The Value of Self-Analysis of the Teaching Activity of Primary School Teachers and Its Relevance on Self-Perceived Professional Progress

Anastasia-Mălina Cioloca, Muşata-Dacia Bocoş

1. PhD student, Anastasia.cioloca@ubbcluj.ro, 0000-0002-7581-8662
2. University professor doctor, musata.bocos@ubbcluj.ro, 0000-0002-8108-7931

Abstract

The present qualitative study, part of a wider research, aims to investigate the ways in which self-analysis of teaching activity is used among primary school teachers in Romania and the relevance of this approach on the self-perceived professional progress of teachers. Data collection was carried out by applying the focus-group method for a sample of 51 participants. The focus-group grid consisted of several preliminary questions, six open questions that allowed the formative valences of the self-analysis of the teaching activity to be outlined, and a concluding question. In this paper, we have focused on the ways in which self-analysis of teaching activity can be used and the contribution of this process to teachers' self-perceived professional progress. Following the recording of the answers, their analysis and coding, aspects such as: the permanent reporting of teachers to students, the achievement of educational goals, the optimal and prompt change of teaching strategies, the use of self-reflective questions, didactic self-regulation and the efficiency of the instructional-educational approach, considered as prerequisites for the practice of self-analysis of teaching activity, were highlighted. On the other hand, we found that all 51 primary

school teachers claim that self-analysis of teaching activity contributes significantly to their self-perceived professional progress.

Keywords: self-analysis of teaching activity; self-perceived professional progress; reflective self-questioning; teaching self-regulation.

JEL Classification: I2

1. Introduction

In the context of the dynamism of contemporary society, it becomes imperative that each individual autonomously identifies his/her own development path, at his/her own pace, and starting from the knowledge, internalization and valorization of his/her personal and professional identity. In this respect, the process of self-analysis can be a forward-looking approach aimed at developing relevant strategies for making the actions undertaken more effective and facilitating the professional progress of the individual concerned.

Self-analysis of teaching activity, a new term in the field of education, is only tangentially and marginally dealt with in the literature. This is despite the fact that the importance of self-analysis of teaching activity by primary school teachers is crucial, since we are talking about a segment of schooling that provides the foundations for the development of the personality of the educated. A Eurydice Report (European Commission, 2023) reports on the general aims of pedagogical instruction at primary school level: to provide basic education for all children; to develop their personalities on the basis of their individual characteristics; and to acquire the fundamental skills needed to ensure continuity of education. In order to achieve these educational goals, which are the responsibility of the teacher, it is necessary for the teacher to undertake reflective, introspective actions, which allow him/her to constantly restructure the pedagogical approach, starting from the premises of his/her own awareness. Awareness of these actions and their level of success will enable teachers to develop self-perceptions of their professional progress. Through this qualitative

educational research, we want to investigate, operationally, the ways in which primary school teachers value the process of self-analysis in the classroom. On the other hand, we want to identify the usefulness of this process in self-monitoring their professional progress.

2. Literature Review

The contemporary era, with its evolutionary implications, has imposed a conceptual-applicative restructuring of teachers' professionalism. This new paradigm involves a massive expansion of the roles that teachers perform in the classroom, in line with the expectations of students (at the micro level) and the expectations of society (at the macro level). A comprehensive scientific approach (Farihin et al., 2022) highlights the importance of continuous development of teachers' competences for their professional progress. So far, professionalism is addressed from three perspectives: the importance and quality of the teacher education process (Yuliana et al., 2019), the correlation (at the achievement level) of teachers' professional competences with students' academic performance (Diana et al., 2020; Permatasari & Sobandi, 2019; Thaariq et al., 2020) and the influences of teachers' teaching performance on quality in education (Kos, 2021).

A possible route for teachers to achieve professionalism is explained by Farihin et al. (2022) by going through the following stages: professional training, professional certification, understanding and acceptance of career shortcomings, reflective dissemination of findings and self-awareness, value orientation of the teaching approach according to predetermined standards, adoption of mentoring, practice of collaborative professional action, action research and addressing transformative, innovative pedagogical directions. These stages can only be traversed by teachers through teaching commitment (Nafis et al., 2019). In order to systematically practice these evolutionary approaches, we believe that self-analysis of teaching activity plays a crucial role.

Self-analysis of teaching activity, a new concept in the field of education, can provide teachers with the appropriate framework for systematic reflection, which has a strong regulatory character for

past actions and a strategic-guiding character for similar future actions. More than reflection, self-analysis of the teaching activity allows value judgments to be made on the teacher's own pedagogical approach, written/auditory/visual recording of observations and self-reflective questions from the relevant instructional sequences, and experimentation with new teaching strategies to validate the previously designed premises. Self-analysis of teaching activity is defined by Cioloca and Bocos (2023) as an interrogative, prospective and retrospective activity on the main elements of structure, composition, events, experiences and feelings, accumulated in the educational act, with the aim of resolving dysfunctions, in order to obtain superior results, from a qualitative point of view.

Self-analysis of a teacher's teaching activity is constantly carried out by referring to students' cognitive and non-cognitive behaviors. As a result, the self-reflective questions that the teacher should operationalise concern, on the one hand, the way of organizing and coordinating the pupils' learning activity and, on the other hand, the impact of the teacher's attitude on the psychosocial climate in which the lesson took place. These cognitive and non-cognitive behaviors of the learners can be observed at the observational level of the teacher, or through the feedback process which illustrates the degree of comprehension and its limits in the learning process. Baines' (n.d.) study, structured on case studies and statistical analyses, reports that teacher feedback and reflections recorded after lessons are significantly correlated with high performance. Another result of this study designated the importance of teachers' reflection on teaching procedures and their relevance to the quality of teaching. Thus, a teacher who wants to self-perceive, at a realistic level, his professional progress, will ask himself self-reflective questions about the effects of his pedagogical approach on the students he is supervising, constantly collecting feedback from them and constantly adjusting his set of teaching strategies in order to make the instructional-educational process more effective.

3. Methodology

Aim of the research

In accordance with the stated research questions, the aim of the research is: to investigate the ways of valuing the self-analysis of the teaching activity, from a practical-actional perspective, in order to achieve professional progress, based on the personal and professional self-perceptions of primary school teachers in Romania.

Research objectives

O1. To investigate the perceptions of primary school teachers on the ways in which they value self-analysis of their teaching activity and its implications for teachers' self-perceived professional progress;

O2. To analyze and interpret the ways in which teachers' self-expressed self-analysis of their teaching activity is valued in relation to its multidimensional implications.

Research questions

The present educational research was conducted on the basis of the following questions:

1. What are the ways in which the self-analysis of teaching activity by primary school teachers is valued?

2. Is self-analysis of the teaching activity of primary school teachers a useful and favourable process for self-monitoring professional progress?

Research method and instrument used

In the present study, we used the focus group method for data collection. Thus, through collective, semi-structured discussions, we facilitated the debate of the educational phenomenon under investigation: self-analysis of the teaching activity and exchanges of professional experiences among the teachers participating in the study. The research instrument used for data collection was the focus-group grid, which included preliminary questions, open-ended questions on the ways of valuing self-analysis of teaching activity and a concluding question, through which teachers

expressed the intensity of their agreement/disagreement regarding the contribution of self-analysis to their own professional progress. The time allocated to this grid was 60 minutes.

Sample of participants

The population we were interested in researching was the community of primary school teachers in Romania. In order to select the sample of participants, we applied simple random sampling, which generated the participating counties for the present research: county HR, county SV, county NT, county CT, county AG, county DJ, county TM, county AR, county SM. The entire exploratory approach respected research ethics, so we undertook the research through institutional agreements, partnerships between the institutions involved and by respecting the rules of confidentiality of personal data. Participants in the study gave their consent including for the audio recording of each interview, which were subsequently transcribed.

4. Results and Discussions

Coding and data analysis

The transcription of the audio recordings resulted in nine texts, on which we carried out a content analysis, in which we valorized the self-perceptions expressed by the participants, starting from the unit of analysis: the formative value of the self-analysis of the teaching activity, with the 7 related sub-units. We mention again that the present educational research is part of a larger research of its own. Thus, out of the total of 7 sub-units of analysis, dealt with in our own broader research, in the present research approach to the formative value of self-analysis of teaching activity, we will consider only two sub-units of analysis, in line with the aims pursued:

I. Ways of valuing self-analysis in teaching activities;

II. Degree of contribution of self-analysis to professional progress.

Content analysis was carried out by assigning codes to the self-perceptions expressed by the study participants. These codes took the form of statements and were created on the basis of the researcher's self-reported similarities across the units of analysis.

The 5 resulting codes for the sub-unit of analysis "ways of valuing self-analysis in teaching activities" are explained as follows:

Focus group grid item	Coded text passages	Code numbering	Enunciation of the code	Code frequency
How can self-analysis of teaching activity in the classroom be used?	"Self-analysis helps me primarily in my relationship with my students." "It often happens to me that I analyze students' reactions to the tasks I propose during each lesson." "Everything we think about when we do self-analysis is strictly related to students' work..."	Code 1.1.	Self-analysis of the teaching work of primary school teachers is constantly carried out in relation to pupils and their cognitive and emotional spectrum.	10/51
How can self-analysis of teaching activity in the classroom be used?	"Self-analysis of the lesson means to see if we have met the proposed goals, through evaluation sheets, or by checking the homework in the next class." "As an addition, in self-analysis, we are talking about continuous feedback that we need to receive from the students. This feedback helps us to figure out what we did well, what we didn't do well, where we need to improve some things."	Code 1.2.	Self-analysis of teaching activity can be used by teachers to validate/invalidate the achievement of educational goals, based on feedback from learners.	6/51
How can self-analysis of teaching activity in the classroom be used?	"For personal development, every day we should ask ourselves what went wrong and what we can do differently in future activities." "I believe that every day we should evaluate ourselves. It is a diagnosis for us. We see what we need to continue in the future, what we can fix in ourselves so that the instructional-educational activity is a quality one."	Code 1.3.	The practice of self-analysis of teaching activity provides teachers with an opportunity to address reflective self-questions in a responsible manner to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own careers and for continuous professional development.	9/51
How can self-analysis of teaching activity in the classroom be used?	"We can make the most of the teaching activity, following self-analysis, by changing teaching strategies. That is, the moment I realize that a certain strategy didn't work, if I look back on what happened in that learning sequence, I can come and change, use another strategy so that I can achieve my proposed operational objectives."	Code 1.4.	Self-analysis of the teaching activity, starting at the design stage and carried out systematically throughout the educational process, requires the teacher to change teaching strategies in order to improve the instructional process.	8/51
How can self-analysis teaching activity in the classroom be used?	"At the classroom level, it helps us to self-regulate our work, to identify our strengths, our weaknesses and to streamline our work as we go along." "It can be used, in particular, to improve what you do."	Code 1.5.	Consistent practice of self-analysis of teaching activity by teachers leads to self-regulation, improvement and efficiency of the instructional-educational process.	10/51

Table 1. Analysis of codes for the sub-unit "ways of using self-analysis in teaching activities"

As can be seen in **Table 1**, there are many ways in which primary school teachers can use self-analysis of their teaching activity. Among them, in the self-perception of primary school

teachers, we highlight: the feedback received from students, an integral part of the self-analysis of teaching activity, seen as a process of validation of the achievement of educational goals; the possibility of identifying answers to self-reflective questions about one's own career; the possibility of changing teaching strategies to make the instructional process more effective. According to the analysis of the codes, the following are recorded most frequently: permanent reporting to students and self-regulation and improvement of the teaching act. Primary school teachers claim that during classroom work they observe their pupils and collect the data necessary for self-analysis, based on the teaching relationship established between them, the pupils' reactions, their results and their end products. On the other hand, teachers claim that self-analysis of their teaching activity leads to an awareness of their own teaching actions. The understanding of these, of the rewarding aspects of the lessons, but also of the less functional ones, favors the issuing of value judgements, the adoption of relevant decisions through which teachers self-regulate, improve or make their professional activity more efficient.

The 2 resulting codes for the sub-unit of analysis "degree of contribution of self-analysis to professional progress" are explained as follows:

Focus group grid item	Response options, Likert scale	Code numbering	Enunciation of the code	Code frequency
Can systematic self-analysis of teaching work contribute significantly to professional progress?	- not at all - to a small extent - moderately - to a large extent - totally	2.1.	*Self-analysis of teaching activity fully contributes to the professional progress of primary school teachers.*	28/51
Can systematic self-analysis of teaching work contribute significantly to professional progress?	- not at all - to a small extent - moderately - to a large extent - totally	2.2.	*Self-analysis of teaching work contributes greatly to the professional progress of primary school teachers.*	23/51

Table 2. Analysis of codes for the sub-unit "degree of contribution of self-analysis to professional progress"

Professional progress requires constant improvement of teachers' educational practices, which can be ensured through self-analysis of teaching activity. This improvement can be produced systematically, starting from conscious self-reflection in real time, in the lessons undertaken, to the adoption of necessary, self-reflective, scientifically validated changes and the recording of subsequent changes, to the development of thriving professional interactions, at community level, with the teacher's professional status being qualitative-recognised.

5. Conclusions

In the present empirical research, we investigated the ways of valuing the self-analysis of teaching activity, from a practical-actional perspective, based on the personal and professional self-perceptions of 51 primary school teachers from all geographical regions of Romania. Beyond our efforts to generate comprehensive research, we encountered some limitations. These are the impossibility of assigning codes to 15 passages of text, due to lack of adequate content, and the non-existence of answers from participants for each question asked by the researcher. The results obtained in this research can form the pillars for future directions of experimental research: testing the effectiveness of in-service training programs designed and implemented to provide opportunities for self-monitoring of teachers' professional progress, design and application of tools for feedback/self-feedback, reflection and self-analysis of teaching activity.

Following this research, we highlighted, based on the teachers' answers and their teaching experiences, the ways of valuing self-analysis of teaching activity and its relevance on self-perceived professional progress.

The process of self-analysis of the teachers' teaching activity is carried out systematically, by using reflective self-questioning, by referring to the students' particularities, by constantly addressing the feedback from the learners, by self-identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their own career and by changing teaching strategies.

All this has a multidimensional self-regulatory purpose: to achieve educational goals, to make subsequent teaching activities more effective, to improve the instructional-educational act in general and for continuous professional development.

Also, all 51 primary school teachers claim that self-analysis of their teaching work contributes significantly, i.e. to a great extent and in full, to self-monitoring their professional progress.

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