacher's or teachers' will (on the basis of individual professional experience, instead of a

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