The Problem of the Social Competence of Teachers-Engineers

Not every expert in his branch is at the same time an excellent teacher. What does the social achievement of pedagogical, teaching, tutorial, parental, student and generally stated human activities depend on? What are the necessary conditions of being accepted, respected and appreciated by the other people?

Certainly, qualification, professional and technical knowledge, personal qualities, work results, general appearance and image of a person should be mentioned as the very important assumptions of every social achievement. But without communication abilities, without knowledge of effective tactics and strategies of acting in the interpersonal relations— even a man with an excellent education can (in all kinds of social connections) easily fail. This contribution to the discussion will concern a definition of the term „social competence“, will explain the meaning of above mentioned competence in pedagogical interaction and also the possibilities how to develop social abilities and skills of teachers-engineers. Formulated in the terminology of activities, the university teachers should possess expert, research, pedagogical and managerial competences.

---

1 This article is the part of the project of Czech Science Foundation „Authority and Alteration of its Concept in Educational Environment“. Head of the project: Prof. PhDr. Alena Vališová, Csc. Project Time and Schedule Required: Three-years project (2010 – 2012). Reg. no. GAČR - P407/10/0796.
Theoretical context of term „social competence“ of teachers

The university teacher generally holds the highest status in the „teachers´ hierarchy“. It happens very often in many branches of science and research that some theoretical terms are not unambiguously explained and, of course, the need to define the term „social competence“ does not bring any exception to that rule. In special literature its explanation is often connected with some slight differences. First of all the substance of „social competence“ is usually being theoretically developed in coherence with the following related terms: social-psychological competence, work-professional social competence, interpersonal competence, teaching-methodical competence of action, interactive competence, communicative competence. I do not see my task in some kind of detailed analysis of above mentioned term, I should rather refer to the content difficulty of its definition. In our contemporary pedagogical and psychological literature we meet the term „social competence“ or „social ability“ or „social efficiency“. It means adequate use of motoric, mental and emotional ways of behaviour, capabilities, attitudes and skills so that it would be possible to deal successfully with some concrete and important life situations. The term is very tightly connected with exercising ones individual independence (i. e. the skill to organize and direct independently our own private matters) and with social responsibility (it means the responsibility to the self, to the other people and to the whole society). The level of individual independence and responsibility determines the social maturity of a person. Related to the teacher´s personality social competence is also thought as a capability of the right teacher´s acting, as the art to perceive processes of the group dynamics, to react adequately to them and to bring them into line, as the capability of teamwork and acting with adults. Social competence is the result of social maturity, and it is being developed during the ontogenesis of an individuality. Not only a child, but also an adult can continuously develop himself in the quality of social capability through the mediation of constant social learning, training and repeating.

Teacher´s authority with reference to his social competence

Not every expert in his branch is at the time an excellent teacher. In connection with the questions of teacher´s social competence problems of authority and manipulation, freedom and responsibility are usually discussed. After all, do we really need authority and manipulation in education? What kind of relation between freedom and responsibility can be found in the educational process? How much can these relations influence the quality
of developing the young people’s social competence and the ways of their social behaviour?

With the term „authority“ such expressions as duty, power, fear, manipulation, service, career, competence, responsibility, rules, order, discipline, obedience, etc. are connected. I do not want to analyse here these so much complicated relations. I am only trying to point out some general preconditions of the „natural authority“:

- high professional and qualification level
- the art of leading and managing a working team
- the capability to communicate and cooperate with the group
- the capability to precede conflicts and eventually to solve them
- the art of non-violent arguing and negotiation
- the capability to motivate the other people to work output
- the art of combining tolerance, humour, strictness and perseverance
- the capability to cope with own emotional conditions to the self and to the other people
- the art of determining mutual rules of interhuman contacts and work duties and common respect of them
- the art of giving laudation and criticism
- general natural image and cultured bearing

The development of teachers – engineers social competence

In some aspects of the interaction with students the teacher-engineer can feel certain problems especially in the competence of expression, in social sensitivity, in discovering and accepting the emotions, in the sphere of assertiveness, in the capability to give and to accept the feed-back, etc.. Other times an individual feature, that negatively influences the creation of good relations with students, colleagues and chiefs (e. g. intolerance, dominance, lability, rigidity, trend to conformity, orientation on fault), can bring many problems. The above mentioned lacks can be eliminated with the help of the high quality pedagogical and psychological preparation of teachers-engineers (in theoretical and applied form).

The conception of pedagogical and psychological preparation of teacher-engineer should probably respect:

- demand for balance of particular components of socio-professional preparation (knowledge, activities, values)
- demand for balance of theoretical and practical components of psychological and pedagogical preparation
demand for balance of empirical (based on experience) and cognitive (based on knowledge) activities
Professional preparation of teachers-engineers from the point of strategies of behaviour should lead up to:
- the development of social competence
- the creation of autonomy in teacher’s acting

There are many growing questions in the professional preparation of teachers-engineers. Is it possible to reach high professionalism within the framework of preparatory or other education or only in practise? What a meaning can introspection and selfeducation have in the professional preparation of teachers? What part in development of teachers-engineers social competence do the lessons of psychology and pedagogy really take? What methodical principles is possible to use for developing their social capabilities? Practice (not only educational) show more and more that the school, family and society cannot fulfil its role without authority and a meaningful regime, looses its value, stability, certainty and also basic functions. We assume from experience that this topic is up-to-date not only in our country.

Results

In some aspects of the interaction with students the teacher-engineer can feel certain problems especially in the competence of expression, in social sensitivity, in discovering and accepting the emotions, in the sphere of assertiveness, in the capability to give and to accept the feed-back, etc.

Other times an individual feature, that negatively influences the creation of good relations with students, colleagues and chiefs (e.g. intolerance, dominance, lability, rigidity, trend to conformity, orientation on fual) can bring many problems. The above mentioned lacks can be eliminated with the help of the high quality pedagogical and psychological preparation of teachers-engineers.

From the point of developing interactive competences as the whole complex of social capabilities is in preparation of teachers-engineers possible to use first of all: theoretical and applied teaching of social sciences—psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, ethic, sociology etc.; forms of separate short-termed courses of social capabilities with a variable orientation for teachers at technical schools—of different types and level (communication, rhetoric, assertiveness, drama, solution of conflicts, training in cooperative skills, etc.). The development of social competence (above all, that one of students and teachers in different types and levels of school), it is the special sphere to want I have been paying (in theory and in practice) an intensive attention for years.