

Tendences in Development of Professional Roles and Competences of Bulgarian Primary Teachers

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Abstract

The proposed study is based on the theoretical concept of the teaching profession as a "role play". The professional roles of the teacher are seen as a fundamental and important construct that determines the quality of teacher work. The study of the professional roles of the teacher is based on the assumption that the professional status "teacher" is generalized and could not "take over" the chaos of roles that the teacher performs. Therefore, the teaching profession should be interpreted as "the existence of a certain (or indefinite) number of independent structural units - components of the teaching profession, which mark different aspects of the teacher's status in the profession. The roles that the teacher assumes in connection with one or another status act in a system and form a status-role complex. The structure of this complex is relative and situative, because a certain status in specific conditions can be "minimized" to a role, and certain roles can be "maximized" to a status. To perform the roles in a certain status, the teacher "unlocks" a set of competencies that determine the functional structure of the role. The deficit of competencies provokes instability of the functional structure of the role, resp. the role is not well interiorized and the teacher falls into a role conflict, his status in each situation fails to establish itself (Kaloyanova, 2010-2011). According to the presented theoretical model, this research is aimed at establishing of the tendences in development of bulgarian primary teachers professional roles in the aspect of they attitudes to certain roles. The study involved 200 Bulgarian primary teachers. The research methodology includes a structured questionnaire, organized in 3 sections. Section 1 include 9 questions for establishment of teachers attitudes about contemporary professional status and roles. Section 2 include 9 questions for establishment of teachers attitudes about key professional competences. Section 3 include demographical questions. In Section 1 and Section 2 questions represent an ordinal scale, 6 questions have an optional answer, and 10 questions require a free answer from the respondents. The results are analyzed with qualitative and quantitative content analyze, correlative analyze and analyze of the weighting factors. The received results are compared with the results of previous studies. The findings of the study inform about the dynamics of the status-role models of Bulgarian primary teachers and their dependence on the specific educational situation.

Keywords: teacher's professional roles, primary teachers, status-role models

1. Introduction

The study is based on the current concept of the teaching profession as role-playing. This concept enters the educational sciences of social psychology, where role theory is seen as fundamental to the explanation of human behavior in various social situations. This theory is particularly influential when looking for ways to study and improve the social effectiveness of the individual and achieve resilience and mental comfort in an increasingly complex social environment.

1.1 Theoretical justification of the study

The leading concept of “role” is understood as “a normatively prescribed and standardized form of behavior realized by the individual as a result of his taking a certain position” (Jonev, 1996). Within the role theory, the role is the essential, functionally fulfilled part of the status of the individual in a certain community (according to Linton, cit. by Jonev, 1996). The function on its own is a part of the role and represents “a complex and a series of various practical and theoretical actions with their own characteristics” which requires the social position (Zhekova and all., 1992). Characteristic of the functions is that they add value or trivialize role scenarios depending on the density and adequacy with which they relate to the content of the role (Kaloyanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2010A, Kaloyanova, 2011).

Each person performs a set of roles depending on the social groups in which he participates and thus affirms his specific status in the community. But these roles are not natural. The personal “role readiness”, which determines the effective behavior of the individual in the group, depends on interiorization, which is a process of recognition by the person of the roles and their arrangement in the social status. The process of internalization is directly dependent on the specific abilities and competences of the person. If the process of internalization is disrupted, the person falls into the roles of conflict. Prerequisite for the emergence of role conflicts is the role distance, which represents alienation of the person from the role, unwillingness to perform it due to misunderstanding or refuse (Kaloyanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2010A, Kaloyanova, 2011).

A professional role is a type of social role that includes a set of functions that a person performs to enter a certain job position. From this follow requirements for specific norms, specific behavior is assumed (Kaloyanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2010A; Ivanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2011).

The applications of the role theory of the teaching profession are expressed in the understanding that the teacher performs a certain set of roles, which in the modern educational environment are becoming more numerous and complex. The professional roles of the teacher are seen as a fundamental and important construct that determines the quality of teacher work. In contemporary educational situation the professional status “teacher” is generalized and could not “take over” the chaos of roles that the teacher performs. Therefore, the teaching profession should be interpreted as “the existence of a certain (or indefinite) number of independent structural units - components of the teaching profession, which mark different aspects of the teacher’s status in the profession. Interiorization of the teachers’ professional roles is most relevant to the professional competences, as it refers to the level of knowledge of the role; to the specific qualification that leads to the performance and with significant functions, i.e. to role readiness. The functional structure of the role is determined by the specifics of the professional and personal competencies of the teacher (Kaloyanova, 2010;

Kaloyanova, 2010A, Kaloyanova, 2011). Professional pedagogical competence is being upgraded over the personal competencies through special education (Rasheva-Merdzanova, 2010; Totseva, 2015). The teachers' professional competencies are regulated in the Bulgarian educational system in Ordinance №15 of the Ministry of Education and Science, and usually include significant elements of personal competencies¹.

1.2 Theoretical model of the study

The theoretical model of the study is based on the relationship between status, role, function and competence in the teaching profession.

The relationship between status, roles and functions is characterized by two properties. At the same time, the teacher accepts several statuses, they are adequate to the situation. But the teacher could not simultaneously perform the roles associated with them. Therefore, if necessary, other possible statuses are minimized to roles. Status and role are values for the teacher, while the function acquires a value character only if it is adequately included in a professional role (Kaloyanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2010A; Kaloyanova, 2010B; Kaloyanova, 2011).

Both properties are manifested through interiorization, which is a process of recognition by the teacher of statuses and their characteristic roles. Interiorization, as a process of achieving role readiness, is relevant to the professional competence of the teacher, as it refers to the level of knowledge of the role; to the specific qualification that leads to the performance and with significant functions. The disrupted process of internalization provokes a role conflicts. Prerequisite for the emergence of role conflicts is the role distance, which represents alienation of the teacher from the role, unwillingness to perform it due to misunderstanding or refuse (Kaloyanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2010A; Kaloyanova, 2010B; Kaloyanova, 2011).

In aspect of teacher's profession, the role conflict role can be observed on two levels:

- At the group level – there are contradictions within the status-role network. They are caused by the performance of roles with functions that are not provided by the necessary competencies. The reason for such a conflict is the difference between role requirements and role expectations, as well as the teacher's own role uncertainty. In these cases, the imbalance is assumed by the difference between the readiness of the teacher to perform certain roles and the expectations of others (e. g. parents, management) to him;
- At the personality level – inter-role conflicts arise caused by the performance of the profession with too many roles that the teacher cannot provide physically, temporally, or functionally. Intra-role conflicts are a form of personal conflict and refer to the „duality” in the performance of a certain role (Kaloyanova, 2010; Kaloyanova, 2010A; Kaloyanova, 2010B; Kaloyanova, 2011).

In the study, the professional roles of the teacher are considered in two main aspects:

¹ Ordinance №15 of July 22, 2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, directors and other pedagogical specialists, www.mon.bg

- traditional roles that are focused on teaching and lead to deficits in the professional activity of the modern teacher;
- current, nonconventional roles, which enter the teaching profession as a result of the changed educational conditions and express the professional behavior of the teacher, centered on the child (Kaloyanova, 2010B).

2. Methods

The aim of the study is to be determined empirically the actual status-role models of Bulgarian primary teachers. The study involved 200 Bulgarian primary teachers.

The research methodology includes a structured questionnaire, organized in 3 sections. Each section meets a specific research criterion:

The First Criterion is „Attitudes to the Professional Roles”. This Section include 9 questions for establishment of teachers attitudes about contemporary professional status and roles, as follows:

- 1 question represent an ordinal scale for ranking 38 teachers’ professional roles according to the degree of importance the respondents attach to them;
- 6 questions with an optional answer for determining 5 priority roles for teachers according to the following indicators: most important, most prepared to perform, most untypical, most difficult, most unprepared to perform, need of qualification to perform;
- 2 questions with free answer to establish the attitudes of teachers towards the functional structure of the most accepted and refused roles.

The Second Criterion is „Attitudes to the Key Professional Competences”. This Section include 9 questions for establishment of teachers attitudes about key professional competences, as follows:

- 1 question represent an ordinal scale for ranking 12 teachers’ professional competencies according to the degree of importance the respondents attach to them;
- 8 questions with free answer to establish the relationship of professional competences with professional abilities and factors of the educational environment.

The Third Criterion are the demographic characteristics of the respondents and contains data on gender, age, educational degree, pedagogical experience and location of the educational institution.

The results are analyzed with qualitative and quantitative content analyze, correlative analyze and analyze of the weighting factors. The received results are compared with the results of previous studies.

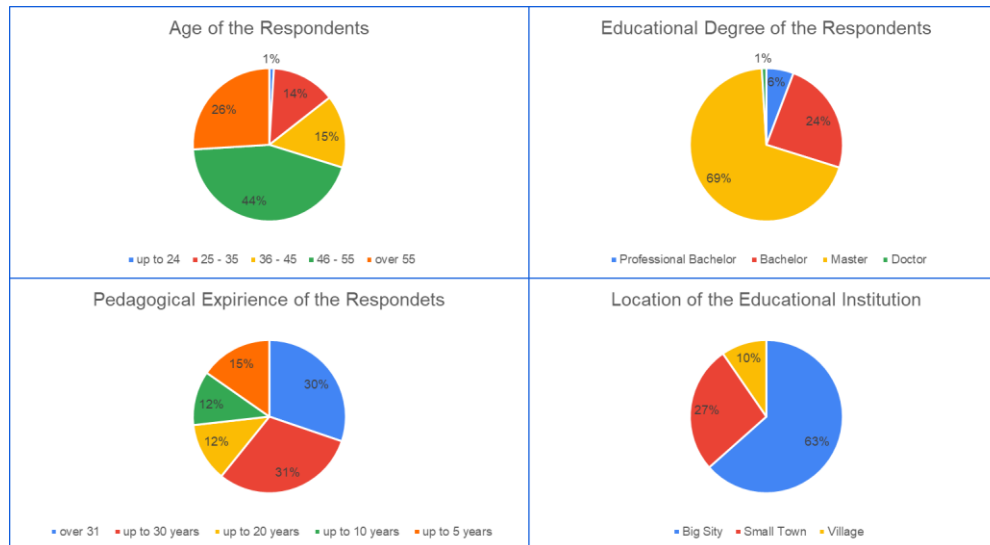
3. Results

3.1 The demographic characteristics of the respondents

The study involved 200 primary teachers, of whom 195 were women and 5 were men.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the studied group of teachers according to age, educational degree, pedagogical experience and location of the school in there they work.

Figure 1: The distribution of the Respondents according to demographical factors



Most of the subjects are middle-aged and slightly above average age – between 46 and 55 years. The least are young teachers up to 24 years (Figure 1).

70% of the studied teachers are with high qualification, they have a master’s degree and one of them is a doctor. Also, a bigger part of the respondents works in big cities of the country (Figure 1).

The distribution according to the pedagogical experience shows that the main part of the respondents are primary teachers with long experience in the educational system (Figure 1).

It can be argued that the sample is representative for the specifics of the demographic profile of Bulgarian teachers².

3.2 Results of the study on the First Criterion “Attitudes to the Professional Roles”

Table 1 presents the ranking coefficient for each role according to the ranking of the roles by the studied primary teachers (Table 1).

Table 1. The Rang Coefficient of The Teacher’s Professional Roles

№	ROLES	R
1.	educator	1,00
2.	authority	0,91
3.	motivator	0,63
4.	creator	0,60

² <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/>

5.	organizer	0,53
6.	tutor	0,49
7.	manager	0,48
8.	innovator	0,46
9.	lieder	0,43
10.	role model	0,42
11.	examinator	0,40
12.	planner	0,40
13.	friend	0,39
14.	advisor	0,39
15.	iniciator	0,38
16.	informator	0,35
17.	listener	0,34
18.	consultant	0,33
19.	contractor	0,33
20.	observer	0,33
21.	supervisor	0,32
22.	mentor	0,31
23.	coordinator	0,30
24.	mediator	0,29
25.	expert	0,27
26.	entrepreneur	0,27
27.	moderator	0,27
28.	preceptor	0,26
29.	supporter	0,26
30.	distributor	0,25
31.	selector of information	0,25
32.	collaborator	0,24
33.	guardian	0,23
34.	facilitator	0,22
35.	competitor	0,21
36.	animator	0,21
37.	opponent	0,19
38.	network administrator	0,19

The five roles with the greatest weight for teachers, according to the importance they attach to them, are the roles of educator, authority, motivator, creator and organizer.

Three of these roles, are defined by the respondents as the most important roles for the primary teacher. That are the roles authority, motivator and creator as an authority is indicated as the most important role form over 50% of respondents. With a statistically insignificant difference (from 0,5%), the role of innovator can also be considered the most important for the studied teachers. However, many primary school teachers do not feel prepared to perform these roles. Especially the role of authority, which is not mentioned by any teacher among the roles he is prepared to perform. The same role an insignificant part of the studied teachers considered for untypical or difficult. Only 6,5% from respondents feel as unprepared to be

authority in the educational environment and under 5% want to qualify for its implementation (Table 2).

3 from another most important roles – innovator, motivator and educator are among the roles for which teachers feel well prepared. Especially the role educator which is indicated by over 50% of the respondents. However, the roles of innovator and motivator are marked among the top five roles for which teachers need qualification. Educator is a role that few primary teachers consider to be untypical or difficult, and none of the respondents feel the need for qualification to perform it. Among the first five roles for which teachers are considered well prepared are also the roles manager and examiner.

According to the results obtained, one important role for the respondents is that of a mediator, but they do not feel sufficiently prepared to perform it and therefore state the need for qualification (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of teachers' professional roles according to indicators

ROLES	IMPORTANT		PREPARED		UNUSUAL		DIFFICULT		UNPREPARED		NEED OF QUALIFICATION	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
authority	108	54	0	0	4	2	13	6,5	13	6,5	9	4,5
innovator	107	53,5	51	25,5	1	0,5	45	22,5	42	21	78	39
motivator	85	42,5	80	40	8	4	15	7,5	11	5,5	49	24,5
educator	85	42,5	117	58,5	6	3	6	3	0	0	5	2,5
creator	69	34,5	49	24,5	4	2	14	7	12	6	10	5
manager	49	24,5	70	35	4	2	24	12	17	8,5	13	6,5
mediator	44	22	25	12,5	13	6,5	21	10,5	40	20	53	26,5
tutor	40	20	49	24,5	16	8	24	12	4	2	6	3
friend	40	20	47	23,5	11	5,5	6	3	4	2	2	1
role model	39	19,5	24	12	6	3	16	8	11	5,5	8	4
organizer	33	16,5	48	24	2	1	16	8	3	1,5	6	3
expert	28	14	22	11	56	28	36	18	67	33,5	53	26,5
initiator	26	13	36	18	6	3	17	8,5	16	8	16	8
listener	26	13	31	15,5	45	22,5	22	11	4	2	4	2
planner	20	10	35	17,5	6	3	27	13,5	9	4,5	2	1
lieder	18	9	18	9	11	5,5	10	5	27	13,5	29	14,5
examiner	18	9	52	26	8	4	34	17	9	4,5	20	10
contractor	17	8,5	38	19	57	28,5	40	20	7	3,5	6	3
consultant	16	8	25	12,5	20	10	13	6,5	13	6,5	12	6
advisor	16	8	31	15,5	14	7	14	7	9	4,5	13	6,5
selector of info	14	7	3	1,5	27	13,5	38	19	29	14,5	21	10,5
network admin	14	7	2	1	68	34	78	39	95	47,5	60	30
animator	14	7	1	0,5	95	47,5	57	28,5	58	29	27	13,5
supervisor	13	6,5	32	16	31	15,5	44	22	19	9,5	9	4,5
coordinator	12	6	18	9	11	5,5	32	16	21	10,5	27	13,5
competitor	12	6	0	0	77	38,5	48	24	40	20	20	10
entrepreneur	12	6	12	6	61	30,5	54	27	61	30,5	59	29,5
observer	12	6	28	14	31	15,5	21	10,5	15	7,5	4	2
informator	12	6	15	7,5	14	7	10	5	7	3,5	4	2
opponent	12	6	1	0,5	83	41,5	40	20	56	28	11	5,5
moderator	12	6	4	2	8	4	15	7,5	26	13	26	13
collaborator	12	6	5	2,5	14	7	5	2,5	8	4	8	4
guardian	12	6	4	2	59	29,5	40	20	30	15	14	7
mentor	10	5	12	6	11	5,5	18	9	31	15,5	32	16
preceptor	10	5	15	7,5	12	6	16	8	10	5	10	5
facilitator	8	4	10	5	10	5	12	6	31	15,5	35	17,5
distributor	4	2	14	7	60	30	27	13,5	35	17,5	10	5
supporter	4	2	7	3,5	19	9,5	10	5	2	1	12	6

In opposite, the role network administrator is indicated as important from only 4%. Network administrator is determined as one of the most unusual and most difficult professional roles from the respondents. Also, for performing of this role the studied primary teachers feel most unprepared. But this role is in top 5 of the roles for which primary school teachers need qualifications (Table 2).

The most refused professional roles from the respondents are the roles of opponent, network administrator, distributor, competitor and animator (Table 1 and Table 2).

According to the research thesis, in this part of the study it can be argued that educator is the primary teacher's status (Table 1 and Table 2). Depending on the specific educational situation this status includes the roles authority, innovator, motivator, creator, manager, examiner, organizer, expert, network administrator, entrepreneur, mediator (Table 2).

Some of these roles load and create tension for primary teachers because they are difficult to perform (for example roles innovator, network administrator and entrepreneur) or the primary teacher feel not prepare to perform it and need additional qualification (for example roles innovator, motivator, expert, network administrator, entrepreneur) (Table 2). Regarding the role of authority, it can be assumed that the studied primary teachers do not associate authority with certain competencies and accept authority as something inherent in the teaching profession, which is not subject to formation or development (Table 2).

Table 3 presents the functions with which the respondents connect the important professional roles. Data are derived through quantitative and qualitative content analysis and summarize over 50% of the opinions expressed by respondents (Table 3).

Table 3. Functions characterizing the important roles for primary teachers

Nº	Functions	%
1.	Building authority in relation to children, parents, colleagues	94
2.	Teaching children	92
3.	Planing and organizing the educational process	88
4.	Motivating students	86
5.	Creativity in work	78
6.	Use of innovations in the educational process	77
7.	Developing important key competencies of children – honesty, justice, tolerance, independence	73
8.	Sterss and dedication at work	59
9.	Development of educational resources	55
10.	Assessment of student achievement	53

The derived model of teachers' attitudes to the professional roles is related with 10 main functions (Table 2).

This status and the roles it include, teachers perform with the following functions:

- Educator – teaching children; developing important key competencies of children – honesty, justice, tolerance, independence;
- Authority, mediator – building authority in relation to children, parents, colleagues;
- Expert, entrepreneur, innovator, network administrator – use of innovations in the educational process, development of educational resources;
- Motivator – motivating students;
- Creator – creativity in work;
- Manager, organizer – planing and organizing the educational process; sterss and dedication at work;
- Examiner – assessment of student achievement.

3.3 Results of the study on the Second Criterion “Attitudes to Key Professional Competences”

The weighting factors of teacher’s professional competences according to the determined rang coefficient are visualized on the Table 4.

The obtained data show that only one competence is a priority for primary teachers. This is a competence „Planning, organizing, and realizing lessons“. The other 11 competencies have significantly lower weights than the first ranked (Table 4).

Table 4. The Rang Coefficient of The Teacher’s Professional Competences

№	TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES	R
1	Planning, organizing and realizing lessons	1,00
2	Organizing and maintaining an innovative and dynamic educational environment	0,52
3	Active interaction with the parents/ family	0,48
4	Planning, organizing, and implementing additional educational activities (extracurricular, project, etc.)	0,43
5	Development of didactic materials, incl. electronic	0,40
6	Use of information and communication technologies in the educational process and professional activity	0,38
7	Diagnosis and analysis of the achievements of the students	0,36
8	Education of children / students in accordance with the social norm	0,33
9	Planning and implementation of additional support activities	0,31
10	Interaction with colleagues, incl. other pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists	0,24
11	Interaction with other institutions and NGOs	0,22
12	Participation in the management of the school	0,19

This conclusion is confirmed by the results obtained in determining the most important competence for primary teachers. The results presented in Table 5 shows that organizing, planning, and implementing lessons is the only competence indicated by over 50% of the respondents (Table 5).

Table 5. The Teacher's Professional Competences according to the Degree of Importance for the Primary Teachers

№	TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES	F	%
1	Planning, organizing and realizing lessons	132	66
2	Active interaction with the parents/ family	83	41,5
3	Organizing and maintaining an innovative and dynamic educational environment	69	34,5
4	Interaction with colleagues, incl. other pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists	57	28,5
5	Education of children / students in accordance with the social norm	43	21,5
6	Planning, organizing and implementing additional educational activities (extracurricular, project, etc.)	42	21
7	Use of information and communication technologies in the educational process and professional activity	38	19
8	Diagnosis and analysis of the achievements of the children / students	24	12
9	Development of didactic materials, incl. electronic	17	8,5
10	Planning and implementation of additional support activities	15	7,5
11	Interaction with other institutions and NGOs	5	2,5
12	Participation in the management of the school	2	1

Particularly insignificant for primary teachers are the competencies for participation in school management and interaction with other institutions and NGOs (Table 5).

The realization of the competence planning, organizing and realizing lessons is associated from the respondents with rich set of 17 abilities (Table 6). 7 of them can be singled out as leading, as they are simultaneously indicated by over 50% of the respondents and fall between the first and second place in their answers. These are the resourcefulness, respect, organization, adaptability, empathy, exactingness and patience (Table 6).

Table 6. The Primary Teacher's Abilities according to the Degree of Importance for the Professional Competences

№	Abilities	%	Average Rang of the Response
1	resourcefulness	62	1,43
2	respect	58	1,27
3	organization	54	1,82
4	informed	52	2,44
5	adaptability	48	1,76
6	observation	45	2,82
7	flexibility	43	2,15
8	self-development and self-cultivation	40	2,68
9	empathy	38	1,71
10	comunikative	34	2,55
11	fairness	32	2,87
12	emotional stability	31	2,73
13	exactingness	29	1,86
14	self-criticism	26	2,64
15	patience	25	1,56
16	inspirance	25	2,42
17	tolerance	25	2,22

Establishing the relation between roles and competencies confirms that primary teachers associate their best developed competencies with the five roles that are most important to them, and the leading role is educator. Also, the studied teachers categorically refuse the roles of competitor, opponent, network administrator and animator (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Relation between the Professional Roles and Competences in %



educator	62,75%
innovator	56,86%
authority	54,90%
motivator	50,98%
creator	50,98%
competitor	1,96%
opponent	1,96%
network administrator	1,96%
animator	1,96%

4. Discussion

Based on the theoretical model of the study and research results, a current empirical status role model of the Bulgarian primary teachers can be derived.

The status with which a primary teachers in the profession identify, is educator.

The status of educator is filled four main roles: innovator, authority, motivator and creator and supplemented in specific educational situation with the roles of manager, organizer and examiner. Its functional structure includes teaching and developing important key competencies of children as honesty, justice, tolerance, independence; planning and organizing the educational process; stress and dedication at work; assessment of student achievement.

Primary teachers vary in other roles, complementing the main ones by filling them with the following functions:

- Authority, completed with mediator – building authority in relation to children, parents, colleagues;
- Innovator, completed with expert, entrepreneur, network administrator – use of innovations in the educational process, development of educational resources;
- Motivator – motivating students;
- Creator – creativity in work;

The necessary competence for the realization of the described status-role model are the competencies for planning, organizing and realizing lessons.

The qualities that the primary teachers must possess for the fully realization of this model are resourcefulness, respect, organization, adaptability, empathy, exactingness and patience.

5. Conclusion

It can be summarized that studied primary teachers have a contradictory and unstable attitude towards their professional roles in the educational environment. Their status-role models are complex, they show incomplete internalization of important roles for the modern teacher, resp. presence of serious role conflicts.

Some of the roles that teachers perform in their professional activities with the necessary readiness, they do not consider important - these are the roles of manager and examiner. Among the minor roles, however, there are also those for the performance of which they do not feel ready and feel stress in their performance. However, for the performance of these roles primary teachers want to qualify in order to include them more effectively in their role repertoire. In addition, these roles are refused by teachers as burdensome and imposed „under pressure” – these are the roles network administrator and entrepreneur.

Other roles, such as innovator, mediator, motivator and expert, are defined by primary teachers as relatively important, but they lack skills in their performance and state the need for qualification.

One of the most important roles for the respondents – an innovator, they perform with difficulty and although they are considered prepared for its implementation, it is among the top five roles for which teachers need qualification. Another important role – that of authority, teachers do not associate with specific functions and skills, except when they complement it with the role of mediator.

The studied teachers identify their status-role models with a professional competence that is traditional for the teaching profession – the competence for planning, organizing and realizing lessons, and neglect the other competencies that are normatively attributed to the modern teacher. To compensate a roles and competence deficit, primary school teachers use a serious set of skills that they uncoordinated incorporate into their status-role models.

Traditionally, teachers reject roles that enter education from other professional fields but are necessary for the effective work of the modern teacher - these are the roles competitor, opponent, network administrator, animator, facilitator, distributor, supporter.

A comparison of the results with previous research shows that the status-role models of primary teachers over a period of 10 years are becoming more complex and dynamic. There is still significant resistance to the complicating teaching profession. The tension in the work of the teacher grows, but with it grows the desire to master new skills, roles and competencies. This and similar studies show the need to systematize the processes of teacher training and qualification.

Acknowledgment

This paper is an output of the science project NIH-436/2020 „Trends and perspectives in the development of status-role models and key competencies of Bulgarian teachers”

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