The Teaching Profession from the Perspective of Novice Primary School Teachers – Responsibility and Joy

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Abstract: There is a great deal of interest in researching the perception of teachers about their first years in teaching; however, the research does not often focus on examining the views of primary school teachers. This is despite the fact that their multidisciplinary training, their multidimensional role, and their teaching practice, usually tied to one class group, may lead to their different perception of the first years in practice and therefore to other needs in the field of their support. This article will present the results of a questionnaire survey focused on the perception of the teaching profession during the first years of practice among graduates of the Primary School Teacher Training study programme at the Faculty of Education of Charles University. The respondents show a positive attitude towards the profession; they say that teaching brings them joy and fulfilment. At the same time, they are aware of the great responsibility that the profession brings. From their answers it is clear they have a strong emotional connection to the children and they are interested in their cognitive development. The results of the survey also show that the respondents are sensitive to society's underestimation of the importance and complexity of the teaching profession.

Keywords: newly qualified teacher, novice teacher, beginning teacher, teacher induction, primary school teaching, perception of the teaching profession

Introduction

Teachers play a unique role in education. The way they teach is influenced by their needs, expectations, and beliefs, and thus it is important to consider these carefully (Chou, 2013; Vries et al., 2014). Novice teachers also have a special position among educators as they are more susceptible to stress and more likely to leave the profession (McDonald, 2019; Ingersoll & Smith; 2003, Hanušová et al., 2017; Kearney, 2014).

Our article focuses on primary school teachers, because they are in many ways unique. In many school systems, they teach most of the subjects of the primary curriculum (e.g. the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, France,

Germany, and Belgium[1]). Their teacher training is thus highly multidimensional and therefore the content knowledge cannot be extensive in all areas (Stará & Starý, 2019). It seems that the insufficient subject knowledge or the subjective feeling of this deficiency may lead to uncertainty, especially in novice teachers, with regard to whether they will be able to pass on the important and correct knowledge and skills in individual subjects.

Teaching at primary school also places great demands on the development of children's social and communication skills, both because of their developmental abilities and because of their various social backgrounds, including different levels of social and communication skills brought from their families and pre-primary education. Primary school teachers teaching children in their first year of school often have responsibility for new class groups of children with a wide diversity of educational needs. It is clear that they have to devote a lot of effort and time to uniting the class, working with class rules, building a conducive environment for learning, and creating an atmosphere for cooperation, help, and a mutual sense of belonging and understanding the needs of others (Janík, Wildová, & Uličná, 2017).

Primary school teachers spend most of their working time with their pupils, help them with their problems with peers and learning, and share their pupils' achievements, difficulties, and expectations, which are often unrelated to the curriculum and lessons. They spend a lot of time building a positive school culture. Together with their pupils, they form a social group who are naturally interested in one another and care for one another (Ahnert et al., 2012).

With regard to the above, it is clear that novice teachers need support in the areas of subject teaching, classroom management, and the psychosocial area. Their feelings could even be compared to the feelings of "a person lost at sea", according to Ingersoll (2012), because of a certain isolation in their class, the demands of their multiprofessional role, and the various demands and needs of the diverse group of pupils in their class.

It is understandable that many studies focus on novice teachers and their perception of beginnings at school, the range of support offered to them, and how they assess this support (e.g. Hanušová et al., 2017). Our article summarizes some of the important findings from past research which, in our opinion, are important for understanding the issues of

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[1] AGCAS. (2018). To be a successful primary school teacher, you need a passion to inspire young minds and a commitment to ensuring that every child achieves their potential. Prospects. Available from https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/primary-school-teacher

Devenir professeur des écoles: [Become a schoolteacher]. Nouvellevie Professionnelle. Available from https://www.nouvellevie pro.fr/info/285/devenir-professeur-des-ecoles

Germany: Preprimary & Primary Education. Education Encyclopedia – StateUniversity.com. Available from https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/521/Germany-preprimary-primary-education.html

Belgium: Teaching Profession. Education Encyclopedia – StateUniversity.com. Available from https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/156/Belgium-teaching-profession.html

primary school teachers entering practice nowadays. It will also acquaint the reader with the results of a questionnaire survey conducted among the graduates of the Primary School Teacher Training study programme at the Faculty of Education of Charles University. We will focus on novice teachers and their perception of a wide range of issues associated with starting their careers as teachers in primary schools today.

The process of becoming a teacher

Becoming a teacher is a lengthy process of forming a professional identity and developing professional competencies in interaction with the context of society, the region, the wider community, and within the particular school and working relationships. However, this process is not always foreseeable; it is often discontinuous. Although it usually follows the main development lines, it is a gradual and strongly individual process (Hanušová et al., 2017, pp. 19-21, Hastings & Schwieso, 2004)

We are interested in how the novice teacher develops in the process of becoming a teacher.

In the well-known cognitively focused five-stage model of a teacher's professional development by Berliner (1995), a novice teacher is characterized as one focused on basic survival using simple, fragmented techniques and instructions

In addition to using different teaching approaches, the process of becoming a teacher is also viewed from the perspective of teacher efficacy. Teachers' efficacy is often linked to their pupils' learning outcomes (see e.g. Rice, 2003; Papay & Kraft, 2015), although these studies often yield conflicting results (Wayne & Youngs, 2003).

According to these studies, teaching experience has a relatively large influence on the pupils' results in the first years of teachers' professional careers, but in the later years of a teaching career, experience does not affect the pupils' results as much (Rice, 2003; Papay & Kraft, 2015).

In the TALIS research (2008, 2018[2]), the efficacy of teachers is not viewed from the perspective of external evaluation, but teachers are asked to report on their own feelings of self-efficacy. In a number of countries, novice teachers reported slightly lower levels of self-efficacy than more experienced teachers. Novice teachers feel less confident in their ability to teach, particularly in their classroom management skills and their capacity to use a wide range of effective instructional practices (Schleicher, 2020). On average, less than three-quarters of novice teachers' classroom time was spent on actual teaching and learning across the countries in the study. In comparison to experienced teachers, novice teachers spend more time keeping order in the classroom. The TALIS study (Schleicher, 2020) shows that teachers' self-efficacy is related to the way they collaborate with others in the field.

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[2] In the Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS 2018 Conceptual Framework, the limitations of this survey method are described. *However, it is also argued that the survey method provides information about the perceptions that could not be obtained through other methods* (OECD, 2018).

Strom (2015) provides research evidence that the teaching of teachers new to the profession must be viewed as a collection of a variety of elements (the students, the teacher, the content, the classroom, etc.) that combine in different ways at different times to produce teaching. Because of different factors, the teacher examined by Strom used very different teaching methods in two different classes and also evaluated the results of his teaching and the learning of the pupils very differently.

Another view of the professional development process is one focused on the teachers' professional socialization. Hanušová et al. (2017) draw attention to the importance of this view, because "beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes related to the social role of teachers and teachers' behaviour act as a perceptual and cognitive filter and determine socialization processes after entering the profession" (Hanušová et al., 2017, p. 23). At the beginning of a teacher's career, this phase is often marked by experiencing a shock while finding new ways to get along with colleagues, parents, and the school community. (See e.g. Hastings & Schwieso, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

The TALIS 2018 and 2008 research studies have shown that teacher self-efficacy is linked to deeper forms of collaboration among teachers, including pair teaching, peer observation and feedback, engaging in joint activities across different classes, and participating in collaborative professional development (Schleicher, 2020).

NOVICE TEACHER

A novice teacher does not have significant practical experience and from the first day, he/she is required to perform in full the work of a teacher, which encompasses many areas. Feiman-Nemser (2003) explains that a novice teacher often comes to school a week before the start of the school year, and everything is new to him/her; he/she does not know how to arrange classroom furniture, what to do on the first day of school, and how to plan everything. He/she does not know what his/her students are like, what their families are like, or what their interests, resources, and the context they live in are like. According to this author, novice teachers ask themselves an infinite number of questions, such as "What should I teach?" "How should I evaluate students?" "What will their results say about me as a teacher?" "What does the head teacher expect?" "How am I to deal with the diverse needs of students?" "How am I to make sure everyone learns? etc. (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, pp. 25-26).

In the studies cited above, we can find evidence that a novice, in comparison to his/her more experienced colleagues, focuses more on the lesson content, short-term planning, and appropriate immediate responses to difficult classroom situations (Berliner, 1995); he/she feels relatively unsure in his/her ability to teach compared to his/her more experienced colleagues, particularly in classroom management skills and using effective instructional practices, and he/she doubts

whether he/she is suitable for the profession of a teacher (Schleicher, 2020). Novice teachers learn quite a lot from growing practical experience (Rice, 2003; Papay & Kraft, 2015), but it is a problem to find effective ways of getting along with colleagues, parents, and the school community, and he/she is worried about being liked by pupils, but also by colleagues and the head teacher (Shoyer & Leshem, 2016; Crețu, 2017).

A novice teacher tends to be idealistic in looking at his/her pupils and has high expectations of them, is full of energy and optimism (Cooper, 2007), often has a clear idea of what kind of teacher he/she would like to be (Burn, Hagger, & Mutton, 2015), and has a positive attitude towards the profession (TALIS, 2018a). A novice teacher is also characterized by considerable creativity and openness to new challenges and has a negative view of colleagues who are close-minded in this area (TALIS, 2018a).

Hagger, Mutton, and Burn (2011) carried out research among 17 novice teachers. All of them expected their first year to be demanding. Most often they spoke of the pressure of the workload, about the significant increase in learning commitments, and the necessity to learn new things such as school-based systems quickly. They most feared undertaking the role of administration as a teacher because they felt least equipped for it. Most of them underestimated the importance of building relationships with parents and pupils. Some of them had had an unpleasant experience with angry parents. They often mentioned concerns about lesson planning and time management. Some talked about the distrust shown by their colleagues, while others felt supported by their colleagues and the school.

According to multiple studies, novice teachers as a group are highly vulnerable, or even the most vulnerable, to dropout in many school systems (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; McDonald, 2019; Hanušová et al., 2017).

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) report that approximately 19% of novice teachers left school because of reorganization, the closing of the school, or layoffs; 42% of the teachers in their study answered that they had left school for personal reasons, such as pregnancy or health or family reasons; approximately 39% of the teachers left to look for better jobs and other careers; 29% of the teachers reported job dissatisfaction as the core reason for leaving and these teachers were given the option of listing up to three reasons. More than three-quarters were dissatisfied with the salary, but even more respondents chose the following options: problems with pupils' discipline; lack of support from the school management; poor pupil motivation, and lack of teacher influence over school-wide and classroom decision making. Hanušová et al. (2017) consider the main negative factors which convince novice teachers to leave the profession to be the following: an excessive amount of teaching and other responsibilities, lack of support from management and colleagues, and an unfriendly school culture. On the basis of their analysis of research,

the aforementioned authors add that the unfavourable atmosphere of the school is a more frequent reason to leave than, for example, pupils' lack of discipline or other problems with pupils.

On the other hand, the supporting factors that convince novice teachers to stay are a favourable school climate and school culture, cooperation, and support for the integration of novice teachers (Hanušová et al., 2017). According to the study of Johnson and Birkeland (2003), those who are more likely to stay are the teachers who feel successful in teaching pupils, who are supported by the school through peer support, who have opportunities for further education, and who are involved in school life through meaningful tasks. In addition, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that while certain conditions at school are absolutely essential if novice teachers are to feel successful, they must be satisfied with their salary, prestige, and career opportunities.

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN COMPARISON WITH A TEACHER OF HIGHER LEVELS OF EDUCATION

We can learn about the perception of the profession by primary school teachers in comparison with teachers of other levels of education from the results of questionnaire surveys in TIMSS, the respondents to which were teachers of the fourth and eighth grades, and the TALIS research study in 2018, with 11 of the 48 countries participating in the TALIS core survey at the lower secondary level (ISCED 2) and the survey at the primary level (ISCED 1) (TALIS, 2018b, p. 18).

In terms of satisfaction with the profession, the TIMSS 2015 survey (Mullis et al., 2016, p. 49) did not show significant differences between primary and lower secondary school teachers. About half the pupils in the fourth and eighth grades had teachers who were "very" satisfied with their careers and most of the rest were satisfied. Put together, more than 90% of the pupils had mathematics and science teachers who felt good about their work.

In the TALIS 2018 research study, teachers in primary schools seem to be slightly more satisfied with their current working environment than their colleagues in lower secondary schools and a significantly lower percentage of primary school teachers wonder if it would have been better to choose another profession (TALIS, 2018a, p. 89).

In analysing teachers' experience of stress across educational levels (TALIS, 2018a, p. 96), there do not seem to be significant differences, except for some countries. The variation across educational levels for the other stress-related indicators (time for personal life, impact of the job on mental and physical health) is not significant either, except for a few countries.

Significant variation in the sources of stress was observed across educational levels (TALIS, 2018a, p. 94). Primary school teachers report to a greater extent that modifying lessons for students with special needs, marking, and being held responsible for student achievement are sources of stress.

The TALIS data (2018a, p. 157) shows that collaboration is more prevalent and frequent among primary school teachers than their lower secondary school colleagues. For example, teaching jointly in teams in the same class at least once a month is reported by a significantly larger portion of primary school teachers in 11 out of 13 countries. Primary school teachers are also more commonly included in monthly meetings that discuss the learning development of specific students, working with other teachers to ensure common standards in evaluations of student progress, and participating in collaborative professional learning.

As for teacher collegiality, in comparison to secondary school teachers, primary school teachers agree more often that there is collegiality among the staff, as measured by the presence of a school culture of shared responsibilities for school issues, by mutual support, and by school staff sharing a common set of beliefs about teaching and learning (TALIS, 2018a, p. 162).

In terms of the opinion on whether their school is safe and orderly, the statements of primary and lower secondary school teachers do not differ significantly. 69% of the primary school teachers (and 63% of the lower secondary school teachers) in the TIMSS 2015 survey said that their school was very safe and orderly, 28% of the primary school teachers (and 33% of the lower secondary teachers) considered their school somewhat safe and orderly, and 2% of the primary (and 3% of the lower secondary) teachers would not describe their school as safe and orderly (Mullis et al., 2016, p. 39).

Across the 13 TALIS countries with available data for ISCED 1, only a small proportion of primary school teachers work at schools in which teachers are never appraised. Differences in the frequency and methods of appraisal vary according to education systems. The findings also show (TALIS, 2018a, p. 169) that the prevalence of teachers receiving feedback is similar across educational levels.

The data (TALIS, 2018a, p. 201) does not show a great degree of variation between primary and lower secondary education in terms of teachers' school responsibilities. The largest differences are observed for the curriculum and instruction, with less leadership by primary school teachers.

TALIS (2018a, p. 208) reports that primary school teachers have less autonomy than lower secondary school teachers. A significantly lower number of primary school teachers report having control over "determining the homework to be assigned" and "determining course content". On the other hand, primary school teachers have more control over "disciplining students".

Primary school head teachers report (TALIS, 2018a, p. 208) that teachers in their school have better academic leadership, with significant differences in the areas of "understanding the school's curricular goals", "success in implementing the school's curriculum", and "high expectations of student achievement".

It is interesting that in the TIMSS research from 2007 and 2015, professional development in the areas of both con-

tent and pedagogy looks more prevalent for lower secondary school teachers than for primary school teachers and there no quantitative increase has occurred since 2007 (Mullis et al., 2016, p. 45).

SUPPORTING NOVICE TEACHERS

The problematic situation for novice teachers is addressed by individual school systems and there are induction programmes that are being more or less systematically implemented. Howe (2006) carried out research aiming to compare induction programmes in different countries. In his analysis, he focused on induction programmes from Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. According to Howe (2006), the most successful programmes include opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and acculturation, and are implemented in a supportive environment. Howe (2006) deems as relatively effective the induction programmes in Japan, Germany, New Zealand, and some US states, which include internships for novice teachers, mentoring under the guidance of specially trained mentors, comprehensive training, and reduction of teaching responsibilities, with an emphasis on assistance rather than summative evaluation and control. Howe emphasizes that combining approaches is important to the success of induction, and that it is crucial to have time to reflect and to focus induction on support for (not evaluation of) teachers who are new to the profession.

From the international research, Kearney (2014) identified examples of best practice as being a one- to two-year mandated programme that focused on: teacher learning and evaluation; the provision of a mentor; the opportunity for collaboration; structured observations; reduced teaching and/or release time; intensive workplace learning; seminars for novice teachers and/or meetings; professional support and/or professional networking, and a programme of professional development.

The survey asked the 29% of respondents who listed job dissatisfaction as a major reason for leaving about the source of their dissatisfaction, again giving them the option of listing up to three reasons. More than three-quarters linked their leaving the profession to low salaries. But even more of them said that one of the following four different schoolworking conditions was behind their decision to quit: problems with pupils' discipline; lack of support from the school management; poor pupil motivation, and lack of teacher influence over school-wide and classroom decision making.

Kearney (2014) says that induction programmes should be conceptualized as a learning process that provides professional support in the form of orientation to the school to help socialize beginning teachers to their new workplace and the profession; mentoring as part of a situated learning process, culminating in initiation into a professional Community of Practice; focused collaboration with colleagues working in similar situations

for additional professional support; structured observations of beginning teachers by their mentor; structured time release for beginning teachers to meet with their mentors for professional support and to discuss outcomes of observations; work on collecting evidence and supporting documentation…, training and either structured time release, remuneration, or both for mentors; and being part of a larger formal programme of continuing professional learning that is sustained throughout the teacher's career (Kearney, 2014, p. 13).

According to many studies, induction has a positive influence on novice teachers staying in the profession (Ginkel et al., 2016; Kearney, 2014; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll, 2012; Howe, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) meta-analysis provided empirical support for the claim that support and assistance for beginning teachers have a positive impact on teacher engagement, classroom management, pupils' achievements, and making the teachers stay. Novice teachers who took part in some form of induction were usually more satisfied with their work and did not think so much about leaving the profession. Furthermore, they proved to be better at keeping pupils on task, developing lesson plans, using effective procedures for questioning pupils, adapting classroom activities to pupils' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and managing the learning process. Almost all studies have shown that the pupils of novice teachers

who had undergone some induction had higher scores in academic tests (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). What proved to be an important factor for teachers beginning their professional careers were the characteristics of the school where the induction took place (town schools with poorer social-economic backgrounds did not show a positive impact on induction), the length of the induction programme (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll, 2012; Feiman-Nemser, 2003), and the selection and training of mentors (Hobson et al., 2009). Feiman-Nemser (2003) states that good working conditions and school culture are essential for the success of induction. In his opinion, even the best induction programmes cannot compensate for an unhealthy school climate, an unhealthy competitive environment, or inaccurate beliefs of teachers about what teaching should look like.

Hagger, Mutton, and Burn (2011) conducted a three-year longitudinal study examining the support in the first years of practice evaluated by novice teachers in England. Some of them were provided with support under what was called the school-based ITE partnership, others under formal induction measures. Most teachers appreciated their experience with induction support, which provided encouraging feedback and formative assessment, as well as practical assistance in the area of introduction to established working routines in individual schools, including related administrative tasks. However, not everyone was satisfied with their induction. Dissatis-

fied respondents criticized the fact that the support had not built on their previous education and the fact that planning sessions were often cancelled; they perceived the programmes as help for those who needed it rather than as a systemic mechanism for continuing professional development.

It is clear that teaching is a complex profession and the knowledge and skills acquired by new entrants to the profession during pre-graduate preparation are not enough for its successful performance. According to Ingersoll (2012) and other experts, induction programmes can significantly help in the professional growth and learning of novice teachers.

In the current situation, when many school systems face a shortage of teachers,[3] often from the primary school level,[4] some schools are forced to employ students of teacher training or unqualified teachers. Helms-Lorenzo, Van de Grift, and Maulana (2015) revealed important findings among Dutch teachers. They found that the probability of a qualified teacher staying in the same school for three years is about 2.6 times greater than that of an unqualified teacher. Thus, it seems that school systems should focus not so much on induction programmes as paying more attention to future teachers and their finishing their teacher training and entering practice.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to find out how the graduates of the Primary School Teacher Training study programme at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague view the teaching profession. We asked ourselves the following research questions:
- What do teacher graduates consider to be the benefits of the teaching profession?
- What areas of the teaching profession do they consider unsatisfactory?
- How do they characterize the teaching profession?
- When they started their careers, which areas did they feel prepared for? What did they feel unprepared for?

METHODOLOGY AND
THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

In order to answer the research questions, we conducted a questionnaire survey because it is viewed as the most pragmatic method to learn about the participants' perceptions (Artino et al., 2014).

We formulated the research problem as "the perception of the first years of practice of teacher graduates" and viewed it from a descriptive point of view. We wanted to find out and describe what the respondents considered to be advantages and what they considered to be disadvan-

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[3] Videnovic, M. (2018). Eurydice: shortage of teachers is a problem in Europe. *Friends of Education Macedonian Educators Hub*. Available from https://www.friends-of-education.org

[4] *The long and short of the UK teacher crisis. Education Business.* Available from https://educationbusinessuk.net *Germany faces shortage of 26,000 primary school teachers, The Local.de.* Available from https://www.thelocal.de

tages in the profession of a primary school teacher. This also included areas in which they felt well prepared after entering practice and in which they felt less prepared, including how they viewed the teaching profession.

The first part of the questionnaire concerned personal data (year of graduation, form of study, number of years of practice, relationship with entry into practice with respect to studies, etc.), the second part regarded motivation for teaching (how long they wanted to become a teacher for, the reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the role of a teacher, characteristics of the teaching profession), and the third part focused on their studies at the Faculty of Education of Charles University (characteristics of the studies, strengths and weaknesses of the studies, whether the studies prepare them well to become a teacher – areas, characteristics of practical training).

This paper does not present all the results of the questionnaire survey, but only those that relate to the above-mentioned research problem. The results concerning the graduates' retrospective evaluation of their studies will be published in a separate article in the future.

We subjected the data we received to basic statistical analyses and we performed qualitative analysis of the parts in which the respondents had freely answered the open questions. In one of the questions, we asked the respondents to describe in three words what the teaching profession meant to them. We coded the answers in this item and then we calculat-

ed the frequency of answers in individual categories.

In November 2019, we addressed by email all graduates (hereinafter only "graduates") who had successfully completed the Primary School Teacher Training study programme at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in the academic years 2009/2010–2018/2019 with a request to fill in an online questionnaire. Because of invalid email addresses, 12 were returned to us. However, it is possible that more of the graduates no longer actively used the email addresses they had used during their studies and therefore did not read the communication. In the email, we also invited the graduates to a meeting with members of the department and representatives of current students, which was to be held in December 2019.

The meeting was attended by 15 teachers, seven previous members of the Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education, and ten of Primary School Teacher Training. There, we acquainted everyone with the preliminary results of this questionnaire survey, which at that time had been completed by 117 teachers who had graduated from Charles University. We discussed these results together at the meeting and also talked with the teachers about their specific experiences in their first years in the teaching profession and their retrospective evaluation of their pre-graduate preparation.

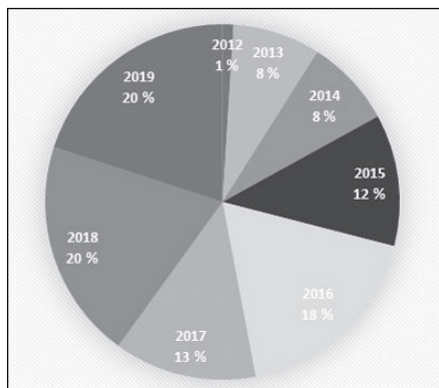In March 2020, we sent a report with the preliminary results of the question-
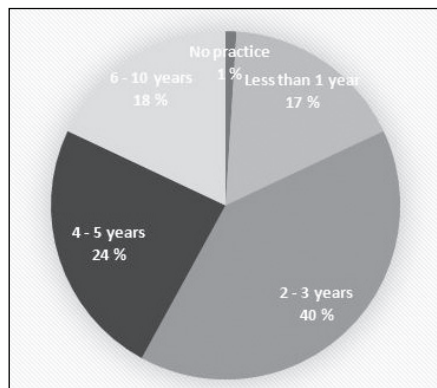
Figure 1 Year of graduation, N = 137

Figure 2 Number of years in practice, N = 137

naire to the same 561 email addresses, and we briefly reported on the meeting with the teachers. We also asked those teachers who had not yet done so to complete the questionnaire.

We completed the data collection on April 2, 2020. By this date, we had collected 137 relevant completed questionnaires. If we compare the number of email addresses to which the request to complete the questionnaire was sent and the number of completed questionnaires returned, we can say that the response rate was 25%.

The data was analysed with due ethical consideration.

STRUCTURE
OF RESPONDENTS

The definitions of a novice teacher in the literature vary (Rockoff, 2011; Farrel, 2012; Píšová, 2010), and so we addressed primary teachers who graduated less than ten years ago.[5]

The year of graduation is depicted in Figure 1. The vast majority of the respondents (83%) graduated less than five years before the start of our research, 8% of the respondents graduated six years ago and 8% of them seven years ago. Only 1% of the respondents completed their studies in 2012. Respondents who completed

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[5] Although a teacher with under five years of experience is usually considered a novice teacher in the literature, some research, e.g. Henry, Fortner, and Bastian (2012), shows that the effectiveness of teachers continued to grow during their fifth year in schools and maybe also in further years (this was not researched by Henry et al.). Our intention was also to get data from teachers with 6-10 years of experience, so that we could compare the data from both groups. However, as we do not have data from enough respondents with more than five years of practice, we abandoned this goal. The participants who have more than five years of practice (R04, R12, R16, R20, R23, R27, R31, R43, R46, R47, R48, R51, R53, R61, R68, R79, R86, R109, R113, R119, R121, R122, R133, and R142) were not cited in this article.

their studies in 2010 and 2011 did not complete the questionnaire.

105 out of 137 respondents studied full-time, 27 of them in a part-time form, and five respondents studied in both forms over the course of their studies.

Figure 2 shows the number of years that the graduates had been working or had worked as primary school teachers. We can see that 17% of the respondents had less than a year of experience, 40% of them had two to three years of experience, 24% had four to five years of experience, and 18% of the respondents had between six and ten years of practice.

75 out of 137 respondents took up the position of a primary school teacher during their studies; 49 out of these 75 respondents started their teaching during their full-time studies. 57 of the respondents started immediately after graduation and no one answered that they began teaching well after graduation. Two respondents had not yet started teaching but were considering it. Three out of 137 answered that they were no longer interested

in being a teacher, but the answers of two of them show that they were performing the duties of a teacher (see below), but only at lower secondary school level.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Motivation for teaching

We also invited graduates who did not teach to participate in the research. However, only three respondents chose the answer *I am not interested in working as a teacher.*[6] We therefore believe that the survey was completed mainly by respondents who taught. Those who did not teach were asked to give a reason. One respondent did not provide an answer and two agreed that they wanted to teach at a higher level of education. It is clear from their statements that they did teach, they just did not teach at primary school level: *(I have) more enjoyable relationships when working with older children and adults* (R130)[7]; *I work as a lower secondary school teacher; I definitely want to teach and I really enjoy it.* (R125).

Table 1 Frequency of answers to the question "When did you decide to become a teacher?", N = 137

Answer	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
I knew even before my university studies.	121	88.3%
I knew when I started my university studies.	6	4.4%
During my years at university.	9	6.6%
At the end of my university studies.	0	0
I have never wanted to become a teacher.	1	0.73%

[6] Italics are used for the text of the questionnaire items and for the respondents' statements.
[7] Every statement cited in the article is marked with a code for a particular respondent; for example, R130 is the code for the respondent who was the 130th person to fill in the questionnaire.

What was very interesting was the answers to the question *When did you decide to become a teacher*? The respondents were asked to choose from five possible answers. It is evident from the results (Table 1) that the vast majority of applicants for Primary School Teacher Training wanted to become teachers, but only a relatively small portion of them decided for this profession during their studies. It was quite rare that a person who did not want to become a teacher completed their studies.

The areas most appreciated within the teaching profession

The question *What are you most satisfied with as a teacher*? was an open one. We coded the answers using the MAXQDA software for analysing data from qualitative and mixed-methods research. We identified the following main categories of answers: children's development, work with children, meaningful results of work, diversity and variety of work, entertainment, freedom, creativity, job stability, year schedule, self-fulfilment, feedback from pupils, feedback from parents, contribution to society, possibility of passing on their knowledge to pupils, teamwork, workplace climate, support from the school management, methods and forms of work, class relationships, material equipment, setting goals, professional development, subject: mathematics, subject: Czech language, self-reflection, teaching concepts, planning.

A relatively large number of answers fell under the category of **children's devel-**

opment, with respondents usually talking about shaping children and influencing their attitudes to learning and knowledge*: … I help children's personalities on their way to knowledge* (R01),*…when I see the success of my children and also how they are always discovering something new* (R75)*, stimulating children's curiosity* (R78)*, positive influence on children's emerging personalities… to arouse enthusiasm for learning* (R77), *…how children progress and develop, how they think and how new knowledge, skills, and attitudes are forming in their heads* (R89).

Another, related category with quite a lot of answers was **work with children**, which contained statements regarding the fact that work with children **fulfilled** the respondents the most. We have included answers that directly state this fact and also answers concerning fascination with children and their learning*: They are always discovering and enrich me every day* (R127), *...seeing them discovering and learning new things* (R115), *...children = joy* (R117). Respondents often mentioned that they also learned and felt enriched by the interaction with children: *We learn from each other* (R124).

More respondents talked about the possibility of seeing **meaningful results of work**: *…I see the results of my work very soon (children understand/do not understand, can help themselves, increasing creativity in assigned tasks…* (R07).

Other answers could be put in the category of **diversity and variety of work**, where we have included, for example, the following statements: *Variability of*

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work… (R120), *No same old routine every day* (R116), *Variety (every day is different…)* (R28), and we also put many of them in the category of **entertainment**, along with other answers.

Teachers who are new to the profession value **freedom** very much, as can be seen from numerous statements, such as: *…that I am my own master and can manage and plan everything* (R10), *the possibility of organizing my work freely* (R37), *the trust and freedom bestowed on me by the headteacher* (R59), *freedom of choice of "how to teach", with a degree of autonomy in the classroom* (R64). We have also included some of the statements from this category in the category of **creativity**. It is clear that creativity is also an important factor for new primary school teachers, as can be seen from the frequency and content of the answers: *creativity in creating each lesson* (R08), *I have no problem with creating lesson plans and inventing interesting activities for children* (R17), *…it (work) can be approached in a very creative way* (R29).

There were also statements from which it was obvious that some teachers really cared about the **stability** of the profession: *…I am satisfied with a certain stability in the form of a schedule…* (R08), *…fixed working hours* (R11). One respondent found it important that the teaching profession allowed for a two-month **holiday** (R24).

Respondents also said that the teaching profession brought them **self-fulfilment**: *Plenty of opportunities for further development* (R57).

They are also happy when the **pupils appreciate their work**: *When children like the prepared lessons…* (R58) and appreciate the **feedback from parents**: *…when parents praise my work* (R58).

Respondents also mentioned the **contribution to society**: *The opportunity to change things for the better* (R34), *…we try to be happy, decent, and perceptive people* (R42), and the **opportunity to pass on their knowledge to pupils**: *…passing on my knowledge and skills to others* (R49).

Some respondents mentioned that they valued **positive teamwork**: *We have a great young work team* (R33), *with the teaching staff at my workplace* (R69) and a good **climate in the workplace**.

The areas within the teaching profession that bring the most dissatisfaction

We coded the answers to the question *What are you least satisfied with as a teacher?* as we had done with the answers to the previous question. We identified the following categories of answers: administrative activities, insufficient material provision, time-consuming nature, dysfunctional inclusion policy, low salary, communication with parents and their approach, discipline of pupils, the position of the teaching profession in society, number of pupils in the class, organization and structure of education, stress, responsibility, getting up in the morning, motivation, approach of the school management, absence of further education, absence of prevention against burnout syndrome,

absence of mentoring, cooperation with a teacher's assistant, emotionally demanding nature, work with the class, rivalry with colleagues.

We have included a relatively large number of responses in the category of **administrative activities**, with respondents usually talking about an excessive level of administration or being unprepared for it: *Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the administration.* (R01), *meaningless and often unnecessary paperwork around…* (R73), *stress associated with paperwork…* (R89).

Another category with relatively numerous answers was the category of **communication with parents**, in which there often appeared statements of dissatisfaction with parents' approach to the teacher and complaints about the novice teacher being unprepared in this area: *Not being prepared for perpetual communication with parents…* (R14), *Sometimes I would love to rename "Rodiče vítáni" ("Parents Welcome", a brand of schools claiming openness to parents; author's note) to Parents Banned; you can agree with children, but not with parents...* (R21). Respondents often mentioned that it was difficult to build authority when interacting with parents: *parents (now we know each other, but building authority as a novice teacher was not the easiest)* (R33), *Some parents are reluctant to follow professional recommendations regarding the appropriateness of their child's education.* (R44).

More respondents complain about the **position of the teaching profession in society**: *I do not like the way people from outside view us.* (R18), *with society's atti-*

tude towards teachers – lack of appreciation and understanding* (R64), *low level of respect for this profession* (R123).

A similar number of respondents who complained about the previous category did not like the **low salary** of teachers either. This category included the following statements: …*frequent work beyond working hours, inadequate salary* (R29*), salary (even though I work in a private school) ...* (R33), *a lot of work for little money…* (R57).

Novice teachers are often dissatisfied with the **time-consuming nature** of the profession, as is shown by numerous statements, often supplemented by a list of time-consuming and/or inadequately assessed teacher responsibilities, some of which respondents considered to be **above-standard** or activities that someone **should help them** with, such as: *As a novice teacher, I have no materials and I have to make everything. Preparations thus take more time than the actual implementation in teaching.* (R01), *work beyond duty without payment* (R08), *…I have the least time left to prepare for class, which is what I basically studied for five years* (R91), *With a lack of time and energy capacity to 100% prepare all the lessons* (R106), *…a lot of talk about how it should be and little time/energy for 'action'.* (R111), *Stress, a lot of work that the public does not see.* (R137).

There were also answers that showed that some novice teachers were unhappy with the overall **organization and management of education**: *Minimum powers to change the overall system...* (R66), *Little powers of the teacher X high responsibility.*

Great pressure on the way of teaching from many sides… Overall inadequacy of education in terms of people/money/premises/equipment. (R118).

Two respondents said that **getting up early in the morning** was difficult for them (R35 and R60).

Respondents also said that they were dissatisfied with the **approach of the school management**: *with the fact that all teachers in the school do not have the same conditions from the school management.* (R42), *Lack of management support (at a former workplace), confusion, lots of talk…* (R111).

They had a problem with **inadequate conditions** for teaching: *Conditions (size of classes…* (R41),*…little money for aids and necessary, adequate equipment – my hands are tied sometimes* (R73), *I am not happy with the large number of pupils in a class, with the large number of pupils with SEN in one class…* (R85).

The respondents also mentioned **pupils' discipline**: *I am also dealing with pupils who openly refuse to work or respond to a request, plea or task...* (R07), *with constant conflict resolution in the classroom...* (R58), *the need to repeatedly address pupils' disciplinary problems* (R100).

Some respondents complained about what they deemed dysfunctional **inclusion**: *I am not a supporter of inclusion in teaching and in practice I often find that it slows down the rest of the class and the teacher as well and I cannot "push" the class' boundaries in teaching = and teach them as much as possible.* (R73), *I am the least satisfied with the form of our inclusion…*

(R74) and **stress**, along with the **mental demands** of the profession.

Characteristics of the teaching profession

The question "*What does the teaching profession mean to you?*" required the respondents to answer in three keywords. We grouped synonymous and multiword descriptive answers into unified categories. We have identified the following categories of responses (the frequency of responses in a given category is indicated by the number in brackets): responsibility (46), joy (44), future (19), calling (19), creativity (19), difficulty (17), meaningfulness (17), fulfilment (16), occupation (16), education (11), children (9), development (9), entertainment (9), love (8), guide (7), importance (6), preparation (6), learning (6), upbringing (6), giving (5), communication (5), stress (5), patience (4), fatigue (4), influence (4), challenge (4), energy (3), inspiration (3), possibility (3), excitement (3), underestimation (3), support (3), help (3), cooperation (3), administration (2), action (2), path (2), empathy (2), motivation (2), motion (2), learning (2), diversity (2), variability (2), satisfaction (2), exhaustion (2), relationships (2), life (2), authority (1), struggle (1), gift (1), discipline (1), flexibility (1), improvisation (1), individuality (1), information (1), certainty (1), group (1), model (1), wisdom (1), hope (1), objectivity (1), discovery (1), enrichment (1), devotion (1), openness (1), progress (1), humiliation (1), potential (1), encouragement (1), psyche (1), pride (1),

growth (1), sharing (1), self-confidence (1), dream (1), spontaneity (1), justice (1), freedom (1), happiness (1), application (1), recognition (1), success (1), persistence (1), teaching (1), commitment (1), experience (1), change (1).

An overview of the frequencies of the answers that were given can also be seen in the word cloud

Areas for which graduates felt well prepared

The answers to the question *In which areas of professional preparation were you most confident after studying at the Faculty of Education of Charles University?* were divided into the following categories: pupil motivation, assessment, individualization, communication with colleagues, communication with parents, communication and approach to pupils, improvisation, orientation in FEP (Framework Education Programme) and SEP (School Education Programme), appropriate choice of methods, classroom management, class team building, goal setting, concept of teaching, practice, subject and its didactics: art education, physical education, music education, drama education, national history and geography, basic science, English language, mathematics, Czech language and literature, reflection, planning.

We have included a relatively large number of answers (53/137) in the category **subject and its didactics: Mathematics**, as the respondents talked about teaching mathematics according to the method

of Professor Hejný, which is taught at the Faculty of Education of Charles University: *knowledge of Hejný Mathematics* (R13), *Mathematics! in my opinion, the department prepared a perfect gradation of the subject; the lessons were incredibly fun and meaningful* (R32), *...My confidence in didactics of Maths improved significantly after them (studies). That was really the fundamental difference.* (R52) Furthermore, a large number of respondents (40/137) were confident in the field of **subject and its didactics: Czech language and literature:** *I learned a lot in the Didactics of Czech taught by Dr...* (R07), *in the didactics of the main subjects, i.e. Czech language...* (R09)*, I was certain about how I wanted to teach the Reading classes...* (R74).

Another category with relatively numerous answers was the category of **planning**. Statements connected to lesson planning and their preparation appeared often: *quality lesson preparation, which has been getting shorter over time during practice* (R21), *probably in the way to plan a lesson in such a way that it has a good beginning, course of the lesson, and evaluation at the end* (R73). Some respondents mention that they do not have problems with the **goal setting** category*: ...in setting goals and achieving goals* (R63), *the formal aspect of lesson planning (writing a lesson plan, setting goals...* (R81).

More respondents were confident in the area of **appropriate choice of methods:** *Choice of methods and the ability to defend this choice…* (R35), *…use of various methods and forms of work* (R100), *introduction of new teaching methods* (R131).

Respondents often felt confident in the area of **reflection**; they mainly talked about self-reflection, towards which they were constantly guided during their studies: *...the art of reflection* (R75), *...to be able to reflect upon a lesson (even my own)* (R93), *Self-reflection* (R24).

There were also statements from which it was clear that some novice teachers knew at the beginning of their practice exactly how they wanted to teach and they were convinced of their own **concept of teaching**: *And especially in the concept of teaching, how I would like to teach (working with a mistake, children's self-evaluation, groups, projects) – some things have been worn down in practice, some things have been refined.* (R07), *...in other words, I know how I want to teach and why I want to teach that way (on the basis of facts, not opinions).* (R35). Nine respondents consider the area of **communication and approach to pupils** as an area in which they feel self-assured: *respectful communication with pupils* (R16), *the approach to pupils and understanding their needs* (R17), *I was most confident in the actual communication with pupils* (R126).

Areas for which graduates did not feel well prepared

The answers to the question *In which areas in the professional preparation did you feel the least confident?* were divided into the following categories: practice, mental health, self-assessment, gifted pupils, communication with school management, child psychology, special pedagogy,

teaching methods and forms of work, bullying, creation of SEP (School Education Programme – authors' note), work with technology, discipline of pupils, teacher's rights and obligations, assessment, planning, cooperation with an assistant, class team, authority, inclusion, creation of IEP (Individual Education Plan), working with pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs) administrative activities, communication with parents, form teacher post, subject and its teaching: Czech language and literature, mathematics, basic science, national history and geography, art education, music education, physical education.

A relatively large number of answers fell under the category of **communication with parents**. As mentioned above, this area also appeared often as a reason for dissatisfaction with the role of a teacher. The answers in this category were not very diverse; a typical answer was: *How should I deal with parents who do not cooperate?* (R26).

Another category with a relatively large number of answers concerned **Administrative activities**. This category also appeared frequently in the question about dissatisfaction with the teaching profession. To illustrate, we present some answers*: Administrative matters – writing PSP* [Pedagogical Support Plan – author's note], *IEP, Template system, etc.* (R10), *Administration.* (R35), *…in paperwork* (R30).

More respondents felt insecure in the area of a **form teacher's post**: *Area of form teacher post…* (R01), *conducting parents' evenings* (R08), *management of a form teacher* (R39), *…filling in the class register, etc.* (R66). In connection to this area, some respondents also mention feeling insecure in the category of **rights and obligations of teachers**: *the teacher has rights and obligations* (R17), *knowledge of some important laws; regulations related to the work of teachers* (R38), *...as well as regulations for extra-curricular activities and in general, for example, no one at university told me that I had to instruct children about safety before we went out and also write it down in the class register* (R80).

Respondents also did not feel confident in the area of **pupil discipline**: *… What strategy to use for a child who is not listening at all?* (R26), *…work with pupils' behaviour* (R29), *In solving problematic situations… with problematic pupils.* (R30), *problems of responding to misbehaving pupils* (R131).

There were also statements from which it was clear that some novice teachers at the beginning of their practice did not know how to evaluate their pupils; they were uncertain in the field of **assessment**: *verbal assessment* (R16), *In the evaluation X marking* (R63), *in the assessment of pupils, I am still insecure about that* (R64), *marking – rules for marking.* (R103).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One limitation of our study was that the questionnaire might only have been completed by graduates of the Primary School Teacher Training study programme who had a positive attitude to-

wards the teaching profession. We tried to prevent this by inviting graduates to fill in the questionnaire even if they did not teach. Furthermore, the respondents were assured that the questionnaire would be anonymous and serve, among other things, to provide university teachers with feedback on how the studies at the Faculty of Education prepared the graduates, so that the teachers could think of how to improve the studies with regard to the needs of novice teachers. The response rate of the questionnaire was low, which we consider another limitation of the study. We tried to motivate respondents to participate via all the available and ethical tools (inviting them to a meeting, sending them the preliminary results). We believe the data obtained is valuable and that it could support and develop the present scientific knowledge on the issue.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of our research show that the vast majority of graduates of the Primary School Teacher Training study programme were motivated for the work of a teacher before entering university. Several respondents decided to actually follow the profession of a teacher at the beginning of their studies or during them. Only one respondent had never wanted to take up the profession.

What was surprising was that more than half of the respondents started working as teachers before graduating, and for most of the time they had been full-time students. This fact, of course, imposes

great demands on Faculties of Education, which are under pressure from two sides. On the one hand, there is the pressure to maintain and improve the quality of studies, as well as to take responsibility for the educational results of students in teacher training, and to enable students to experience sufficiently long and reflective quality practice, etc. On the other hand, they face pressure to accommodate students who decide to participate in the teaching profession (at a time when the Czech Republic is facing a shortage of primary school teachers) while studying and therefore, of course, have limited time and mental capacities to study. In the context of the results of our research, which demonstrates the considerable motivation of undergraduate students to start teaching early and remain in the profession, and on the evidence of the research by Helms-Lorenz and Maulana (2015), which showed that finishing one's studies has a major impact on teachers staying in the profession, it seems important to solve the current situation of teacher shortages by enabling as many motivated students as possible to study and to encourage students who are already teaching to complete their studies successfully. It goes without saying that the quality of the studies must be maintained or improved. Because of the demanding character of the teaching profession, especially for novice teachers, it is clear that it is very difficult to teach well, to be happy in the profession, and, at the same time, to study well and successfully complete their studies. Faculties of Education thus face a really great challenge.

In this context, it is interesting that our respondents only rarely said that they did not feel prepared regarding the teaching of related content knowledge; on the contrary, they often said that they felt best prepared in some subjects and specifically in Mathematics and Czech language and literature. Nor did they seem to doubt themselves too much in the subject teaching areas, which of course does not mean that they might not have certain difficulties in this area (Stará & Starý, 2019; Stará & Krčmářová, 2014). From the answers received, it seemed that less experienced primary school teachers had a relatively clear idea of what kind of teachers they wanted to be (cf. Hagger & Mutton, 2015). Their statements showed a relatively high level of professional confidence. This finding is in line with the TALIS survey (2018a, p. 208), in which school heads stated that teachers in primary education understood the school curriculum better and were more successful in its implementation, and with partial research probes (Stará & Krčmářová, 2014), which also pointed to the relatively high level of professional confidence of novice teachers. If they doubted their knowledge or skills (or did not feel sufficiently prepared in this area by their pre-graduate studies), it was in the areas of communication with parents, addressing pupil discipline, and administration. These facts are confirmed by other research (e.g. Hagger, Mutton, & Burn, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

The characteristics of the teaching profession, according to our respondents as less experienced primary school teachers, showed that the teaching profession was primarily a source of joy for them. It motivated them to participate in the shaping of children's personalities and they provided their pupils with opportunities for their development. These novice teachers were particularly fascinated by children's learning. They were happy when they could, as direct participants, witness how pupils improved and how much they enjoyed learning. They felt proud to be, to a large extent, those who mediated this knowledge and to be highly competent in this area. The work with children fulfilled them; they talked about their own enrichment through contact with the pupils. They perceived the meaningfulness of their work. They enjoyed it being varied, diverse, and creative. They valued the freedom that this work allowed them.

On the other hand, less experienced primary school teachers did not like the fact that their profession, which they perceived as highly responsible, demanding, and professional, was perceived by society as a less respected profession, as people did not realize how mentally demanding, time-consuming, and multidisciplinary the job was. They felt a lack of appreciation because of their low salaries, not being trusted with the necessary powers, or not being provided with the necessary material support. There were sporadic cases of teachers mentioning their disapproval of the introduction of policies relating to inclusion in schools and with the increasing number of pupils in the classroom.

Several teachers considered good relationships in the workplace or the sup-

port from the school management as the area which they were most satisfied with; however, a similar number of respondents answered that these were the areas they were least happy with. Although relatively few respondents provided any comments in answer to questions on workplace relationships or support from the school management, it is clear that effective teacher cooperation, peer support, and support from the school management can be crucial for many teachers' satisfaction with the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2012; Schleicher, 2020;

Hanušová et al., 2017; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, etc.).

In line with other research on novice teachers (e.g. Cooper, 2007; TALIS, 2018a; Burn, Hagger, & Mutton, 2015), our respondents also showed a positive attitude towards the profession, energy, and high expectations. It is the task of teacher educators and school managements, but also educational policy, the media, parents, and the public, to support them so that they do not lose this positive outlook as a consequence of society's underappreciation of the teaching profession.

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STARÁ, J., WILDOVÁ, R., POPELKOVÁ, Š. Profese učitele pohledem začínajících učitelů 1. stupně ZŠ – zodpovědnost a radost

Vstup do praxe a vnímání prvních let v praxi začínajícími učiteli se těší relativně velkému výzkumnému zájmu. Tyto výzkumy se však obvykle nezaměřují na zkoumání problematiky učitelů primárních škol, přestože jejich specifičnost – mj. vzhledem k multidimenzionální a multioborové přípravě a výukové praxi většinou vázané na jeden třídní kolektiv – může přinášet jejich odlišné vnímání a prožívání prvních let v praxi, a tudíž i jiné potřeby v oblasti jejich podpory. V příspěvku jsou prezentovány výsledky dotazníkového šetření mezi absolventy studijního programu Učitelství pro 1. stupeň základní školy Pedagogické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy zaměřeného na vnímání profese učitele v prvních letech praxe. Respondenti vykazují pozitivní vztah k profesi, vypovídají o tom, že jim povolání učitele přináší radost a naplnění. Zároveň si uvědomují velkou zodpovědnost, kterou toto povolání přináší. Z jejich výpovědí je zřejmé silné citové napojení na děti, třídní kolektiv a zainteresovanost v oblasti rozvoje poznávání dětí mladšího a středního školního věku. Citlivě vnímají nedocenění důležitosti a náročnosti profese společností.

Klíčová slova: začínající učitel, učitel 1. stupně ZŠ, vnímání učitelské profese, vstup studentů učitelství do praxe