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# Responsibilities and Competences of A University Teacher

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## Abstract

Activities of university teachers are characterised with professional competences in the fields of their specialisation and research, in the areas of teaching and management. All these competences reflect not only theoretical and empirically acquired knowledge, but also the skills, personality features, willingness and desire to pursue constant self-education and to contribute to training and personal development of students. Requirements for university teachers are related to living in the varied world and to the changes occurring in tertiary education. One of the most significant motifs is the use of information and communication technologies in the process of education. Teachers are responsible for what they can influence through their activities in relation to students, to themselves, as well as to a particular community. The article does not only present the theoretical bases connected with the hermeneutic aspects of teaching and research activities, but also includes the results of partial empirical research which focused on students' notion of the responsibilities, competences and features which are required from university teachers. It turns out that students consider specialist competence of teachers in the disciplines they teach as essential and that they take it for granted. However, they also evaluate the teachers' personal dispositions, features, approaches and skills which include communication, team work, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and developing students' independence, etc. Last but not least, they appreciate the teachers' ability to carry out reflection, self-reflection, fair assessment, their ability to take a detached view and to be helpful, which enhance positive motivation in students.

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## 1. Introduction

In our world, varied world, which is the setting for our lives, in the 3rd millennium we are faced with tasks and questions, which teachers (and of course not only teachers) have to react to. This world is characterised with entwining, clashing and strong confrontation of different cultures, different approaches to life, and therefore requires

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an adequate reflection of multiculturalism, and self-reflection of cultures on the one hand, and on the other hand, also the development of transversal reason, which involves the possibility of “building bridges” between cultures, as well as between different conceptions of the life journey.

This possibility is determined by the acceptance and elaboration of the concept of the polarities of postmodernism and the educational and training efforts, which through its diction model must lead to comprehension, understanding and communication. This means that we refer to the educational and training relationship as to a dialogical relationship, in which it is suspected that a mutual intrinsic encounter is the ultimate basis for possible communication. This relationship includes experiencing the idea of the other person’s position, and transcending the current position and situation. It is also an insight into the fact that various languages represent various conceptualisations and interpretations of the world. These motifs stand out more clearly if we make use of all the potential of information and communication technologies in studying, teaching, as well as in mutual encounters, e.g. on social networks, in a virtual learning environment, etc.

## 2. Intrinsic education

“Intrinsic education”, i.e. not only education as obtaining qualifications which are needed to cope with the “operational” components of our lives, aims to respect all antropina, obviously with regard to the capabilities of a particular student, teacher or subject. This issue is analysed for instance by Kratochvíl (1995), who states that education is not based on a method but on responsibility. It would be irresponsible not to rely on a method at least in the situations in which we have no insight; it would be equally irresponsible, however, to replace insight with method. Education should lead to responsibility, instead of being a process of giving instructions on how to use manuals (Kratochvíl, 1995, p. 155). An essential moment of the teacher’s approach to education is the acceptance of responsibility connected with the concern about the soul, about the language and communication, with the concern about the polis and about the world. This is reflected in the formulation of the bases, in the conception of objectives, in the application of methods and tools. Kratochvíl is critical of the reductionistic concept of education, which we also face in our school system.

In this situation, the task for the scholars at school can be nothing less than to try to maintain the potential of education; to try to create also some space for intrinsic education within the technocratically and bureaucratically targeted school (Kratochvíl, 1995, p. 161).

Technocrats and bureaucrats should understand that scholars do not express this desire just out of pleasure or because they are stuck in old traditions. Without intrinsic education, or at least part of it and at least for part of the population, not even the technical and administrative running of the society is sustainable as the running of the human society. Besides, the right to education also ranks among human rights.

The basis for the concept of competence in this article is the acceptance of responsibility, the call to responsibility. The terms responsibility and competence complement and enrich each other, considering the gnoseological, methodological, axiological and ethical levels. Based on the concept of intrinsic education and on the grounds for the university teacher’s profession, results of empirical surveys, which were carried out in 2009-2013, will be presented. These results illustrate the relevance of non-simplifying approaches to the issue of the teacher’s responsibilities and competences. The purpose of this report is to provide subject for the university teacher’s reflection and self-reflection, the acceptance of which may imply at least partial shift in the approach towards education and to performing the teacher’s profession, especially at the time of the massive onset of ICT, not only in teaching.

### 2.1. *Critical approach to the concept of education, the teacher’s responsibilities and competences*

Intrinsic education is perceived as a concept, which transcends the concept of education as a process of instruction on manipulation, on being qualified, which is needed to handle the operational (frequently technocratic and bureaucratic) dimension of our lives. Intrinsic education is not reduced to an algorithmized technological process featuring testing and assessing the effectiveness, and the desire to ensure higher and higher measurable productivity and effectiveness, which bring about advantages over competition when asserting oneself onto the market. The educational strategy which could be summed up in the following words: more, faster, cheaper, more

efficiently (and sometimes also in an easy and amusing way), is enormously deceptive and misleading. It distracts attention away from the world's wholeness and from the wholeness of human life as a life of a being who is essentially "scarce", and who is enabled through adequate education to become a compact entity understanding its own transcendence.

Konrad Paul Liessmann (2008) states that education should continue to be "a programme for forming a human through spiritual work on himself or herself and in the world" (Liessmann, 2008, p. 42). This is what school should assist. The original meaning of the word "scholé", "schola" is breaking of work, a place of ease, a place of feast, an extraordinary place (see for example Liessmann, Palouš).

The school which has stopped being a place of ease, concentration, contemplation, is not a school any more. It has become a mere place of life necessity. As such, it is then dominated with projects and practical subjects, experience and contact networks... There is not enough thinking time (Liessmann, 2008, p. 44). If anyone keeps preaching about interconnecting into networks without realising that this puts huge pressure on conformity, he or she apparently obeys the diktat of his or her time, not independent reason, not even half of it. ... Lack of education, therefore, is not an intellectual deficit, insufficient informedness, a defect in cognitive competence – although these will still exist – but it is the resignation to the attempt to understand anything. Any time knowledge is discussed today, something other than comprehension is always implied. The idea of comprehension, a former basis of the work of human sciences hibernates at the best in the politically correct phrase about understanding the others as a manifestation of required tolerance. What is still stubbornly referred to as education conforms at present neither to the possibilities and borders of an individual, nor to the invariable sources of the cultural tradition ... External factors – the market, employment rate, locality's quality and technological development – are now the standards which an "educated person" should meet. From this point of view, the general education "equally expendable as the personality development ... The knowledge in the society of knowledge is mainly defined by the distance from the traditional sphere of scholarship. It does not abide, though, by the attitude of half-educatedness. What is put in practice in the knowledge of the knowledge society is self-confident uneducatedness" (Liessmann, 2008, p. 51).

Unless education possesses a philosophical dimension, and unless it is concerned about it systematically, it cannot be considered to be intrinsic education. Zdeněk Kratochvíl points out that the outcome of the educational process, "education has a liberating role as it shows us into the abundance of possible approaches and perspectives, thus enabling interpersonal sharing as well as an open relationship towards the world. Authentic education always has a philosophical dimension. Educatedness is the same as philosophicness. To separate education from philosophy would lead to deny both of them" (Kratochvíl, 1995, p. 176).

## *2.2. Requirements for intrinsic education – results of empirical survey*

In the courses of "Professional Ethics" and "Hermeneutic Ethics" at the pedagogical faculty of Charles University the students in their essays and seminar papers wrote their reflections upon the issue of professional pedagogical activity taking as its basis the effort to develop intrinsic education. Frequency analysis of the papers' content (348 papers written in 2009-2013, obviously capturing more than one motif) revealed some key relevant motifs, which were further divided into the following groups:

Basic features of a professional, that means responsible and competent pedagogical process – based on the findings of pedagogy as a science

Components and manifestations of communication in a professionally based pedagogical process.

Table 1. Basic features of a professional, that means responsible and competent pedagogical process – based on the findings of pedagogy as a science

| Motif   | Number of papers containing this motif | %     |
|---|--|-------|
| Professional knowledge, goal-directed approach, pedagogical, psychological and methodological knowledge, ability to respond to impulses from students | 241                                    | 69,25 |
| Legal grounds, competences and responsibilities   | 230                                    | 66,09 |
| Responsibility for pupils or students   | 230                                    | 66,09 |
| Credibility of the teacher and the pedagogical process  | 227                                    | 65,23 |
| Ability to motivate pupils or students  | 218                                    | 62,64 |
| Self-control  | 209                                    | 60,06 |
| Adaptability to various situations; creativity  | 186                                    | 53,45 |
| Authority, handling the topic from the professional, factual and methodological point of view   | 145                                    | 41,67 |
| Precision, discipline, critical thinking  | 127                                    | 36,49 |
| Team work development   | 117                                    | 33,62 |
| Deepening the knowledge – not only linear, but also cyclical processes, learning  | 94                                     | 27,01 |
| Careful preparation   | 61                                     | 17,53 |
| Teacher's own scientific activity   | 52                                     | 14,94 |

Table 2. Components and manifestations of communication in a professionally based pedagogical process

| Motif   | Number of papers containing this motif | %     |
|---|--|-------|
| Use of verbal and non-verbal tools  | 227                                    | 65,23 |
| Clear presentation and clear task setting                                 | 218                                    | 62,64 |
| Loud, clear speaking, eye contact   | 218                                    | 62,64 |
| Intonation  | 201                                    | 57,76 |
| Moderate gesticulation, appropriate facial expressions, cloths, jewellery | 180                                    | 51,72 |
| Use of visualisation; BIDIRECTIONALITY of the communication activity      | 163                                    | 46,84 |

|  |     |       |
|--|-----|-------|
| Encouraging debates, dialogues, discussions – not clinging to monologues, and individual consultations | 163 | 46,84 |
| Allowing space for written expression  | 151 | 43,39 |
| Tolerance of different opinions  | 150 | 43,10 |
| Paying attention to all (even shy) pupils and students   | 130 | 37,36 |
| Fair, justified assessment   | 125 | 35,92 |
| Use of ICT.  | 121 | 34,77 |

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### 3. Conclusion

In their reflections, essays and seminar papers, students primarily oriented themselves at the personal and pedagogical qualities of university teachers. It was possible to implicitly capture scientific and professional activity, organisational and managing components of the teacher's profession being hardly considered, most frequently perhaps only in connection with the use of ICT in teaching and in using teaching support. As essential we perceive the fact that even university students do not ignore the competences and responsibilities of their teachers.

Widely discussed issues of the concept of responsibilities and competences of a university teacher in the area of the content of education, in the ways of communicating the content of education, in the area of emphases put on the use of modern information and communication technologies within the life processes in the varied world.

Educational process is antinomic in many ways. The basic antinomy being reflected in the fact that we continue to grasp the objectives from the pupil's point of view, and it is not only them, but also us, the society and the world, which is on our mind, which we help to create responsibly. Education and training for the third millennium cannot give up on this responsibility, although in relation to the number of impulses, the loss of immediate experience, with the increasing importance of information technologies, with the crisis of authority, and the rise in feeling emptiness, with the crisis of values and traditions, the teachers' and educators' work is getting more and more difficult. However, it may be inspired by philosophers who do not just yield to scepticism, and who strive to ground the meaningfulness of education. ....

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