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TEACHING PROFESSION IN SLOVAKIA IN THE EU CONTEXT

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A study investigated the perceptions and level of knowledge of education law and relevant documents, it presents the partial results focused on professionalization of the teachers' profession among regular education teachers (n = 275). The aim of the theoretical part is to present the basic terminology connected to the pedagogical profession. The authors focus especially on the determination and legislation of professionalization of this profession in the context of Slovakia's accession to the European Union. The research identified opinions of teachers on the changes that EU legislation brought to their work.

Key words: law education in Slovakia, teaching profession, EU

Introduction

The professionals declare an obvious interest in pedagogical profession. One of the reasons is that it is a profession that undeniably and significantly influences the life of individual, family and whole society. There is no other profession that would have such a high number of admirers and critics at the same time. One of the reasons is that all of us have certain experience with this profession.

There are numerous definitions of teaching profession. Generally, the pedagogue is defined as a person responsible for education at different levels of education system of a society.

The characteristics of the teaching profession can be found in the legislation of a particular country. Concerning Slovak legislation it is namely the law 245/2008 and 317/2009¹. The last one deals with peda-

¹ The Law 245/2008 on upbringing and education (School Act) This law defined the principles, aims, range, contents, forms and organisation of education at school institutions,

gogical employees and professional employees. The pedagogical employee according to the above mentioned law is the physical person performing pedagogical activity. Pedagogical activity means a set of activities realised in the form of direct educational-upbringing activity and other activities dealing with it.

The terms pedagogical profession and teaching occupations are used synonymically. Occupations exist also in the form of guilds, semiprofessions and professions. According to Lukášová² semiprofessions refer to a type of work realised in the big bureaucratic organisations with the hierarchic structure and administration authority, high number of members with preponderance of women, lower education with shorter training period and have lower legitimate status.

A group of sociologists suggested a categorisation of professions that is based on the difficulty of work. There are nine categories ordered from elementary occupations to the profession which reflects the most difficult work³.

According to the scale defined based on the difficulty and autonomy of work the pedagogical profession belongs to the highest categories. Its position should also bring high level of prestige. The social prestige or status deals with an accepted hierarchy of values in the given society. The Czech sociologists Tuček a Machonin⁴ suggested the scale of the prestige of occupations. Out of 70 occupations the first position was taken by doctors, ministers and the third position was taken by associate professors and professors at the universities (7th position – elementary school teachers). Průcha states that despite the fact teachers do not perceive or feel the prestige of their profession. There are certainly more reasons. We assume that the basic reason is non-motivation financial evaluation (low salary) and also apparent easy study (opinions on low level of teacher training faculties), high level of feminisation in teaching, personal experience (teacher-parent contact), absence of objective criteria for evaluation of the teacher efficacy⁵.

Profession also creates the social status of a man. Ornstein, Levine and Gutek (2011, p. 31) identify the basic characteristics of a profession:

degrees of education, entrance processes and graduation processes. Law 317/2009 coll. on Law on pedagogical employees and professional employees and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts defines rights and duties, assumptions and professional development of the pedagogical employees and professional employees.

² B. Kosová, *Profesia a profesionalita učitel'a*, Pedagogická revue, 2006, roč. 58, č. 1, s. 1-14.

³ J. Průcha, *Moderní pedagogika*, Praha 2005, 481s.

⁴ J. Průcha, *Učitel'. Současné poznatky o profesi*, Praha 2002, 160s.

⁵ B. Kasáčová, *Učitel'. Profesia a příprava*. Pedagogická fakulta UMB, Banská Bystrica 2002, 152s.

a defined body of knowledge and skills beyond that grasped by laypersons, a sense of public service; a lifetime commitment to career, application of research theory and practice, control over licencing standards, autonomy in making decision about selected spheres of work, an acceptance of responsibility to service rendered, etc. At the same time it enables high level of confidence, social prestige and economic standing.

In the context of pedagogical profession the terms **professional identity** and **autonomy** are mentioned; the professional identity as a perception of one's own professionalism and understanding own position in the system of social relations in a society. Professionalism and autonomy are based on presumptive deep knowledge and skills. In particular education conditions the work of teacher is led by the aim, content and method of teaching. However, the everyday problem-solving of the tasks connected with their activity is determined by the individuality of a pupil's personality.

The success of teacher's work depends on the ability to influence and manage others and what more the ability to control themselves and their expectations. At the same time a teacher has to overcome external factors, as e.g. students' resistance, insufficient conditions for their performance, constant changes and new expectations of the society etc. These are the results of the social conditions' changes where the pedagogical profession is realised. The substance of teacher's professionalism is based firstly on learning and understanding a theory. Recognised professionals not only have extensive theoretical knowledge but they also produce new information (knowledge). The unnecessary condition of teacher's professionalism is an integration of knowledge into the particular science branch, but also knowledge from the fields of pedagogy, psychology, didactics and psychodidactics. Lisbon strategy (2005) expects teacher profession to be mainly highly qualified and continually learning. Further documents highlight the improvement of the efficacy of teachers' education, profession competences and constant professional development. As the consequence of reflecting the calls of European Union it was necessary to create a model of teacher professional development.

The professionalization of teacher profession required a determination of key competencies of teacher. Teacher's preparation is, in this sense, divided into the following fields: subject, pedagogical-psychological, and application. At the same time he must be able to plan, realise and evaluate an educational process. Based on several authors (e.g. Kosová, Kasačová, Pavlov) we may conclude that teacher as an expert professional should be a high-quality professional who should know the way how to improve their own personalities that would simplify learn-

ing and would lead to self-reflection. At the same time we have to stress that a real professionalism is formed by his/her professional practice and experience and also his/her effort to constantly improve oneself, i.e. his/her life-long learning.

Pedagogical profession differs from others as a student cannot voluntarily choose a teacher however student becomes teacher's client based on a legal duty. Authors that deal with the teacher professionalism (Helus, Kasáčová, Kosová), determine the qualifications and assumptions: a teacher should be qualified at MA level, should be personally mature, should be acceptable partner for parents, professionals he works with in order to develop personality of his pupils, the teacher also should have a social status and he should study in the postgraduate period with the aim to develop his abilities and skills at the professional level. Concerning requirements on teaching profession three dimensions are defined⁶: personal, ethic and subject-matter.

– **Personal dimension concerns** personal characteristics. It is predominantly motivation, talent, authenticity, creativity, freedom, responsibility, cognitive presumptions. Kasáčová⁷ points out that the basic presumption for managing pupils is „teacher's ability to build positive relations and approaches towards himself/herself and to apply them in the pedagogical reality“.

– **Ethical dimension** deals with behaviour in the frame of moral norms and moral laws. Teacher's approaches and behaviour should be in harmony with the ideological, aesthetic and cultural principles of a particular society. It is the teacher who shapes the child's personality via different specific needs, characteristic for a particular society.

– **Subject-matter dimension.** This dimension deals with a process of professionalization of pedagogic profession.

Pedagogical profession, similarly as other professions has its own periods, phases that the pedagogical employee goes through. The preparation phase (pregradual – pre-service preparation) is a preparation realised by universities for teacher's professional performance. In Slovakia, the university education (second cycle) is an obligatory condition for the ability to become a teacher. The realisation period starts in the period of in-service teaching. It also has its own phases, namely - adaptation, integration and stabilisation. The most demanding period out of those above mentioned is the adaptation phase as frequently teachers feel a discrepancy between knowledge and experience. The gradual integration of experience

⁶ B. Kasáčová, *Učiteľská profesia a jej dimenzie*, [in:] *Biodromálne premeny učiteľa – učiteľ v premenách času 2003*, Prešov 2003, s. 23-41.

⁷ Ibidem, s. 47.

into the teacher's performance is stabilised and not sooner than in the stabilisation period we can talk about the professional performance.

The important part of the stabilisation phase is own activity – self-study of a teacher that leads to deepening the pedagogical mastery. The fundamental motif of self-study is a necessity to keep pace with constantly faster speed of a development of science, research and thus a study branch as well. Self-study depends not only on the teacher himself but also on a system of education in a country where he works. It is natural, that a society invests a big effort in teacher's permanent development of their pedagogical competences.

Functions and contents of teachers's work

Function of this profession is given by the significance of the education in a society. The level of education is becoming a significant indicator of the country development. Teachers are considered to be carriers of education in a sense of transmission of cultural values and thus they become responsible for enculturation of young generation and also for increasing educational level of society. Reforms applied in the EU countries in the last years are concentrated on the change of understanding of teacher training. Teacher quality and support of their work in developed democracies is one of the priorities of the state educational policy.

Upbringing and education as a social process fulfils various functions⁸. Education is an **actor of social changes, economy development**, it influences a **social and personal development** of individual and enables **professional inclusion** of individual into a society. To provide education in the context of future individual position in a society is the fundamental social task for a teacher. As we have already mentioned the teaching profession is categorised as demanding in the international standard classification of occupation. Determinants of intensity of teaching profession are defined in various contexts⁹. Mostly they introduce: systematic longitudinal preparation (in all phases of a profession), everyday home preparation for the performance (test preparation, evaluation of written assignments and search for new ways of teaching), necessity of a complex, global approach (cognitive, emotional and conative aspects), psychic burden (constant motivating learners), high intensity work (teachers working even

⁸ M. Rabušicová, *K sociologii výchovy, vzdělání a školy*, Brno 1991, 125s.

⁹ N. Krajčová, *Problémy pedagogickej profesie z hľadiska jej sociologickej analýzy*, [in:] *Biodromálne premeny učiteľa – učiteľ v premenách času 2003: FF PU v Prešove*, Prešov 2003, s. 236-242.

during breaks, even during lessons when they do not directly teach), intensive and multi-faceted social control (pupils, parents, public), responsibility for safety and health of children (during lessons and breaks), problem of exact measurements of efficacy of performance of pedagogical profession (inadequacy to measure efficiency by the grades, nor success of particular individual or group).

Blížovský, Kučerová, Kurelová¹⁰ realised research focused on intensity of pedagogical profession. A group of respondents understood extreme burden as a result of: increased demands of the adaptation to frequently unconsidered changes, complicated orientation in a wide spectrum of textbooks and in opposing and contrary information, non-qualified involvement of parents and society to teacher's competences and space, decreasing authority of teachers in the public, increasing level of pupils' aggression, inappropriate value system, a limited possibility of teacher to solve serious offences of pupils. Recently, the demands on professionalization of pedagogical profession have been increased in the context of Slovakia's accession to the European Union. A lot of documents were accepted to harmonise and unify the requirements on educating children and youth in EU, but also teacher training.

According to Lisbon strategy (2005) teaching profession requires high qualification, lifelong learning, mobility and partnership. Document Improving the quality of teacher education, approved in 2007 accentuates the professional competences, potential of reflection in teaching profession and supports a professional development of teachers. There is an evident shift in the priorities in the international context` international context is confirmed also by various research activities that bring particular information about the status quo of teaching in the member states (Pavlov-Valis). The issue had been studied not only in Slovakia, we can mention the researches realised by R. Brookshire, J. Klotz 2002; M. Littleton 2008; E. Ogletree, W. Garrett 1981¹¹. In the context of above mentioned changes the presented research was realised. Its primary aim was to investigate opinions of teachers on changes that should lead towards professionalization of their profession after Slovakia's accession to the European Union. To achieve the aim we set the following tasks:

¹⁰ B. Blížovský, S. Kučerová, M. Kurelová, *Středoevropský učitel na prahu učící se společnosti 21. Století*, Brno 2000, 252s.

¹¹ R. Brookshire, J. Klotz and Conway, *Selected Teachers' Perceptions of Special Education Laws*, Arkansas 2002; M. Littleton, *Teachers' Knowledge of Education Law*, Action in Teacher Education, 2008, vol. 30, no. 2, p. 71-78; E. Ogletree, W. Garrett, *Teachers' Knowledge of School Law*, [serial online], January 1, 1981; Available from: ERIC, Ipswich, MA. Accessed April 20, 2013.

– to find out the level of informedness of pedagogical employees about the changes in legislation after Slovakia's accession to the EU.

– to learn about the opinions of pedagogical employees on those changes,

– to present ideas how to improve the quality of teacher's training, performance conditions that would enable more effective professionalization. To assess knowledge and opinions, the questionnaire consisting of 21 questions was used. The questionnaire included open-ended, multiple-choice and closed ended types of questions. Data were managed mainly in frequency table and graphs and they were qualitatively assessed. Two hundred and four Prešov and Košice region area elementary and secondary teachers were surveyed through responses to 21-item questionnaire to determine the extent of their knowledge as well as their opinion on school law and educational documents. The sample consisted of predominantly women 86,18% (see Table 1).

Table 1

Sample description

		Male		Female		total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
GENDER		38	13,82	237	86,18	275	100
AGE	24-30 yrs	14	36,84	59	24,89	73	26,55
	31-40 yrs	8	21,05	87	36,71	95	34,55
	41-50 yrs	11	28,95	43	18,14	54	19,64
	51 - 60yrs	5	13,16	46	19,41	51	18,55
	more than 60	0	0,00	2	0,84	2	0,73
	Total	38	100	237	100	275	100,00
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	less than 5 yrs	14	36,84	70	29,54	84	30,55
	5 - 10 yrs	8	21,05	48	20,25	56	20,36
	more than 10 yrs	16	42,11	119	50,21	135	49,09
	Total	38	100	237	100	275	100,00
ST. PROGRAMME ORIENTATION	humanities	6	15,79	136	57,38	142	51,64
	natural sciences	25	65,79	70	29,54	95	34,55
	combination	7	18,42	31	81,58	38	100,00
	Total	38	81,57895	237	86,91983	275	86,18

Another criterion was the distribution of respondents according to the age. The aim was to cover all categories of age active at our schools. The highest percentage of respondents belong to the category 31 – 40 years (34,55%) The smallest group was over 60 years (0,73%), what copies the distribution of teachers in Slovakia. The last criterion for group categorisation was the length of practice. Concerning demographic data we also tried to find out the study programme the respondents teach what resulted in wide variety of combinations. Whatmore, in Slovak educational system teachers usually combine two major study programmes, what means they can have studied humanities oriented study programmes, natural science study programmes or a combination of humanities and natural sciences. As some of the respondent had studied even three majors it was difficult to analyse them precisely and the study programme orientation was excluded as a factor for analyses.

Research results/data interpretation

This study sought to assess teachers' knowledge and opinions on the changes that should lead towards the professionalization of the pedagogic profession after the Slovakia's accession to the European Union. In the frame of the first task we examined teachers' knowledge of **legislation changes** in a school system. The Table 2 summarises the answers about teacher's knowledge that after the Slovakia's accession to the EU the Slovak legislation has changed.

Table 2

Level of knowledge about the changes in school legislation

Level of knowledge ab. the changes in legislation	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience								Length of teaching experience									
	less than 5 yrs		5-10 yrs		more than 10 yrs		total		less than 5 yrs		5-10 yrs		more than 10 yrs		total			
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
yes	3	21,43	0	0,00	5	31,25	8	21,05	13	18,57	19	39,58	54	45,38	86	36,29	94	34,18
partially yes	5	35,71	5	62,50	11	68,75	21	55,26	41	58,57	29	60,42	65	54,62	135	56,96	156	56,73
very low knowledge	6	42,86	0	0,00	0	0,00	6	15,79	16	22,86	0	0,00	0	0,00	16	6,75	22	8,00
no	0	0,00	3	37,50	0	0,00	3	7,89	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	1,09
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100

More than half of the respondents (56,73%) confirmed that they partially know about the changes in Slovak legislation after 2004 when we joined EU. As many as 34,18% claimed they are aware of the changes. Less than 10% of respondents expressed they have very low knowledge

about the changes. A rare answer (slightly more than 1%) was that they did not have any information. Concerning the most frequent answer (partially yes) there was not a significant difference recorded (males 55,26 and females 56,96). See Fig. 1.

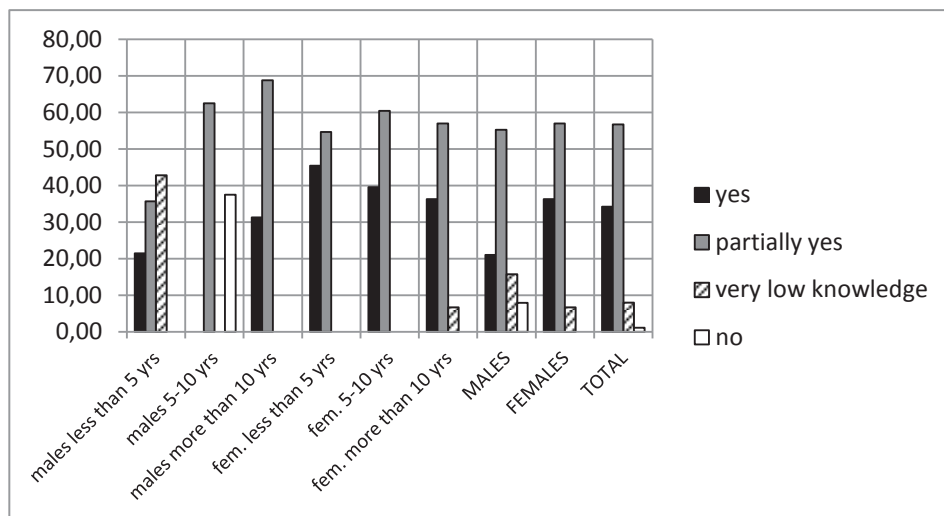


Fig. 1. Level of knowledge about the changes in school legislation

It is important and necessary for a teacher to be informed and aware of not only the legislation dealing with school system but also to know the legislation concerning professionalization of the pedagogic profession. This led us to question about teachers' knowledge of particular laws that change and influence the performance of pedagogical profession. The data gained are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3

Level of school/pedagogical legislation knowledge

Level of school/pedagogical legislation knowledge	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience						Length of teaching experience											
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs		total		less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs		total			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
yes	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	18,75	3	7,89	8	11,43	0	0,00	19	15,97	27	11,39	30	10,91
partially yes	8	57,14	5	62,50	8	50,00	21	55,26	35	50,00	32	66,67	84	70,59	151	63,71	172	62,55
very low knowledge	6	42,86	0	0,00	5	31,25	11	28,95	19	27,14	11	22,92	16	13,45	46	19,41	57	20,73
no	0	0,00	3	37,50	0	0,00	3	7,89	8	11,43	5	10,42	0	0,00	13	5,49	16	5,82
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100

The evidence shows that majority of the sample (62,55%) indicated that they partial know legislation. Only 10,91% agreed that they are closely familiar with the pedagogical legislation. On the other hand 16 respondents (5,82%) have no knowledge about those documents. Surprisingly, females were more positive 75,11% compared to males (63,16%).

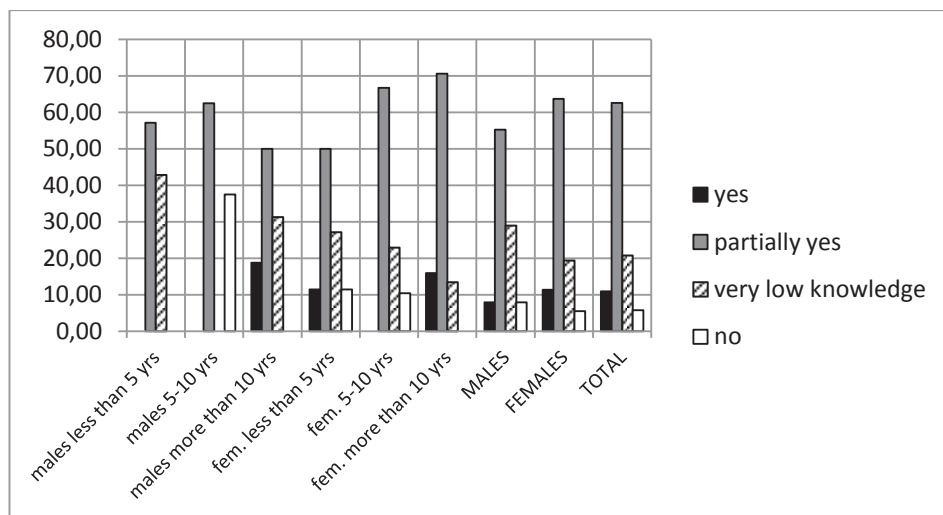


Fig. 2. Level of school/pedagogical legislation knowledge

It is apparent from the table and graph that with respect to the length of experience the best level of informedness was indicated by the group of respondents with the teaching experience longer than 10 years. The study of the documents relevant to one's profession is an evidence of an interest in a profession and its improvement. That raised a question to name at least one document that discusses the changes in relation to their profession. More than three quarters of the participants (76,73%) introduced at least one document. Almost one forth (23,27%) could not name a single document. The difference between males and females was quite interesting, more than 80% of women could name at least one document, while only slightly more than half of males. More detailed information can be found in the Fig. 3.

The selection of documents reflects the knowledge of mainly recent laws directly influencing the teachers' work. The graph illustrates the dominant position of those laws and ordinances dealing with a necessity and form of lifelong learning of teachers. Thirty-eight per cent of respondents introduced the Law on pedagogical employees and professional employees and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts (317/2009).

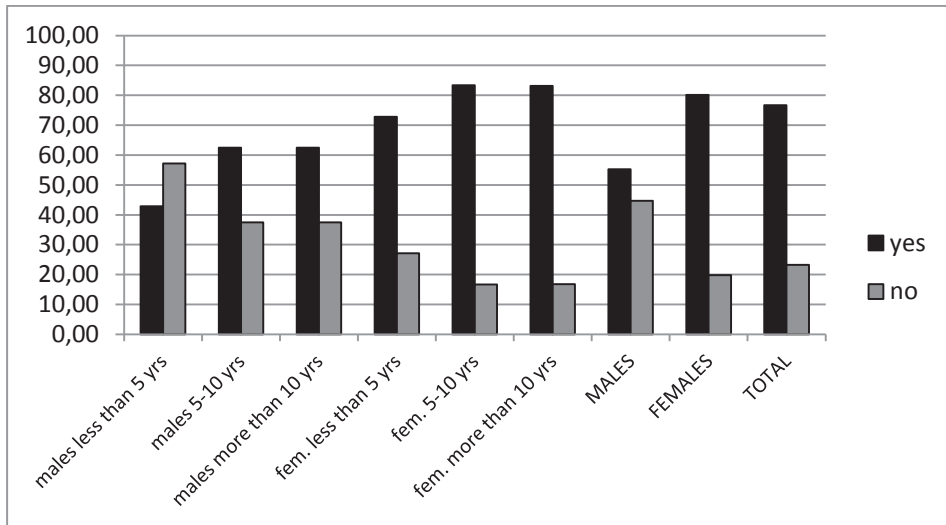


Fig. 3. Informedness about the documents dealing with training of the pedagogical employees

There is a marked difference between males and females indicating the knowledge of Law 245/2008 where the number of women is almost three times higher than males. The Law 245/2008 on upbringing and education (School Act) was the second known document reported by respondents.

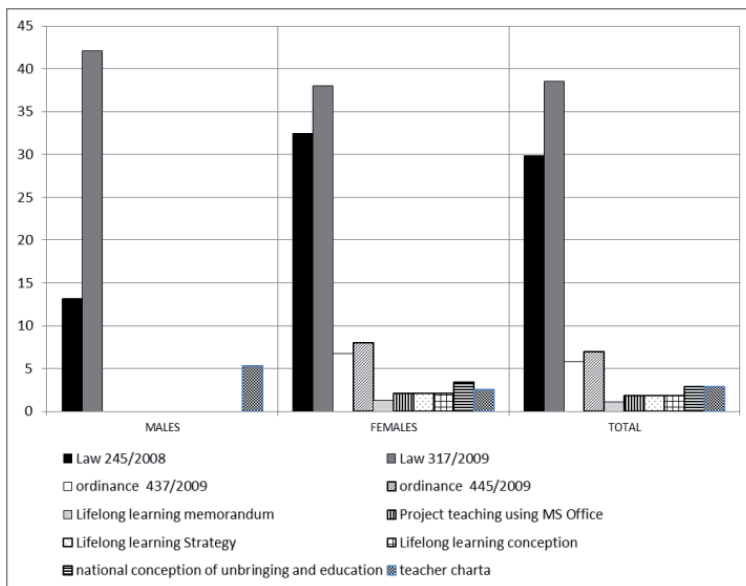


Fig. 4. Documents introduced by respondents

Respondents suggested also other documents. The best informed were the female respondents with the teaching practice over 10 years. This result is quite natural as they are in service a longer period and have come across older and more recent documents in their career more frequently than their colleagues with shorter pedagogic experience. A strikingly small percentage of participants indicated a knowledge of the ordinance 437/2009 and 445/2009 that deal with qualification presumptions and categories of pedagogical employees and professional employees and on continual life-long education, credits, attestations of pedagogical employees and professional employees.

A few respondents mentioned Teacher Charter, Lifelong learning memorandum, Lifelong learning Strategy, Lifelong learning Conception, i.e. documents that are certain visions of education. It is interesting that female respondents mentioned more documents (wider variety) than males (still, we have to realise that there were cca 86% of females in a sample group, see Fig. 4). Changes that we are experiencing after the Slovakia's accession to the EU should support the increase of teacher qualification and to improve the conditions for their performance. As there might be a clash between the "aim of law" and the perception of teachers this question became also a subject of our research. We tried to find out what is the approach of teachers towards the changes in legislation, especially whether they feel and believe it leads to an increase of their qualification.

Changes in school legislation are positively accepted by 68,63% of participants. Concerning gender there were significant differences in the participant responses. As many as 70,46% evaluates the transformation influence positively, (mainly the respondents with the teaching practice longer than 10 years – 78,15%) compared to males out of which 57,89% were positive. Respondents who negatively assessed the transformation could express their opinion in the open-ended questions and to introduce the reason of their dissatisfaction. The most frequent answer was that it was not well-prepared, it had inadequate basis, requires a constant education without its reflection in a salary. Rarely, they mentioned that the education is a natural part of their profession and it should be done in a form of self-directed learning initiated by the teachers themselves.

Changes in legislation should contribute to increasing the qualification but also to create the conditions for improving the work of pedagogical employees. Of the 275 participants who completed the questionnaire, most perceives the changes positively with respect to qualification increase, on contrary – concerning improving conditions for effective work they were more pessimistic in their expressions.

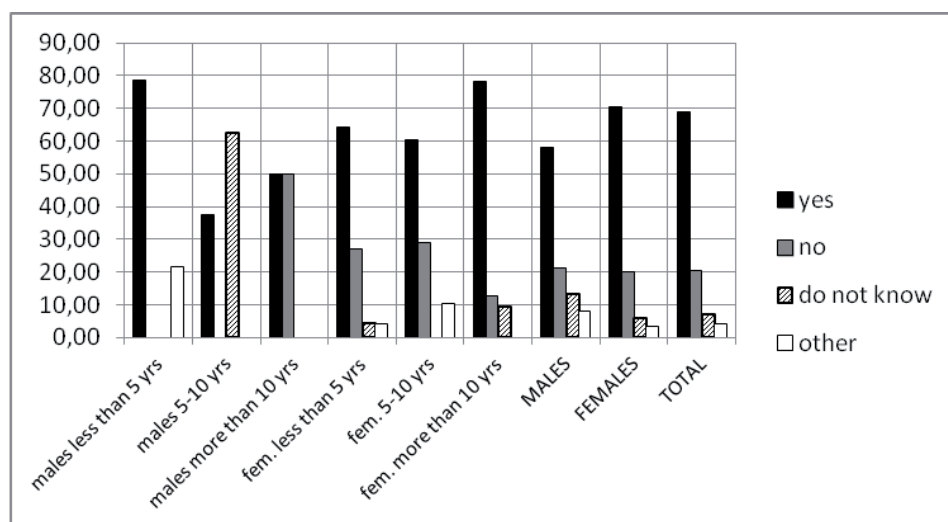


Fig. 5. Influence of changes on increasing the teachers' qualification

Table 4

Opinions on changes in legislation and efficacy

Opinions on changes in legislation and efficiency	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience						total		Length of teaching experience						total			
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs				less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs					
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
yes	3	21,43	5	62,50	5	31,25	13	34,21	0	0,00	0	0,00	22	18,49	22	9,28	35	12,73
rather yes than no	5	35,71	0	0,00	11	68,75	16	42,11	19	27,14	0	0,00	46	38,66	65	27,43	81	29,45
raher no than yes	6	42,86	3	37,50	0	0,00	9	23,68	49	70,00	29	60,42	46	38,66	124	52,32	133	48,36
no	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	2	2,86	19	39,58	5	4,20	26	10,97	26	9,45
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100

Opinions on changes in legislations and improving the work of teachers there was a clear tendency toward the dissatisfaction. Almost half of those surveyed (48,36%) indicated that changes rather do not contribute to improving the conditions and 9.45% were negative in their reactions to the legislation application. Males are more optimistic in their expressions; as many as 42,11% found the legislation rather challenging and improving the conditions compared to 27,43 females. These were more critical and only 9,28 were absolutely positive in their reaction to this question in contrast to 34,21% of men.

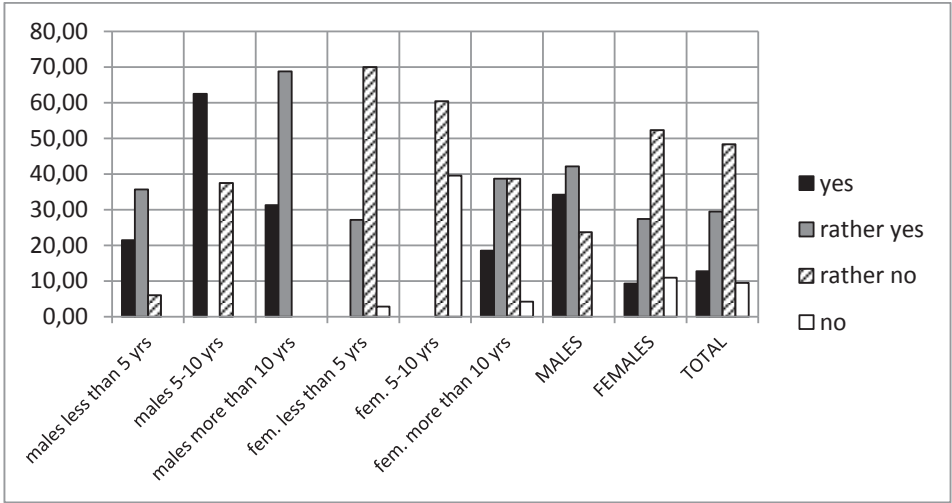


Fig. 6. Opinions on changes in legislation and efficacy

Another field we were interested in were the reserves in pedagogical profession.

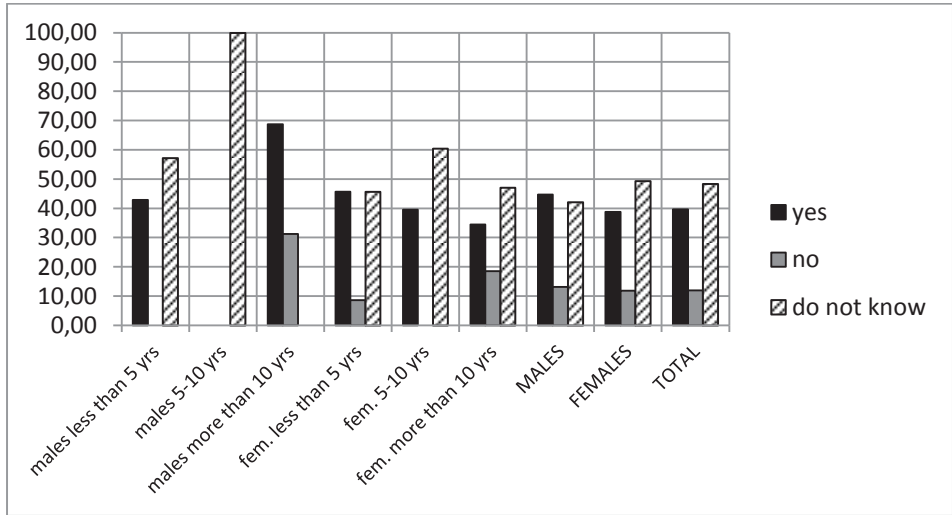


Fig. 7. Reserves in profession

Our findings show that almost half of the respondents (48,36%) could not express their opinion on the reserves, 39,64% of participants realises the existence of their own reserves and 12% of the studies sample do not

feel reserves in their work. Analysing the findings concerning gender we may state that more women (49,37%) than men (42,11%) were undecided. The results are also from regarding the length of teaching practice. Almost a third of men with teaching practice longer than 10 years stated they have no reserves in their work, compared to 18,49 women. Our research confirms that the length of teaching practice can influence the performance of pedagogical practice and that in the stabilisation phase we are better prepared to meet the demands of teacher profession.

Table 5

Respondents' opinions on the problems they feel regarding the legislation changes

	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience								Length of teaching experience									
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs				total		less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
do not feel changes	0	0,00	0	0,00	5	31,25	5	13,16	5	7,14	6	12,24	0	0,00	11	4,64	16	5,82
changes - time-demanding	14	100,00	8	100,00	11	68,75	33	86,84	60	85,71	27	55,10	92	77,97	179	75,53	212	77,09
inadequate possibilities for education	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	5	7,14	13	26,53	13	11,02	31	13,08	31	11,27
other	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	6,12	13	11,02	16	6,75	16	5,82
total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	49	100	118	100	237	100	275	100

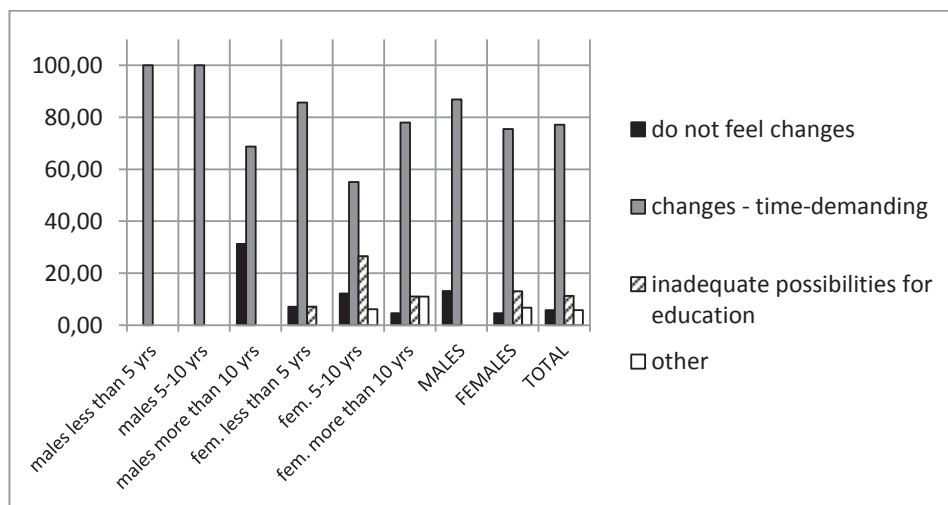


Fig. 8. Respondents' opinions on the problems they feel regarding the legislation changes

Next part of our research was focussed on finding respondents' opinions on the changes that cause the biggest troubles to them. Quite a big number of respondents (77,09%) mentioned it is the time consuming and 5,82% complains about the amount of administration work and extra-curricular activities. The problem with time feel mainly men (75,53%).

The relation of lifelong learning and pedagogical profession is mentioned in most of the documents connected to pedagogical profession. This was the reason why it was our next field of interest. The continual education of pedagogical and professional workers as a part of lifelong education is a process of reaching, improving and spreading professional competencies necessary for the performance of pedagogical practice and professional activity. It is regulated by the Law 317/2009 coll. on Law on pedagogical employees and

Table 6

Attitude of the teachers towards lifelong learning

Attitude towards lifelong learning	Males								Females								TOTAL				
	Length of teaching experience								Length of teaching experience												
	less than 5 yrs				5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs		total		less than 5 yrs				5-10yrs			more than 10 yrs		total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%
yes	14	100,00	5	62,50	16	100,00	35	92,11	62	88,57	46	95,83	111	93,28	219	92,41	254	92,36			
no	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	4,29	0	0,00	3	2,52	6	2,53	6	2,18			
I do not know	0	0,00	3	37,50	0	0,00	3	7,89	5	7,14	0	0,00	0	0,00	5	2,11	8	2,91			
other	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	2	4,17	5	4,20	7	2,95	7	2,55			
total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100			

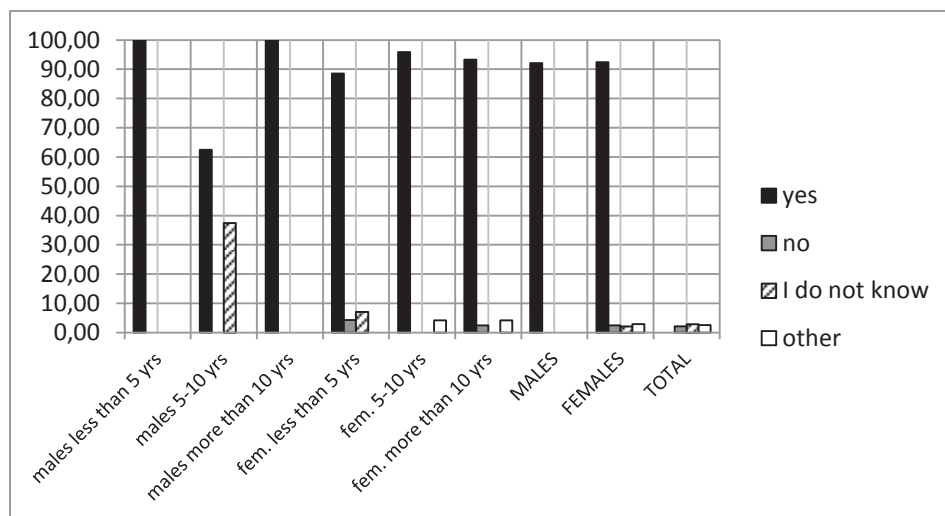


Fig. 9. Attitude of the teachers towards lifelong learning

professional employees and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts that became efficient on November 1st, 2009. It is natural that we also oriented to the possibilities of lifelong education of pedagogical workers. The research results showed that as many as 92,36% perceive lifelong learning as an indispensable part of their profession. A negative approach was recorded in a group of 2.18% of the sample. The prevailing opinion in this small group was that the long teaching practice is enough for their performance. Participants with shorter length of teaching practice feel the need to be continuously educated. More details can be found in the following table.

A really high number of respondents (92,36%) not only talk about the lifelong learning but they are also actively involved in education. They

Table 7

Forms of lifelong learning

Forms of lifelong learning	Males								Females								TOTAL (275)	
	Length of teaching experience						total (38)		Length of teaching experience						total (237)			
	less than 5 yrs (total 14)		5-10yrs (total 8)		more than 10 yrs (total 16)				less than 5 yrs (total 70)		5-10yrs (total 48)		more than 10 yrs (total 119)					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
courses organised by school	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	18,75	3	7,89	16	22,86	16	33,33	32	26,89	64	27,00	67	24,36
own choice from the course offer	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	14	20,00	14	29,17	38	31,93	66	27,85	66	24,00
self-study	14	100,00	5	62,50	11	68,75	30	78,95	43	61,43	32	66,67	67	56,30	142	59,92	172	62,55
other	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	18,75	3	7,89	0	0,00	3	6,25	6	5,04	9	3,80	12	4,36

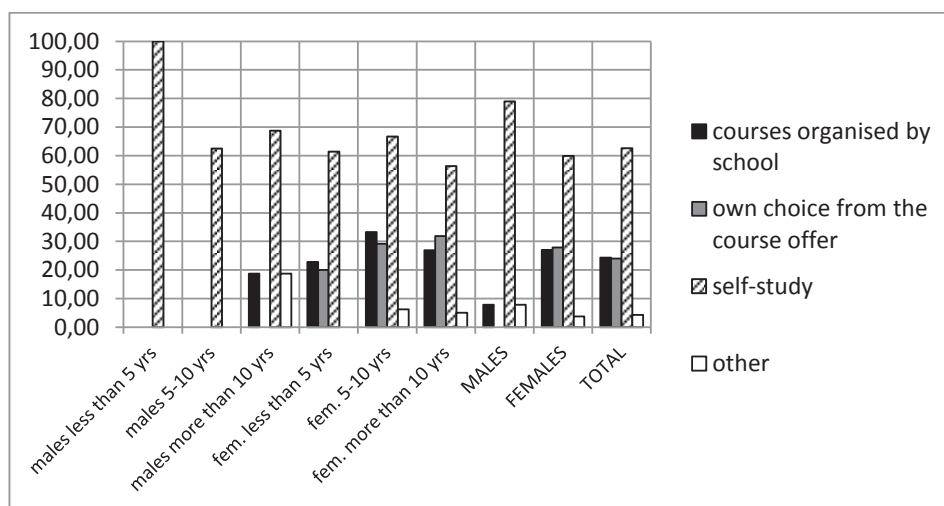


Fig. 10. Forms of lifelong learning education

chose different forms and methods. Their priority is not only self-learning using e.g. the professional literature. Respondents devote a significant effort to select the courses or the school where they work help them to get oriented. The following table summarises the most frequent forms.

The most frequent way of education mentioned by our sample is the self-study. It is preferred by 62,55% respondents. Participants feel a support from their schools (24,36% of respondents selects from the courses organised by school). The individual selection of the courses was indicated by 24% and a small percentage of a sample (4,36%) mentioned other forms. The respondents could circle more than one possible answers. Quite interesting result can be found considering the gender. Individual study was mentioned by almost 80% of men, and considerably less women (59,92%). A marked difference was also noticed in a category of courses organised by school. Women (27%) rely more on school and accept the courses offered (27,85) rather than men compared to only 7% of men. Regarding data reached, it seems that men are less passive or more busy as one of them chose the individual selection of course, what means they either want to study on their own (form of self-study) or participate in the courses offered by the school.

System of professional (career) education became a part of professional growth of teachers. It is logical that we also paid our attention to this area. Regarding opinions of the respondents the career system is not perceived positively. Almost half of the respondents (46,55%) believes that the career system that has been introduced is rather demotivating than leading

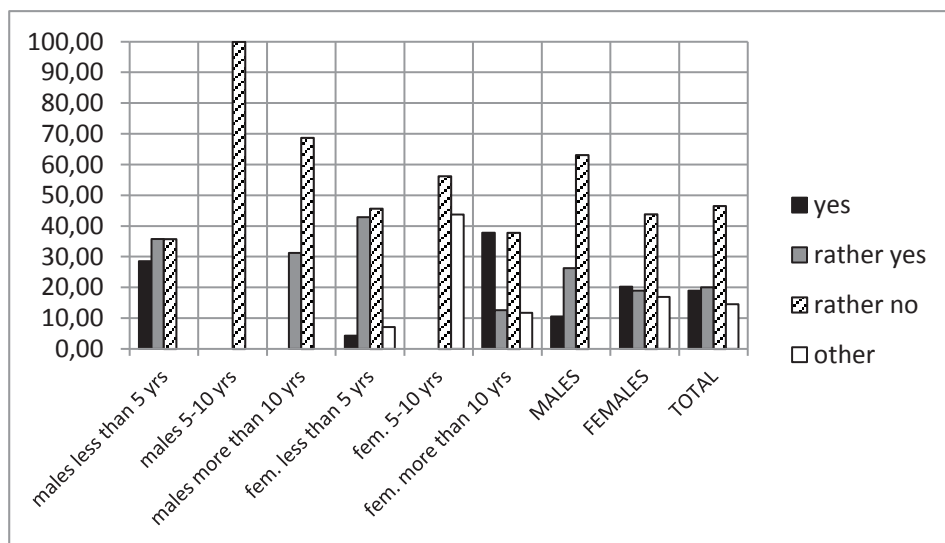


Fig. 11. Career system and motivation to increase qualification

Table 8

Credit system as a tool to increasing efficiency

credit system- a tool to increasing efficiency	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience								Length of teaching experience									
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs		total		less than 5 yrs (total 70)		5-10yrs (total 48)		more than 10 yrs (total 119)		total (237)			
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
yes	0	0,00	0	0,00	5	31,25	5	13,16	16	22,86	16	33,33	24	20,17	56	23,63	61	22,18
no	14	100,00	8	100,00	11	68,75	33	86,84	54	77,14	32	66,67	95	79,83	181	76,37	214	77,82
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100

towards qualification increase. Ultimate negative approach was indicated by 14,55% of respondents.

Credit system (as a step to a qualification increase) is also perceived negatively. It is not supported by 77,82% of respondents and it is positively accepted by 22,18%.

Resistance towards the credit system is presented by both, males (86,84%) and females (76,37%). Respondents could have expressed their reason for resistance to credit system. The prevailing group mentioned that it leads to shift of priorities – credits become the centre of their work rather than students and that credits are not the guarantee of a high quality of teachers work. According to the participants surveyed the teachers' work reflects mainly the teacher's relationship towards his profession and motivation to learn even without credits accumulation. Most respondents agreed that the credit system is not thoroughly elaborated. Respondents

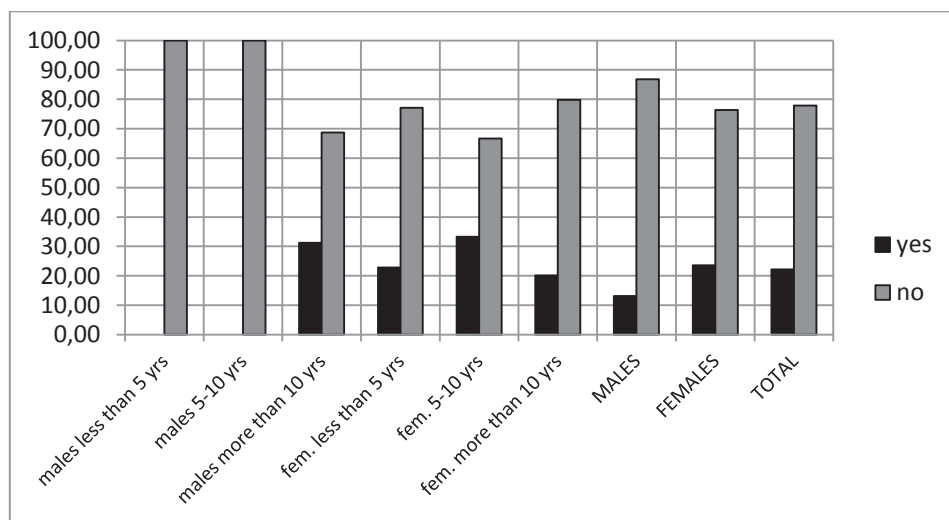


Fig. 12. Credit system as a tool to increasing efficiency

expressed their worries that there would be a particular group of teachers selected for the courses and that man courses are not at the required level and do not meet their expectations.

Concerning credit accumulation we were trying to find the answer to the question what would be the objective measure for the career growth and financial evaluation. More than half of the respondents 57,82% considers credit accumulation not to be an objective tool for evaluation of their work quality. Respondents introduce the reason why they do not support the idea of credit accumulation; they generally agree that the credits do not reflect their work with students nor their interest in the subject matter they teach. It is not possible to learn more about the teacher's enthusiasm, whether the lessons are interesting, whether teachers like their profession etc. More detailed information can be found in the following table.

Table 9

Credit system – a tool of teachers' evaluation

credit system - a tool of teachers' evaluation	Males								Females								TOTAL			
	Length of teaching experience						total	Length of teaching experience						total						
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs			less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs								
	N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%				
yes	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	8	6,72	8	3,38	8	2,91
rather yes than no	6	42,86	0	0,00	5	31,25	11	28,95	8	11,43	8	16,67	38	31,93	54	22,78	65	23,64		
raher no than yes	0	0,00	8	100,00	11	68,75	19	50,00	51	72,86	27	56,25	62	52,10	140	59,07	159	57,82		
no	8	57,14	0	0,00	0	0,00	8	21,05	11	15,71	13	27,08	11	9,24	35	14,77	43	15,64		
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100		

Concerning gender, there are no big differences among their attitudes toward credit as a tool for teachers' work evaluation (50% of men and 57,82% of females would rather not consider them as a measure of quality). The opinion that credits may reflect the quality of teachers' work was more frequently indicated by men. We may thus state that the evaluation of pedagogical employee in the form of credits was not accepted positively. Still, the credit accumulation is legislatively "prescribed" and thus it is still a tool for evaluating teachers' evaluation. It is a task for the lifelong teaching organisers to realise the courses in a form that would be motivating for the teachers. Responds naturally expect also an adequate financial evaluation that would reflect their effort and increased qualification, however it is not possible to be guaranteed by life-long learning education.

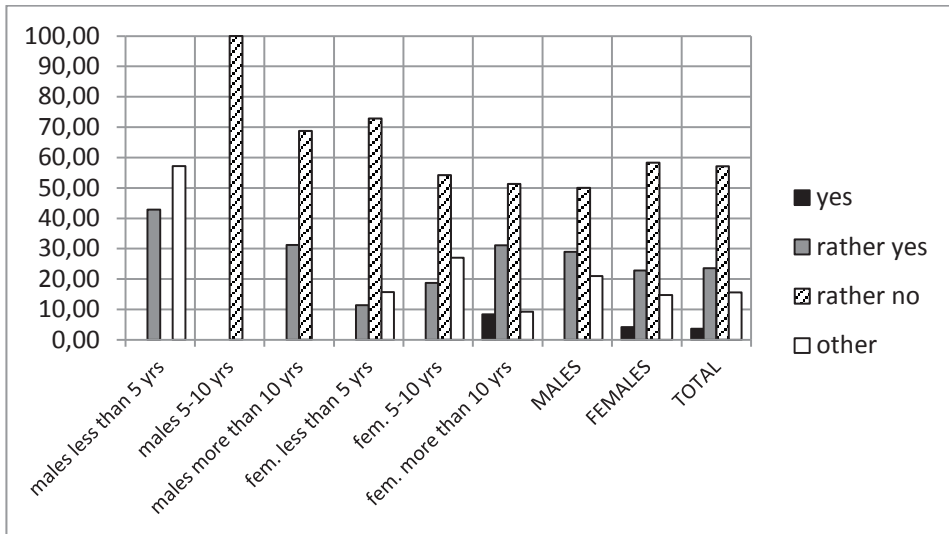


Fig. 13. Credits as objective measure

We were also interested in a fact whether employers do create and how they create the conditions for continual education of their workers.

Out of the data received it is evident that employers are more or less willing to create the conditions for continuous education of their teachers. Out of the sample there were more than half of the respondents (56,73%) who confirmed that their employers more or less support their education

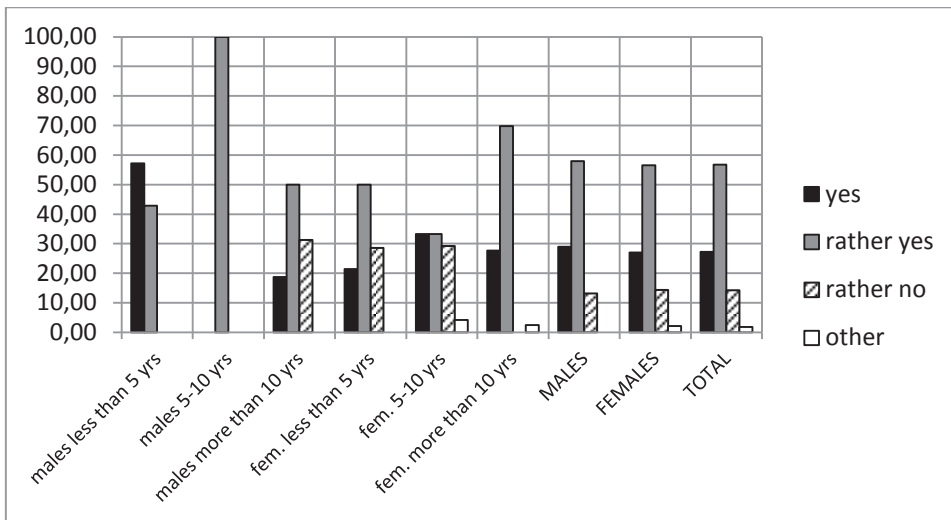


Fig. 14. Creating conditions for continual education

and 27,27% claimed that they are absolutely positive about their managers willingness to support their education. Only a small percentage (1,82%) do not feel management's support. More detailed information can be found in Fig. 14.

Analysing the findings according to the gender, men are more satisfied (71,05%) compared to females (56,54%). The highest level of satisfaction with the continual education is indicated by a groups of males (68,75%) and females (71,05%) with the teaching experience more than 10 years. Knowledge transfer and exchange part of teachers' work. This was the reason why we focused our interest on getting the information about the teaching mobilities. The results show that the most respondents (63,27%) have not information about mobilities and 36,73% would like to take part in the mobilities.

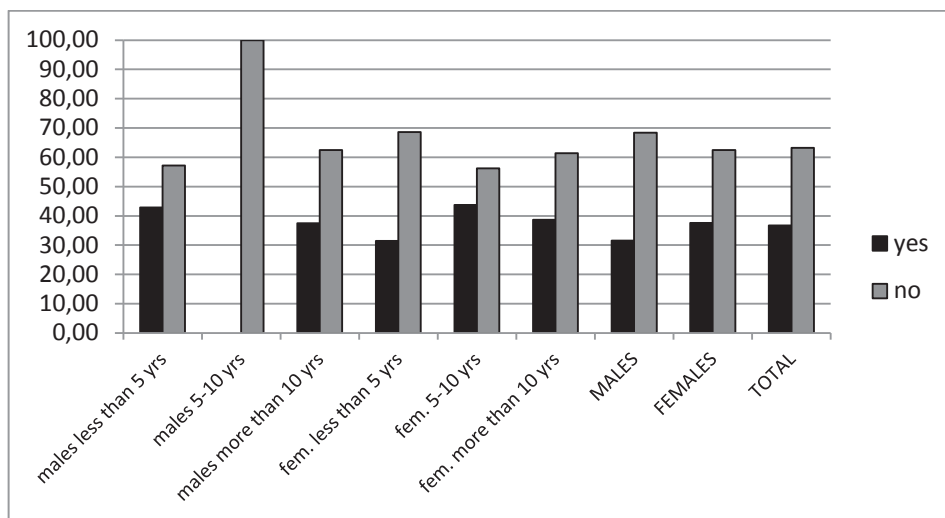


Fig. 15. Informedness on teaching mobilities

The real interest in taking part in the mobility projects is presented in the Fig. 16. The interest was demonstrated by 43,59% respondents. The negative approach was indicated by more than half of the (56,41%) respondents. More than half of respondents express worries from mobilities (64,29% – males, 55,68 – females%). In accordance to our findings it was confirmed that mostly younger teachers are interested in mobilities. This group of respondents mostly appreciate positive aspects of mobilities that could lead towards their professional development. More than 70% males and 47% of female respondents with the teaching practise shorter than 5 years confirmed this assumption.

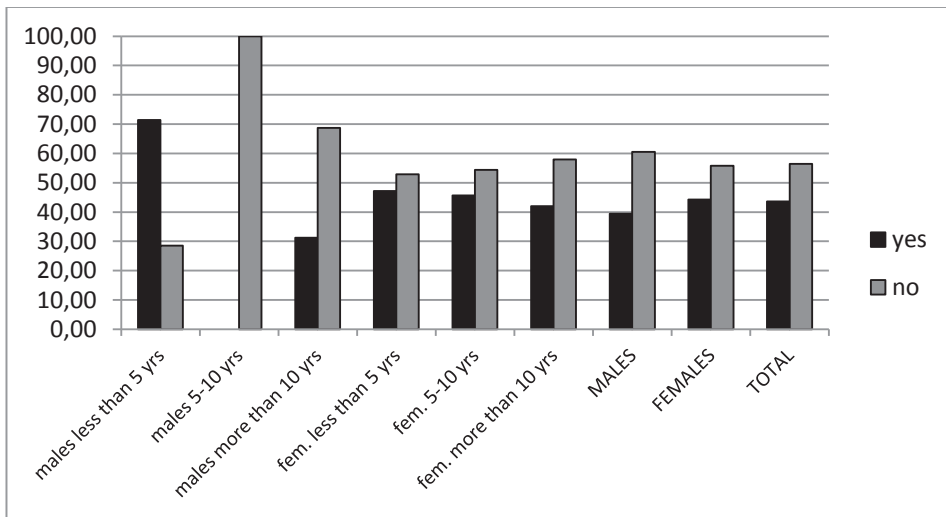


Fig. 16. Interest in mobility programmes

We also wanted to learn more about how teachers perceive the advantages and disadvantages of taking part in mobility projects. Almost two thirds of the studied sample indicated they understand mobilities as a way to gain new knowledge, to reach new experience. They also understand it as a possibility to improve their language skills, although it was not a priority – 22,55%) and to learn new people, culture, country.

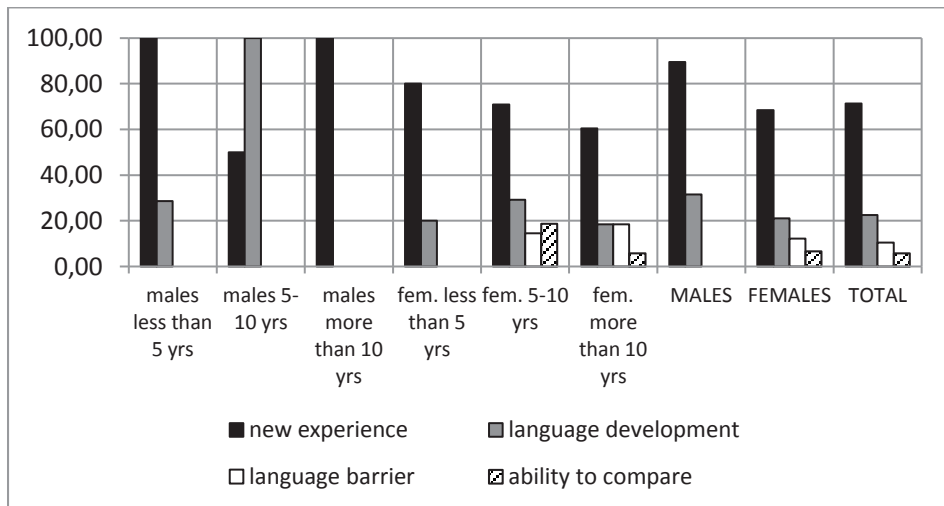


Fig. 17. Advantages and disadvantages of teaching mobilities

The possibility to gain knowledge and experience with other educational systems can be done via mobilities and programmes supporting this kind of cooperation.

The possibility to get information about the programmes and possibilities to take part in the projects was another scope of our interest. More than half of the respondents (55,27%) claimed they have some information about the projects. 25,45% know the projects and their schemes and almost one fifth (19,27%) stated they do not know about the projects.

Table 10

Informatedness ab. the programs for information exchange among EU countries

informedness ab. the programs for information exchange among EU countries	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience							total	Length of teaching experience							total		
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs		less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs		total					
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
yes	6	42,86	3	37,50	5	31,25	14	36,84	16	22,86	13	27,08	27	22,69	56	23,63	70	25,45
yes, some information	8	57,14	0	0,00	8	50,00	16	42,11	41	58,57	27	56,25	68	57,14	136	57,38	152	55,27
no, I have never heard a. this possibility	0	0,00	5	62,50	3	18,75	8	21,05	13	18,57	8	16,67	24	20,17	45	18,99	53	19,27
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100

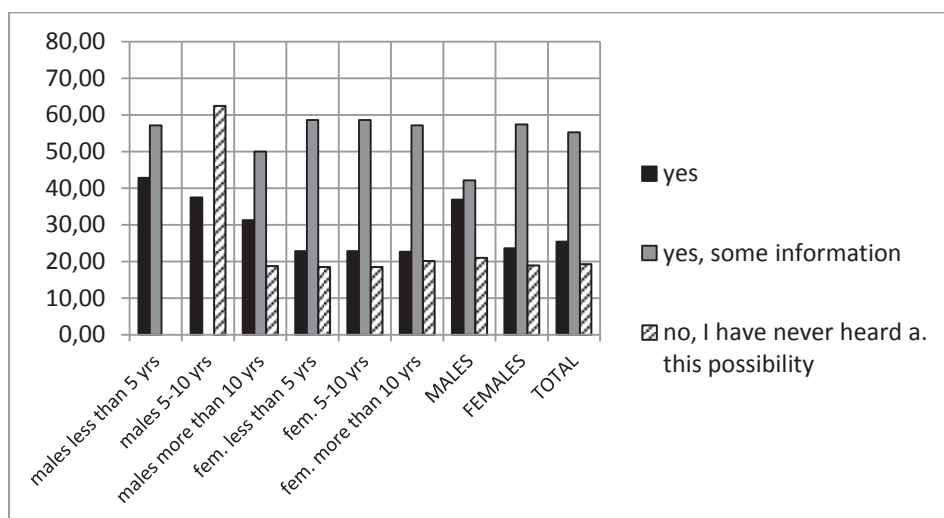


Fig. 18. Informedness ab. the programs for information exchange among EU countries

The cooperation with partners from foreign countries is supported by almost 7 out of 10 teachers (66,91%). There are 12% more men (76,62%) than female who consider this kind of cooperation to be significant.

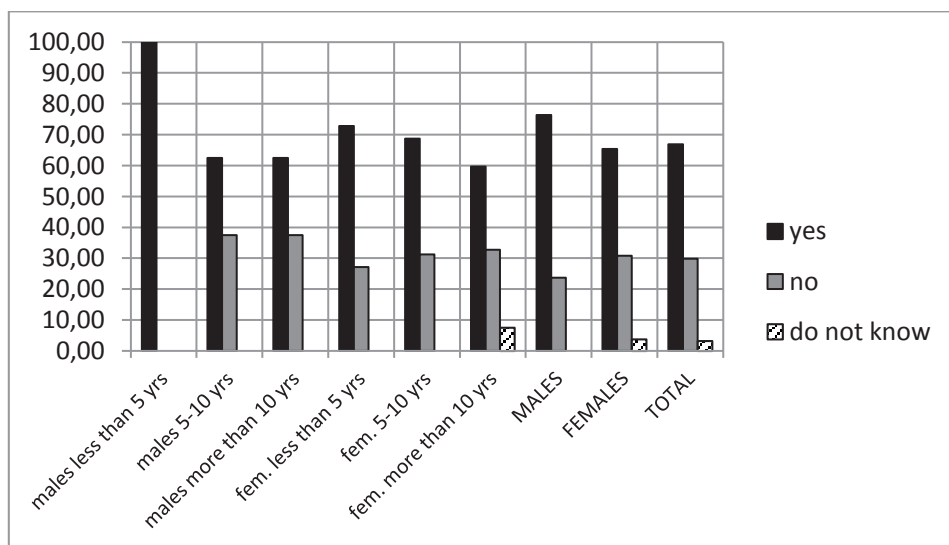


Fig. 19. Significance of cooperation with foreign partners

Despite generally positive approach to the existence of projects teachers do not feel the possibility to join the schemes. Their dissatisfaction is presented by 61,82% respondents. Almost 4 respondents out of 10 (38,24%) had a chance to take part in the projects. Table 11 demonstrates that men have less possibilities. A very high number of male respondents (85,71%) claimed they have no information about the possibilities to participate in projects. The most active group are women with the teaching practice 5-10 years of teaching experience. Every second respondent in this category (56,25%) have the experience with project schemes.

Table 11

Possibility to join different projects

possibility to join different projects	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience						total		Length of teaching experience						total			
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs				less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
yes	0	0,00	0	0,00	5	31,25	5	13,16	32	45,71	27	56,25	41	34,45	100	42,19	105	38,18
no	14	100,00	8	100,00	11	68,75	33	86,84	38	54,29	21	43,75	78	65,55	137	57,81	170	61,82
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100

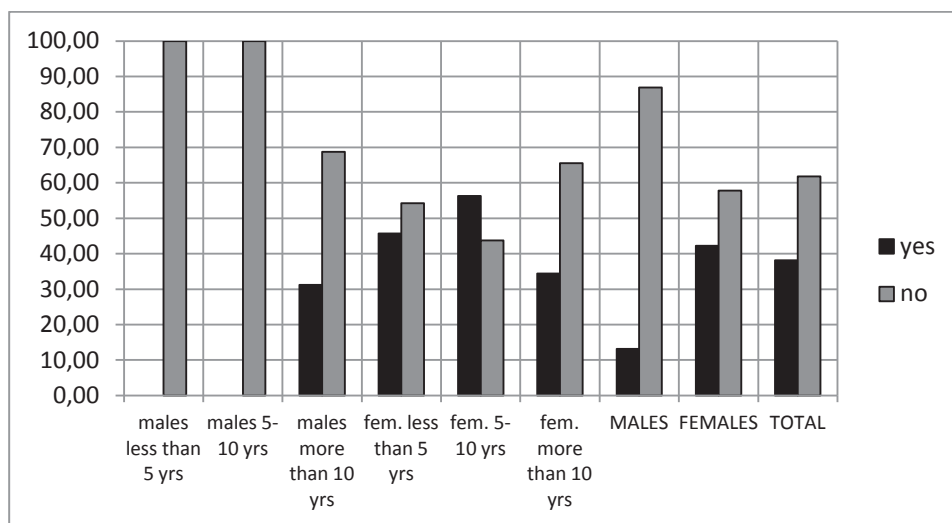


Fig. 20. Possibility to join different projects

The last information dealing with mobilities we were interested in was the willingness of respondents to be more active in projects. The question was legitimate as teachers indicated high load of work and demanding bureaucracy connected to their work.

Table 12

Interest to take part in projects

interest to take part in projects	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience						total		Length of teaching experience						total			
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs				less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10 yrs					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
yes	0	0,00	0	0,00	5	31,25	5	13,16	30	42,86	16	33,33	41	34,45	87	36,71	92	33,45
no	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	19	15,97	19	8,02	19	6,91
according to the project	14	100,00	8	100,00	11	68,75	33	86,84	40	57,14	30	62,50	59	49,58	129	54,43	162	58,91
other	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	2	4,17	0	0,00	2	0,84	2	0,73
Total	14	100	8	100	16	100	38	100,00	70	100	48	100	119	100	237	100	275	100,00

The most decisive factor to take part in the project is the topic and aim of the project. This answer was given by 58,91% respondents. There is a striking difference between the males (86,84%) and females (54,43%). Relatively high percentage of the studied sample would work in projects (males 13,16%, females 36,71%). Less than one per cent of respondents is demotivated and the attractiveness of the project (in the context of their professionalization) has not a significant role. There are quite interesting

findings if we analyse data according to the length of teaching practice. There is an evident interest to take part in project in a group of female respondents with teaching practice shorter than 5 years (57,14%) and it is even higher 61,11%. Most respondents understand such activities as a possibility to learn something new, to create new contacts with partner schools. They are persuaded that this experience might be important in their future as well.

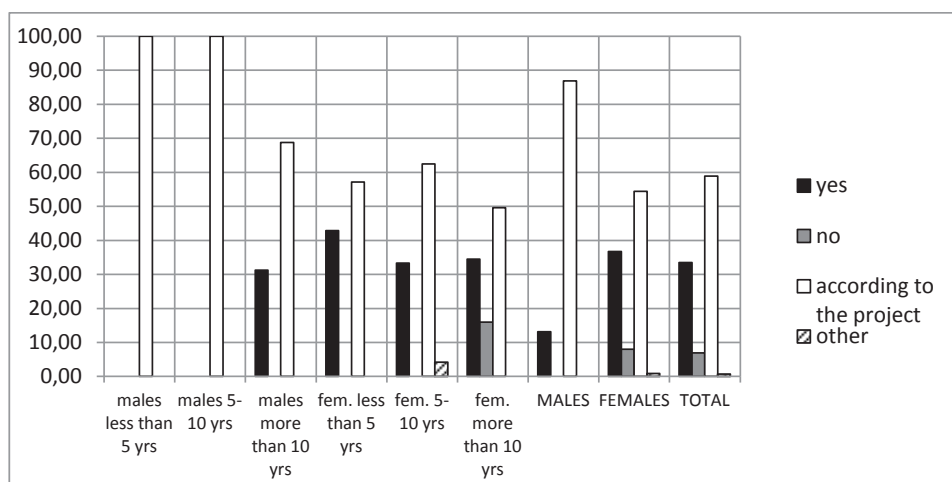


Fig. 21. Interest to take part in projects

Finally we wanted to get the suggestions for improvement from the respondents who are in-service teachers who mostly realise the content and performance of the current educational legislation. Not all respondents proposed suggestions, 60% did not answer this question. The responses given by 40% were relative wide-spectral. The most frequent answer was that there was a short time from the period when the law was passed and thus it was difficult to evaluate and to express a relevant opinion. Another frequent answer was that the conditions for the law application were not adequately prepared. Negative opinions dealt with the growing amount of bureaucracy, necessity to have better technical equipment. Among the answers we could also find the suggestions how to contribute to professional development and how it should be reflected in the legislation, how to set more objective criteria of teachers' performance evaluation and how to simplify the European mobility system.

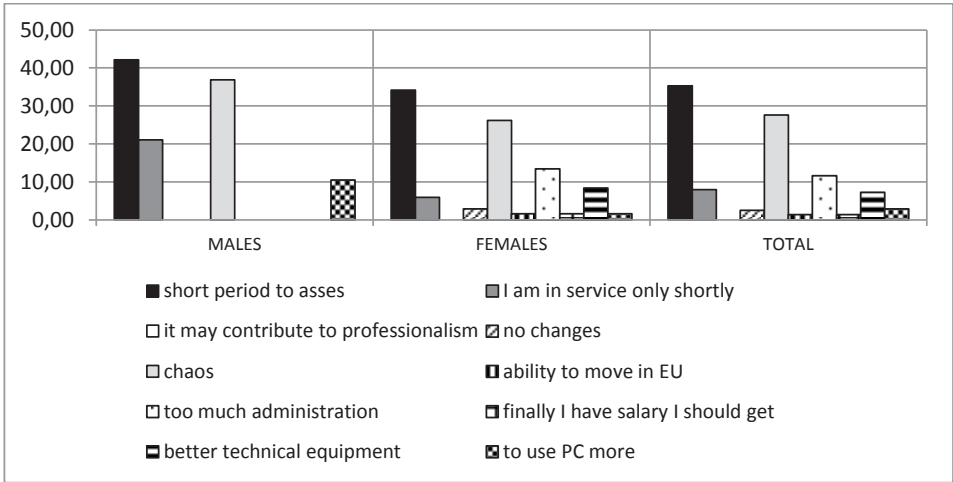


Fig. 22. The perception of changes in legislation with respect to pedagogical profession

Table 13

Expressing opinions on changes in practice

Expressing opinions on changes in practice	Males								Females								TOTAL	
	Length of teaching experience						total	Length of teaching experience						total				
	less than 5 yrs		5-10yrs		more than 10			less than 5		5-10yrs		more than						
	N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%					
can't assess	1	7,14	1	12,50	2	12,50	4	10,53	5	7,14	4	8,33	14	11,76	23	9,70	27	9,82
other	4	28,57	2	25,00	12	75,00	18	47,37	21	30,00	14	29,17	30	25,21	65	27,43	83	30,18
total	5	35,714	3	37,5	14	87,5	22	57,89	26	37,14	18	37,5	44	36,97	88	37,13	110	40

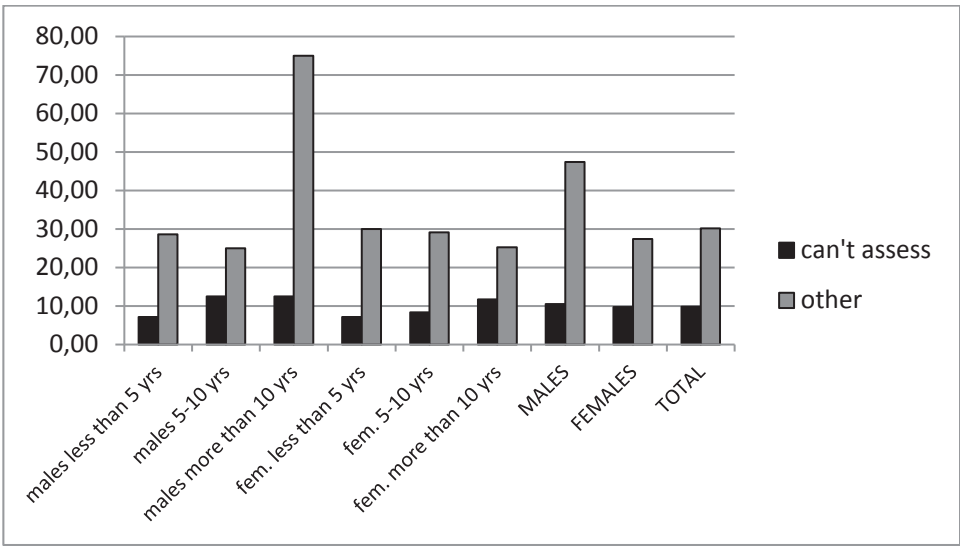


Fig. 23. Expressing opinions on changes in practice

Respondents feel increasing bureaucracy very negatively and they perceive their financial evaluation as inadequate. In both cases it was indicated 23,7% of the respondents. They would appreciate better technical equipment (18,55%), less students in the classrooms (13,45%) and lower teaching load (11,64%). The last one was indicated only by women. Teachers are willing to study, to continue in their professional development, they are ready to take part in the workshops but they complain about increasing bureaucracy and administration.

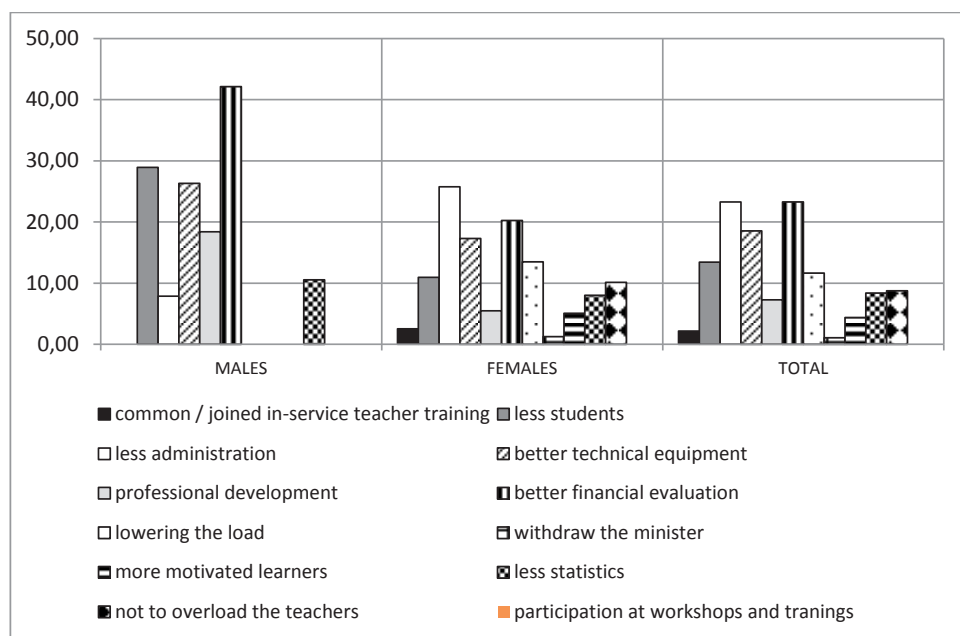


Fig. 24. Respondents' suggestions for changes in practice

The recommendations can be evaluated considering gender. Men mostly mentioned inadequate financial evaluation. 42,11% of the male respondents suggested better financial evaluation, an interesting comparison is with the male group – none of the teachers with the teaching practise shorter than 5 years mentioned it, on contrary all men whose teaching experience ranges 5-10years did so. The better technical equipment and lower number of students was mentioned by more than quarter of respondents. 50% of teachers with teaching experience mentioned a necessity to upgrade the technical equipment. What might be interesting none of the teachers with experience longer than 10 years indicated high number of students in the classes. Professional development is understood as a significant part

of teachers work and career. 18,42% of males perceives it as a must in their profession (especially males with teaching experience ranging 5-10 years). Female respondents (more than a quarter) perceive administration as a burden (especially those with teaching experience shorter than 5 years). Every fifth female respondent mentioned a necessity to improve financial evaluation (the biggest group supporting idea among females is a group of teacher with the teaching experience 5-10years – 43,75%). The institutions, schools should be also financially strengthened. Better technical equipment at schools is expected by 17,30% of female respondents. Lowering the teaching load is not mentioned by men, on the other hand 13,5% of female respondents would appreciate lowering the load. Lowering the numbers of students in the classes can lead to increasing of personal approach and efficiency of work and it was mentioned by every tenth female teacher. Professional development and workshops were mentioned only by the group of “novice” teachers from the category with the teaching experience shorter than 5 years. More experienced teachers are satisfied with the status quo and they do not feel a necessity to change it.

Conclusions

The results of the research that was focused on the opinions of the pedagogical employees on the changes that should lead towards the professionalization of the pedagogic profession after the Slovakia's access to the European Union indicate that the teacher's knowledge is not on adequate level. Although more than half of the respondent could mention the laws dealing with education and teachers' profession that is not sufficient. Teachers consider the law 317/2009 on pedagogical employees and professional employees and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts to be the most significant. The changes in legislation place a demand on teachers – constant qualification increase. Despite this statement almost half of the studies sample believes that current legislation changes do not help to improve the quality of pedagogical profession. At the same time they claim they understand the necessity of life-long learning as an inseparable part of their profession. Almost half of the respondents had reservations on career system. They do not consider credits to be an objective measure of the quality of their work. They indicated that number of credits does not reflect quality of work with students. Teachers suggested as one of the possible measures of their quality of work - students' interest in subjects reflects the knowledge and professional skills of a teacher and what more also his/her pedagogical-psychological and didactic preparation. Concern-

ing conditions created by the employers most respondents expressed satisfaction with the conditions for life-long learning. Slightly less than half of respondents realise that mobilities are the way how to reach new experience, methods, forms of work and the possibility to establish new work business contacts. Our respondents positively perceive the partnerships among the schools and countries. Most of them can see their positions in the mutual projects. The most decisive factor for their participation in the projects is their topic and attractiveness, and of third of respondents stated that would like to take part in the project realisation.

The third task sought the proposals and suggestions of in-service teachers on possible or additional changes in valid legislation that would lead towards the improvement of their position. Despite undisputable positives of legislation the sample respondents appreciate they at the same time refer to certain reservations that are the cause of their problems and sometime these even brake the effective performance of their profession. According to the respondents teachers hinge on their students and they strive to help them to enter real life.

Social changes we are facing definitely influence the pedagogical profession. The impacts prepared and realised via laws, acts and regulations try to smoothly develop it along with a growth and development of society. Even though research highlighted various problems of pedagogic profession at the same time it confirms that pedagogues hinge on the quality of their work and they realise the significance of their responsibility for future generations and implicitly the whole society.

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Kształcenie nauczycieli na Słowacji w kontekście prawnych regulacji UE

Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje badania dotyczące poziomu znajomości przepisów prawa oświatowego reprezentowanego przez czynnych nauczycieli (n = 275). Celem części teoretycznej tekstu jest przedstawienie podstaw prawa oświatowego. Autorzy koncentrują się głównie na zmianach w prawodawstwie edukacyjnym związanych z przystąpieniem Słowacji do Unii Europejskiej oraz percepcji tych nowych regulacji przez nauczycieli.

Słowa kluczowe: prawo oświatowe na Słowacji, kształcenie nauczycieli, UE