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## **TEACHER JOURNAL AS A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT (RESEARCH – THE FIRST YEAR IN THE LIFE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL THROUGH THE EYES OF NOVICE TEACHERS)**

**ABSTRACT.** Wiegerová Adriana, *Teacher journal as a research instrument (research – the first year in the life in primary school through the eyes of novice teachers)* [Czasopismo dla nauczycieli jako narzędzie badawcze (badania – pierwsze lata w szkole podstawowej oczami początkujących nauczycieli)]. *Studia Edukacyjne* nr 27, 2013, Poznań 2013, pp. 237-252. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2691-8. ISSN 1233-6688

The paper offers authentic statements of teachers and analyses problem situations in adaptation of teachers in the school terrain. Critical events are viewed through statements of novice teachers in interviews and in diaries of teachers. Teachers kept diaries throughout the first year in the primary school.

**Key words:** novice teachers, primary school, diaries of teacher, adaptation in primary school, problem situations in primary school

### **Teacher Journal in the Spotlight of Researches**

Journal. How many associations we have on our mind in connection with this word. It is something intimate, something that helps and satisfies, what motivates us to be able to analyse our own thought processes and turn them into written form. In pedagogic theory the term journal started to be applied in the context of different auto-regulation and self-reflexive strategies that became an important part in the content profiling of teacher-focused study programmes. Teacher journal is known to those students that during their studies prepared for teacher profession. It was connected with practice that forms a part of teacher training at different universities of pedagogy or humanities orientation. Different reflexive portfolios are even now a modern supplement of teacher training. Students take it as mandatory requirement that moves them on to complete their

studies. However, so far it is not quite clear how exactly a journal works in the learning process of a student. As stated by Korthagen<sup>1</sup> “to agree with the students to keep a diary is not enough in itself. These efforts may even be counter-productive.” A student certainly must process a journal but we do not know what his internal motives are for its processing. If they write it only because they want to complete their studies without any unnecessary conflicts then the meaning of processing is being lost. Such a student usually does not ever get to write their own teacher journal. Since for them it will be seasoned with memories of something that they had to do, something that was prescribed and whose meaning they could not adequately assess. On the other hand, a correctly prepared and processed motivation-based teacher journal may lead to a significant feedback.

In pedagogic research teacher journal is used mainly as an instrument to investigate student practices. Korthagen<sup>2</sup> indicates possibilities of using the journal by selection of so-called auxiliary questions having their own structure. In relation to this, we can talk about a so-called structured form of journal. However, authors Maralova<sup>3</sup> and Dimitrov<sup>4</sup> emphasise the “power” of an unstructured journal that the student must put in “order” alone. Maňák, Š. Švec, V. Švec (ed.)<sup>5</sup> distinguish two forms of journal – with structured form and unstructured form. According to their division, a structured journal should contain a clear set of instruction on what and how to write with inclusion of a certain example of how it should be written correctly. Clarity is achieved if exactly one page covers one period – day, week. The conclusion should contain a page with free notes. This journal model became the basis for current modern processing of student portfolios. In Polish specialised literature working with a journal became the basis for creating a concept of “reflexive practice”<sup>6</sup>.

In relation to this, reflexive practice means that the product the student creates helps them to:

- learn from the mistakes, further modify their education practice,
- follow changes in mental strategies of teacher’s work,
- do research of own practice, which forms the basis for making scientific postulates on certain examples.

<sup>1</sup> F. Korthagen a kol., *Jak spojit praxi s teorií: Didaktika realistikého vzdělávání učitelů*, Brno 2011, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> E.A. Maralova, *Profesionálny zmysel hľadania metaefektu v prácach učiteľov*, Moskva 2009.

<sup>4</sup> I. Dimitrov, *Psychosociálny rozvoj detí*, Sofia 2010.

<sup>5</sup> J. Maňák, Š. Švec, V. Švec (ed.), *Slovník pedagogické metodologie*, Brno 2005.

<sup>6</sup> For more information see H. Kwiatkowska, *Pedeutologia*, Warsyawa 2008.

An unstructured journal has no prescribed structure or system and the student, teacher may freely write all their notes in it. A journal formulated this way certainly brings deeper analysis but it is also more time-demanding and from the researcher's point of view there are also many obstacles. For example that the journal writer may, so to speak, pupate and write all the time about the same. Wiegerová, Lampertová<sup>7</sup> complete this division with a so-called combined form of teacher journal. In the first phase the student, teacher writes freely what he/she experiences at school. After its analysis the researcher determines further procedure for his/her research purposes. They select categories or they set a certain journal structure that will comply with the target of their research.

In relation to the presented research findings it is necessary to state that the authors F. Korthagen, V. Švec, Š. Švec, J. Maňák, I. Dimitrov and E.A. Maralova write on processing of *student journals*. The above mentioned writers do not write about a *teacher journal* and its application in research.

In methodology-focused specialised literature we find references to teacher journal, which is incorporated in a group of research methods focused on the analysis of human products. These are<sup>8</sup>:

- personal texts of examined persons – letters, *journals*, chronicles, memorials;
- student's text documents: certificates, student's class book, point book;
- teacher materials – pedagogic notes, preparations, *reflexive journals*;
- education publications – textbooks, workbooks;
- official documents – minutes of meetings, reports;
- public documents – decrees, announcements, instructions, notice boards;
- mass media text products – newspapers, magazines, books.

A journal is a personal document of the teacher. It is used to capture the passed through and subjectively experienced situations and events. It is exactly the subjective experience of teachers and all events at school that they consider important, what they think may affect them that may point to new circumstances, which are tied with how teachers beginners experience situations at school. Teacher journal (as we have already stated) is sporadically used in pedagogic research. It is so also because teachers

<sup>7</sup> Wiegerová A., Lampertová A., *A Teacher's Diary as a Research Instrument to Determine the Integration Process of a Beginner Teacher into Daily Life at a Primary School*, [in:] *The Future of Education*, 2nd Conference Edition, Conference Proceedings, Simonelli Editore – University Press, Milan 2012. Dostupné z: [http://www.pixel-online.net/edu\\_futurere2012/common/download/Paper\\_pdf/352-ITL53-FP-Wiegerova-FOE2012.pdf](http://www.pixel-online.net/edu_futurere2012/common/download/Paper_pdf/352-ITL53-FP-Wiegerova-FOE2012.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> P. Gavora, *Úvod do pedagogického výzkumu*, Brno 2010, p. 209.

when writing the journal open their internal experiencing and processing of statements is of time-demanding character. Researchers face a hard task to win co-operating teachers for research purposes, they must cope with their proper motivation and moreover they must actively work with them during the entire research. In other words, research should bring benefit also for the examined teachers that participate in the research. Working on own teacher journal has undisputed significance in quality improvement and analyses of own processes of self-assessment. It is an investment in one's self-improvement. This is also why teacher journal is an important self-regulation strategy. However, it may also have an assessment and regulation dimension if the researcher works closely with the participant and even they provide them with reflexion that enable them to return to certain standpoints, statements, and situations.

Teacher journal may help to develop *professional competences* of a teacher. However, it may also work as an instrument for *coming to terms* with redundant emotions, which accompany the first steps of a teacher at school. Also for this reason writing a journal may be a certain instrument for materialisation of feelings and opinions that are hard to be expressed verbally. To a certain extent we can say that processing a journal may also have therapeutic effects. Teacher's work is rich in interactions. Teachers are in permanent contact with their students, they teach and educate them, listen to their family stories, monitor the situation in children's collective, solve general conflicts in a group, and look after child safety. If these situations are captured in the journals, they are often more authentic. After a while they can return to the given situation. They can more suitably analyse what happened, how they proceeded, as well as how they managed to solve the situation that occurred.

Writing a journal may have a particularly strong *auto-regulation effect* especially for a teacher beginner. Mapping of situations that a teacher beginner faces daily is interesting also because it is seasoned with the flavour of "newness". Since this is the first, genuine confrontation with school reality. Exactly this moment is strong also for the researcher.

Teachers capture in the teacher journal situations and events:

- that made them happy,
- that made them angry,
- that made them sad,
- that surprised them,
- that they cannot explain,
- that they want to remember well (e.g. for future teaching of the given topic),
- that they want to think over later at rest,

- that they want to consult with somebody,
- that they want to share later (at a meeting, presentation, article, qualification work),
- but also different opinions, topics of new activities, funny statements or stories.<sup>9</sup>

The strength of statements of a teacher beginner in this connection also has a strong pedagogic significance since it enables us to enter into the world of a young person, who is going to be confronted with school reality alone and we have the chance to compare his/her advance from a student to a teacher in the most emotive and realistic situations. In this context, keeping a teacher journal is an interesting research instrument. It gives opportunity for more precise revelation of:

- the course of introducing into the school environment in fine, sensitive contours, which have unique informative capability,
- method of work of the teacher beginner and lead-in teacher,
- coping of the teacher beginner with the new environment,
- work of the school staff,
- habits and stereotypes in the teachers' collective,
- school management.

In the following lines we provide the reader with a view on partial research results where exactly teacher journal of a teacher beginner was used.

### **Demonstration of teacher journal application in quality-oriented research**

The entry of a teacher beginner into school environment is undisputedly really demanding. Suddenly they find themselves on the “other side” in the position of a teacher. He/she is the one who will plan the pedagogic activity and organise the course of teaching. He/she is the one who as of the first day assumes responsibility for the students that he/she has in the class. In Slovakia a teacher beginner must attend adaptation education; it means the first phase of continuous education in order to let them become an independent pedagogic employee. Adaptation education is mandatory for each teacher beginner and it usually takes one year.

**Validity of the journal as a research instrument.** In case of qualitative researches triangulation is often used. It is one of the methods used to ensure validity. It is necessary to view the issue from different

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<sup>9</sup> V. Burjan, *Ako byť lepším učiteľom (2.) – Pedagogický denník*, (2011), Dostupné z: <http://www.burjanoskole.sk/?p=2576>

perspectives. Examination of different points of view enables to get deeper into the problem and its more profound understanding at a better quality level. Švaříček<sup>10</sup> writes about methodological triangulation where “individual methods are placed against each other with the aim to maximise validity of the collected data.” In order to ensure validity of data from the teacher journal, it is necessary to provide other points of view on the given issue. A suitable supplement may be conversation or monitoring.

**Sequence of steps in preparation and implementation of work with teacher journal.** We have already mentioned above that in the text we provide partial results of the research, which was a part of the topic on establishing themselves for teachers beginners in the life of basic school. The research was preferentially oriented to monitoring the relationships between the teacher beginner and lead-in teacher in primary education. For better overview for the reader, it is necessary to introduce the individual research phases. They are as follows:

1. Study of specialised pedagogic literature (domestic and foreign) and mapping of studies and researches implemented in this field also abroad.
2. Open dialogues with teachers beginners that completed adaptation education on their experience and situations faced. Examination of what and how a teacher beginner experiences in the first year of teacher career. Creation of more certain research questions.
3. Intentional selection of research sample of primary education teachers, winning confidence.
4. Dialogue with open questions on motivation upon selection of the given school, on work selection for the teacher.
5. Gathering research data through methods – journal of teacher beginner, participation monitoring, and content analysis.
6. Evaluation, analysis, interpretation and graphical presentation of obtained data.
7. Additional explanation of unclear statement, reflection on journal of a teacher beginner.
8. Finalisation of results and creation of a focus group (selected sample of five teachers beginners) aimed at making the aid system for primary education teachers beginners more efficient.
9. Summary of results, making conclusions, evaluation of goals.
10. Creation of topics for further examination – creation of questions.

In the text we concentrated mainly on the research stage focused on using teacher journal in analysis in the process of the first year of life of a teacher beginner in the school environment. The text points out to three

<sup>10</sup> Švaříček R., Šedová K., a kol., *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách*, Praha 2007, p. 160.

basic phases of profiling the research instrument to issues related thereto, as well as to the emerging new challenges. Teacher journal as a research instrument was used in three phases as follows:

1. In the first phase the teachers recorded freely their feelings from school and teacher work.

2. In the second phase, after initial analysis of teacher statements, categories were extracted, which were the subject of further writing of teachers, this time in a clear and closed structure.

3. The third phase of the phase is still open. It should be focused on summary reflexion of each teacher.

Upon working with the journal, we preferred a so-called combined form of teacher journal processing. It contains formulated free statements, as well as statements in categories, which are subject to wider research.

**First phase.** In the first phase the task of teachers beginners was to record their practical experience through free notes, essays in the position of a teacher beginner. It was not specified whether they should focus on their students, method of preparation or relationships at the workplace. The duration of writing an unstructured form of journal was the first school half-year and that in the period as of the beginning of October 2011 to January 2012. We did not start from the end of August with joining school with regard to the fact that it was necessary to respect demandingness of starting a new profession and situation at individual basic schools.

To find teachers, who in the first year of their operation at a basic school are willing to process their own teacher journal, may be compared to “looking for a needle in a pile of hay”. Why is it so? What actually happens after graduating from school? Can a journal be a significant self-reflexive strategy for a teacher beginner? What opinion do teachers have on its processing? Is it actually possible that teachers beginners, apart from the obligations waiting for them in practice, would also be able to handle writing a journal?

The process of winning teachers for the research was extremely demanding. All students graduating from the Faculty of Education of the Comenius University in Bratislava (at the end of August, beginning of September 2011) and entering into teacher practice were addressed, however, only eight of them were willing to participate in the research. The research requires certain time space of the teachers beginners and their direct and active participation. Three of them changed their mind on participation in the research and withdrew due to their high workload. It is possible that the researcher chose a demanding path of gathering data from teachers, however, it may bring all the more valuable findings. Upon winning

of teachers who joined the research was probably the best moment when they alone realised that with their activity they may help teachers coming after them. Cooperation in this point suddenly changed. It was a challenge of how to bring something new, a challenge to change a certain run-in system, to give a helping hand to others in their own example.

However, partial findings made us deal more with certain steps in the work of a teacher beginner and their analysis.

**Second phase.** After content analysis of the unstructured form of journals certain groups of statements showed, which we divided into five categories. Teachers beginners gave their opinions on them from February 2012 to June 2012. Certainly they also had space to write down events and experiences that primarily were not linked with the categories.

1. Cooperation with the lead-in teacher.
2. Cooperation with parents.
3. Information on school where the teacher beginner works.
4. Preparation for teaching.
5. Me and the school.

Paradoxically teachers did not comment on their successes in the didactic line and did not even evaluate their relationship with students. We credit this fact to it that they preferentially perceived the dimension of their adaptation to the school conditions and the dimension of their relationship with the lead-in teacher. We can assume that the teachers selected by us considered their relationship with students to be automatic. And we can also assume that they are able to cope with problems with students. They are students at the first level of basic school, which also reflects the teacher's work to a certain extent.

After having analysed all journals of teachers beginners during the entire year, the phase of working with the journal will follow – reflexion, looking back and interpretation of the journal by the actual teacher beginner during an unstructured interview. Hereby the researcher may avoid incorrect interpretation of data in the journal and complete the obtained data.

### **Content analysis of the teacher beginner's journal – partial outcomes**

In the following lines we will analyse in more details the individual categories that we set up from the statements. It is necessary to say that the research is not closed and it might happen that the individual categories will be further adjusted and re-evaluated. In this stage of the research

we are in the phase of data collection and therefore the results we provide are only of partial character. This fact also limited processing of individual categories.

**First category – Cooperation with the lead-in teacher.** The relation between a teacher beginner and a lead-in teacher is important in the process of adaptation education. Some teachers can approach their lead-in teacher with their troubles without any problems, as for example in this case: “this week I must inquire what exactly we are going to deal with because I do not understand some of the topics in the time and thematic plans and so I have to ask the lead-in teacher what to do and how.”

However, sometimes it happens that the two players in the process of education do not fully realise their tasks that result from their relation. Then the teacher beginner feels that they were not provided all the information according to their ideas and another needless problem might appear. The following lines interpret a similar case: “The timetable makes me angry – I did not know that I can amend it during September according to my needs – the lead-in teacher did not tell me anything about it.” However, after some time partial remedy may come about. “Improvement in the relation with the lead-in teacher but she still does not provide me with all the necessary information.” In this case a teacher beginner had to find somebody else alone, who would provide her with the necessary information and/or she looked for the answers to the questions that emerged by herself. And maybe this state of “anger” caused that they described their lead-in teacher as a “leading” teacher.

If a problem occurs in communication and due to some reasons the teacher beginner loses his/her confidence in his/her formal lead-in teacher, or he/she simply has the feeling that they do not understand each other, it may happen that the role of helper will be taken over by another pedagogic employee. However, in this case it concerns taking over the role of “informal lead-in” teacher. The formal lead-in teacher is the one assigned to the teacher beginner in order to guide them during their adaptation education. Informal lead-in teacher is the one selected by the teacher beginner alone and whom they turn to with their successes and failures. The best is if the formal and informal teacher is one and the same person. However, in practice it is not common.

It is an interesting fact that active approach of the lead-in teacher may rather evoke passivity of the teacher beginner. One of the teachers beginners very often writes about how she turns to her lead-in teacher with several matters. She made few decisions by herself during the first half-year. Exhibition of data in the journal:

If I do not know something, I always ask somebody. Everybody helps me here, I do not have any problems. My lead-in teacher sometimes even gives me advice on what to write back to parents since they ask about matters that they should not be interested in.

On the other hand, in case of another teacher beginner, passive approach of the lead-in teacher brought about activity. She wrote herself:

The lead-in teacher was good for nothing for me, even for the basic things... at the beginning I walked through the school alone and tried to find out where is what, I became familiar with the environment, people and habits alone (...) In the end I managed it but I think that only owing to my character.

The teacher beginner was indirectly forced by the lead-in teacher to take over the initiative into her own hands and she had to become independent much earlier than in the first case.

Summary of the present findings in category – cooperation with lead-in teacher:

- besides the formal lead-in teachers (assigned to the teachers beginners in the adaptation education) the existence of informal lead-in teachers also shows (teachers that the teachers beginners turn to themselves in case of a problem);
- passive approach of a lead-in teacher may evoke activity of the teacher beginner;
- active approach of a lead-in teacher may evoke passivity of the teacher beginner.

**Second category – Cooperation with parents.** Teachers' work is constantly under control in a certain way. It is an extremely demanding process when the teacher thinks about what the environment thinks about them and how they shall look in the eyes of others. Parents represent a significant feedback for the work of a teacher. Teachers look for certainties that would support them in the feeling that they are good teachers. Praise in this stage of maturing of a teacher beginner is the largest appreciation. All the more if it comes from a parent. The following lines demonstrate this matter.

A mother wrote to me that her daughter is sick and will not come until Wednesday and I wrote back to her to let the child undergo medical treatment and I am also going to the doctor tomorrow. And she wrote back to me then that if I am going to be sick all week then she would rather leave her at home ☺ ha ha ... this is a compliment. ☺

Positive feedback to a certain extent became a positive argument to support the teacher in remaining in the profession.

Communication with parents through electronic post is, however, not only a source of good feelings from one's own work. One of the teachers stated a concrete problem that appeared with the following continuation.

There was a fight of seven boys in the class (due to a game of dogs on the "carpet" during the big break. We were in the classroom as it was raining outside) I wrote a note to all the seven of them – During the big break he was fighting with classmates.

After reading the note, the parent of one of the pupils became angry and wrote a mail to the teacher. It was described in the diary as follows: "the father does not understand why I wrote a note and I should use other punishment and he wants to meet me." The problem was resolved in a personal meeting. In this case communication through internet is useless since it became another source of stress for the teacher.

Problematic situations that occur during teaching must be often solved by the teacher beginner also with parents of their students. The most suitable is if the parent and teacher become partners whose aim is to solve a certain problem of the child/student. For example it is demonstrated by the following extract from a journal:

However, I came to the conclusion that no negative things apply to her but something positive will be better; either I will make her become a student that gets a label for not swearing during the lesson and if she has labels for the day, she will get something, and if she does not swear for a week, they will buy a toy for her.

The teacher agreed with the parents on a certain strategy of solving the problem during teaching in the sense of reward-punishment. It is questionable to what extent it permanently solves the problem with swearing.

Summary of the present findings in category – cooperation with parents:

- significant need of appreciation by an indirect actor of teaching;
- the parent is understood as a mediator of the student's feelings;
- dominant communication of the teacher with parents is through internet;
- the teacher beginner seeks help in communication with parents and with more experienced colleagues.

**Third category – Information on school where the teacher beginner works.** Another category includes the process of gaining knowledge of the school and its operation. One of the teachers stated: "I still cannot get used to supervision on the corridor."

Other records rather concerned completion of class books, while several of them found conflict between what they expected and what happened in

reality. It may be documented by the following statement: “I expected that we will make plans together but very soon I realised how wrong I was.”

In the following statement we can see the contrast between what the teacher wanted and what she actually does.

It is the end of October and we started to complete the class book, whereas I am not writing what I am doing right now but what in my plans. I got into a slightly vicious circle that I cannot affect and I shall keep spinning in it during the whole year; however, the moral of it for me is that during the holidays I am surely going to prepare plans for my class processed only by me.

At the end she expressed her desire for change and for remedy. In another case the class book and the qualification list was submitted but the materials to derive from were missing. “During the first two weeks I got the class book and the qualification list but the issue for me was that I still did not see any plans or curriculums or similar matters.”

It shows that after the first half-year teachers beginners are more self-assured in their teacher’s roles. During the first two months they have troubles with handling the rules of the given school, which is caused (in their point of view) by lack of information. Teachers need to understand the concept according to which the given school works.

Summary of present findings in the category – Information on school where the teacher beginner works:

- at the beginning of their operation at school, teachers beginners face problems in absorbing a large amount of information on functioning of the school;
- teachers beginners start to realise that teacher’s work is not only about teaching students but also about many bureaucratic matters;
- teachers beginners have problems with projecting their own teaching (e.g. processing of plans);
- after the first school half-year, teachers beginners become more self-confident.

**Fourth category – Preparation for teaching.** One of the teachers said during the unofficial interviews during September that she does not write preparations in the same way as she used to do during her university studies. However, in October she said the following:

I started to write preparations during the weekend for the following two weeks; although it takes half a day but then the whole week is excellent and everything is alright and without any unnecessary chaos.

After less than one month she gradually realises the importance of preparation. However, the question is what they actually mean under preparation. At the end of the school year she stated in her journal:

Preparation is certainly important but not to write topics, methods, targets, and blah-blah-blah but fundamental is preparation to know what children actually want to learn and what I am going to work on with them during that lesson.

The teacher beginner focuses her attention to the content of her teaching. Even if she stated that it is not necessary to precisely write down the targets of the lesson, after that she wrote that it is important to know what she wants to teach the students. Indirectly she admitted that it is necessary for the lesson to have a target.

Another teacher beginner in the research sample focuses mainly on the demandingness of producing tools in the description of her preparation for teaching. She does not identify herself with using the tools of the given school and therefore she produces them by herself. This fact indicates that the teacher beginner builds her own way of teaching students.

It is interesting that none of the teachers beginners in the research write preparation for lessons every day unless an inspection from the management is reported to them or incidentally another inspection of classes. Probably lead-in teachers do not check on them systematically and do not require it from them. They work on their preparation mainly during the weekend; they focus on the content of individual subjects and not on the individual didactic categories as they studied at university.

Summary of the present findings in category – Preparation for teaching:

- teachers beginners usually work on preparations for lessons during the weekend and not systematically every day;
- they rather focus on the contents of the lesson and not on individual didactic categories;
- teachers beginners spend much time on producing didactic tools even in case that the school has enough of them.

**Me and the school.** A significant element in the entire keeping of teacher journal is description of events that the school management or other colleagues take a different standpoint to. For instance:

For walking Physical Education I go to borrow vests from educators; it would be better to have vests in the class – ideally each child should have their own vest!

The teacher starts to evaluate and compare what is good for the school and what is good for them and their students.

Now we have walking Physical Education first lesson on Friday – which is stupid! The vice-headmistress allowed occasional interchange of the first lesson but then children are confused by it.

The teacher beginner feels that she would do something differently but she does not tell her opinion openly. After a while the situation changes and the teacher writes:

So we went for a walk on Friday during the first lesson – the children spoke much and the remaining three lessons they were as good as gold so from now on we will go for a walk on Fridays. ☺

She evaluated the situation and when she had the necessary arguments, she decided to do it her own way.

During the first three – four months of teacher practice the teachers work more intensively with their students on the common rules. Although all teachers work at the primary level of education but even so there appears problems with keeping the discipline. Therefore they consider introduction and compliance with rules to be of key importance. However, if the rules are set, teachers do not see more serious problems with students.

Even in this category problems with teaching projection, processing of plans and dividing time for individual lesson stages showed, which may be accredited also to the lack of practical experience.

Summary of current findings in the category – Me and the school:

- intensive work of the teacher beginner and their students on common rules in the class during the first three – four months;
- the teacher beginner starts to evaluate and compare what is good for the school and what is good for them and their students;
- the teachers beginners have problems with time organisation of individual lessons;
- they need to understand their own place at the school and their own role in it;
- teachers beginners adapt to the new conditions, they seek an “anchor”.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of working with journals as a research instrument**

As advantage of working with a journal so far shows that it enables to describe situations that are harder to be remembered for example during an interview. It helps the subject to overcome problems with following sensitive information. It allows reflexion of their own work and minimises the feeling that it is a research. The teacher journal creates better conditions for the researcher for avoiding distortion of statements. The teachers alone decide when they will complete the journal. A large advantage of the journal is that the teacher can return to their records written down. Either after one day, one month or even after years.

The disadvantages of using a teacher journal in the research project may be demanding winning of teachers for this purpose, duration of the

research, which also brings about time intensity in the frequency of writing. Teachers see a disadvantage also in it that they must write down their thoughts. They would rather talk about what they have experienced. In this case, however, it would not be possible to return to what they had said. However, for the researcher written capturing of statements is a big advantage. Although teachers consider written text during processing of the journal to be a disadvantage, they might appreciate it at the end of the research. Since they may return to their statements and confront them with the momentary facts and experience. From the point of view of the researcher a disadvantage of journal processing is that it seems teachers would like to maximally simplify their notes mainly as far as the unstructured form of journal is concerned. Then the text creates disputableness in the interpretation of obtained data. If during the research it shows that individual written statements of teachers, so to speak, “pupate” it is necessary to seek other solutions, other ways of journal processing.

## Conclusion

The beginnings of teacher career are usually demanding because one works with students that expect from then to be professional from the first day of joining the school. It is not the practice that is related to a subject at university, where the student is supervised by a teacher from practice or a university teacher. It is responsibility that the teachers realise.

The research presented by us points out to the fact that during the first year the teachers have significant doubts about themselves. They consider whether they made a good choice and compare themselves with their colleagues. They seek certainties through feedback from their students, colleagues, parents and even from their relatives. They try to fulfil their own subjective expectations, which in many cases are in conflict with the expectations of the given school. It is only up to them whether they will find their place at the school or not.

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