

Ways to increase the quality of didactic interactions

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Abstract

The paper analyses the directions of the recent research on improving the methods and quality of didactic interactions. The review and analysis of the literature shows changes of a behavioral, social, as well as informational and communicational character that have occurred in education for over a dozen years. Based on the literature review, the authors analyse the ways of improving didactic competences of the teacher. They indicate that the teacher equipped with the appropriate knowledge in this field not only masters the discipline more effectively but is, above all, more effective in any didactic situation. The studies also show the directions of the teacher's needs and their incompetence in some areas. They enable the development of new strategies for the teacher-student interaction and become an important element in the preparation of the content of new training programs. Increasing the quality of didactic interactions is a process of the development of a teacher as a practitioner who continuously analyses and reflects on their work. The authors believe that the didactic interactions and techniques discussed in it favour profound reflection on the difficulties encountered in education and assist teachers in regaining self-trust and managing to create more effective didactic activities.

Key words: advising, evaluation, coaching, didactic interactions, reflection, teachers

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1. Introduction (Indicating the problem and justifying the importance of research)

Scholarly researches concerned with increasing the quality of didactic interactions have been frequently and carefully analysed in the relevant literature related to efficient teaching. The changes of behavioural, social, as well as informational and communicational nature occurring in education for the last dozen years have affected all levels of education, including primary, secondary and university education (Paszkiwicz 2015; Borecka –Biernat 2011; Wysocka 2012; Stanišić, Leković & Stošić, 2019). Cyber violence and aggressive behaviour of students take increasingly sophisticated forms.

Guidance and advising, together with supervision, are beneficial for teachers who are willing to cooperate in finding new educational solutions in typical and bewildering situations encountered in schools. Equipped with the appropriate knowledge in this area, not only is the teacher more efficient in mastering the discipline, but can also be generally more effective in any teaching situation. Such persons have more time to conduct typical didactic activities. Moreover, they become aware of their ability to react in a professional, proper and effective manner, which provides a sense of security, job satisfaction, motivation to work, and dismisses a possibility of stress and burnout (Dambach, 2003; Łysek 2012; Limont 2007; Babbie 2004; Bauman 2006).

Therefore, conducting a research, analysing it and discussing the conclusions drawn from that research have become extremely important tasks in this area of knowledge. The studies of this kind indicate the teacher's needs and possible incompetence. Additionally, they contribute to the development of new teacher-student interaction strategies and constitute an important element in preparing the content of a new training in this area (Bąbel, Wiśniak 2008).

A review of the literature and recent studies proves that teachers are becoming frequently involved in almost uncontrollable situations in which they have no power to intervene. The students causing various problems, either those hindering teaching or those pertaining to their upbringing, whom the teachers can neither manage nor constrain using the adequate interaction, have become a common occurrence in many schools (Mihaly, McCaffrey 2014).

In a number of cases, the problems are rooted in students' violence or aggression, their tendency to withdraw from the class or their avoidance of conflicts with the peers. However, certain difficulties arise owing to students' desire to attain better academic achievement or their addiction to forbidden substances and/or computer games (Kopczewski, Ciekanski, Płócienniczak, Marjański 2018; Miłkowska 2013; Tomczyk, Szyszka & Stošić, 2020).

In such situations, counselling, supervision and the process of skill-improving strategies allow the teacher to determine the gravity of the situation and consequently achieve a valuable integration of theory and practice. Teachers' participation in such processes greatly facilitates the integration of practical experience and theoretical knowledge and thus enables teachers to approach individual solutions of problems that they frequently encounter in their work. Besides this, advising and supervision, as well as evaluation and coaching, provide an opportunity to manage stress better and build a professional identity (Gilbert & Evans, 2004; Okoń 2003)). Therefore, the following sections discuss the selected forms of the improvement of the didactic approach to teaching.

The participation of teachers in these forms of improvement proves to be considerably beneficial. Firstly, teachers react more professionally and thus support the proper course of the didactic process. Teaching profession is considered to be rather a vocation than merely a job. It presupposes much sacrifice on the part of teachers and willingness to contribute to their students' academic advancement. In that way, they educate young people who become part of high social strata (Sorakin-Balli, Basari, Guldal Kan 2020). They have a sense of security, job satisfaction and motivation to work. They are more resistant to the hazards of stress and burnout. They also feel that

they can react in a professional, appropriate and effective manner. It is a creative space within which teachers learn from their own experience and seek their own solutions to the problems encountered in teaching. These include finding efficient ways of solving problems in all the “difficult” situations, as well as looking for methods of overcoming standard stress experienced by students and teachers. These methods include supervision, advising, evaluation, coaching and sometimes even psychotherapy. They provide good opportunities, especially for young teachers, to increase the quality of didactic interactions in typical situations they encounter in their professional careers. They have made teaching at all levels of education increasingly difficult. Secondly, the students receive the feedback and learn how to behave in difficult situations. Thirdly, teachers themselves develop a substantial sense of assertiveness. Namely, additional knowledge in the field of didactic interactions influences positively teachers’ confidence in their own competences and stimulates their motives to interact (Bereźnicki 2001).

2. Supervision as a way to increase the quality of didactic interactions

Supervision represents one of the ways in which to increase the quality of one’s didactic interactions. It is a process of mutual learning, aimed at constantly strengthening the professional development of both novice teachers and very experienced ones. In supervision, a mentor and an experienced master is referred to as a supervisor. Their role is to support and oversee the apprenticeship of less experienced teachers or the ones who are starting their teaching careers. In the process of supervising, the supervised and less experienced teachers are referred to as the supervisees. Supervisees in the education process are younger colleague teachers, i.e. trainee or contractual teachers, and sometimes even certified teachers (Brophy 2002).

The supervisors in the education process are primarily involved in the discussion of the didactic interactions that the supervisees create with their students. Supervision is also supposed to develop awareness of all the participants. Through frequent contacts with the students of the monitored supervisees, and above all, with the supervised teachers themselves, the supervisors try to strengthen the processes of the individual development of their supervisees. In this way, young teachers have a chance to manage the development of their own educational interactions through the supervisees and contribute to a more effective way of learning and self-education process of their students. On the other hand, due to the participation in the process, the supervisees help their students synthesise knowledge, develop cooperation and interaction in the process of learning. The good practice of supervision sessions also stimulates the supervisees to find better ways of increasing the quality of didactic interactions with their students and help them solve all difficult professional issues and problems. Helping, however, does not only involve making decisions, which means that the supervisees themselves are responsible for the effects of supervision. The supervisees also support students in developing inquisitiveness in discovering their own strengths and weaknesses, and in taking responsibility for their own actions (Miłkowska 2013, Wysocka 2012).

A student who understands their role at school better is aware of the need to acquire skills and knowledge and is less likely to initiate difficult teaching situations by their inappropriate behaviour. Supervision is a challenge for experts to reflect on their didactic interactions and expand the boundaries of their professional activity. Supervision is also a creative space in which the supervisees receive an opportunity to reflect on themselves. The process of supervision is also a chance for the supervisees to participate in the processes themselves, together with their students, and occasionally, their parents and other people associated with the process of education. Supervision gives them opportunities to verify their own work and the relationships between themselves and the supervisees, as well as between supervisees and their students. This means that supervision is a process that initiates rethinking as well as a diversified and multidirectional development of competence. It is a process of a specific learning and development, and also a method of supporting

a professional reflection. Supervision in education allows beginning teachers to get used to the profession of a teacher or a school counsellor, which is becoming increasingly difficult, mainly due to the growing outbursts of aggression and violence among students at all levels of education.

Supervision allows teachers to make a personal insight into themselves through analysing their own experiences. It certainly helps them to integrate practical experience and theoretical knowledge, thus allowing them to invent their own solutions to problems that they encounter as teachers and pedagogues. Apart from that, supervision creates opportunities for a better management of stress and building one's professional identity. A supervisor is both a knowledgeable and experienced expert in the field that they supervise and a skilled master of the supervision process. Supervisees are those experts who learn from their own professional experience during the process of supervision. Due to the support of a supervisor and other supervisees, they also have an opportunity to develop their personality and competence in supervision (Kožuš 2018).

Supervision is also a process of learning. However, this kind of learning happens under particular conditions. Namely, in supervision, education does not proceed in a typical way but through a reflection on one's own actions and professional experience. At the same time, this type of learning seems to be the most effective. Also, supervision assumes the expert support in controlling stress in a professional context. It also teaches motivation for a personal development. The integration of theory and practice is extremely important in supervision. Supervision sustains the development of the professional identity of teachers. From the point of view of didactics and the process of teaching, supervision provides a number of benefits that have not been appreciated so far. They certainly include discovering new methods of didactic interactions in the teaching process and determining how difficulties occurring during classes are perceived by other people. Being involved in supervision, teachers also acquire new knowledge about themselves that they have not realised earlier, resulting in their learning to understand better their own reactions, feelings and ways of thinking. They also understand their decisions better and analyse them more thoroughly. Supervision encourages deep reflection on the difficulties encountered in increasing the quality of their didactic interactions. Being aware of the reasons, it is much easier to develop a better work strategy, regain confidence in oneself and experience more satisfaction from one's professional activity.

Supervision also enhances motivation for the supervisor's personal development. It helps to build and develop professional terminology characteristic for the domain of education. For the above-mentioned reasons, supervision in the ongoing discourse on increasing the quality of didactic interactions is therefore undeniably important (Jankowski 2012)

3. Counselling and its role in the process of improving the quality of didactic interactions

There are numerous elements required for effective counselling and supervision of teachers. One of them is transferring experience to advice as a way to improve the quality of didactic interactions. Research in this area has shown that effective counselling is sensible and plausible only when the counselled and supervised teachers perform their duties with involvement or devotion, analyse their work thoroughly and confront the problems that they cannot solve adequately without any assistance (Łukasik, 2015). This means that the counselled and supervised introduce into this process the questions and problems that require effective and immediate responses and solutions. This is how the counselled teachers directly formulate the content aspect of counselling and supervision. Transferring experience into advice and translating the new knowledge acquired from the counsel and supervision into professional practice should be a continuous process (Stępniewska-Gębik, Kwiecińska 2012).

Another condition for good supervision and counsel, apart from the involvement of the supervised teacher in the process, is an appropriate atmosphere. It is probably the most important element for their progress and success, as it is crucial that every participant feel safe and secure

throughout the entire process, and be allowed to talk openly about all the dilemmas and problems at work without being afraid that this will entail any ridiculing or sanctions and occupational consequences. This is the reason why, in any supervision agreement, it is the group who defines the rules that should be persistently observed by other participants. Being a process of focusing an individual or a group on constructive solutions to various problems, counselling is a strategy of expanding professional skills that is closely related to supervision and guidance. They are all processes and it is the first and foremost similarity that they share (Limont 2007). The second one is the fact that they are all concerned with learning new and better models of behaviour and ways of solving crucial problems. The third similarity is the support given by experts and personal development of the recipients (Wysocka 2012). Despite numerous similarities, there is one profound difference between these processes, and it is the solution of problems. Namely, counselling is the process that occurs almost solely at the personal level, while supervision and guidance solve problems that are manifested at the professional level.

The basic condition to be fulfilled for good supervision and counselling to be realised is a well-prepared instructor or a supervisor and motivated people being counselled and supervised. It should be emphasised that the instructors are competent experts with profound knowledge of the field in which they operate and professionals who are skilled in conducting the whole process. Besides their theoretical knowledge and practical experience, they should be equipped with teaching skills, so that they can share their knowledge with others. To achieve that, they should be communicative and sufficiently sensitive to all the problems of the members of the group (Gallagher et al., 2012). Similarly, the counselled teachers represent a significant part of the entire process. This means that active and motivated participants are necessary for good counselling and supervision to develop. The supervised teachers are expected to be dedicated if they have defined the task for themselves and are self-motivated to participate, as they are aware that their involvement in this process initiates the development of their competencies and personalities (Laurman-Jarżabek E., Mazur E., Szpringer M., 2014).

The researches conducted in this field clearly indicate that enforced participation, established by the decision of the head-person or other school supervisors, does not commonly yield good results. It is extremely important that the supervised are well informed about the potential of the instructor and that they know what to expect from both the instructor and the process itself. The available time, space and a motivating environment are also very important conditions necessary for effective counselling and supervision. Supervision requires conscientious work and a vast amount of time. It is not only the time spent at meetings but primarily the time devoted to its preparation, reflection, and preparing of the documentation (Okoń 2003). All these activities should be taken into account as working time, while the ensuing supervision and counselling interpret as important every activity that results in the development of competencies of both the instructor and the participants. Another significant condition is the appropriate space within which the process evolves (Gilbert & Evans, 2004). Having a regular meeting place, where every member develops a sense of security thanks to its familiarity, is the best option. A review of the literature on the subject proves that results of supervision and counselling are better if the institution supporting the participation of its staff assumes an encouraging attitude (Hoffman, 2000). This condition is largely guaranteed by the factors discussed earlier, including the appropriate space as well as, if not primarily, the atmosphere developed by the supervisor and the person supervised. The appropriate ambience will certainly be guaranteed by tactfulness, propriety, good manners and a sense of humour of the participants in the discussed process.

An effective supervision and its feedback depend largely on thoughtful activities undertaken by the supervisors during the sessions with both individual participants and with the entire group (Śliwerski 2015). Occasionally, besides the individual dimension and group meetings, supervision may take another form. The participants are both the supervisor and the supervised teacher on the

one hand, and the recipients of the process of supervision and guidance, when it comes to education, are the students of the supervised teacher, on the other. In each type of supervision listed here, the following actions of the supervisors and instructors are of a key importance: group forming, promoting objectives, stabilising the group structure and norms, fulfilling tasks and evaluating the process of supervision. The first of the actions listed, building of the group, is the stage when people with different expectations, needs and previous social experience are expected to cooperate with a group of other people, whom, as a rule, they do not know (Łobacz, Paszkiewicz, 2020) The tasks of educational supervisors, and counselling experts at the same time, (in most cases, experienced teachers running the groups) begin before the supervised are gathered at their first meeting since the instructors need to become familiar with the milieu and especially the types of schools and other education or care centres from which the members of their groups have been recruited. They include an effective promotion of the objectives and facilitating the mutual acquaintance among the members of the groups they work with. Therefore, participants should be provided with enough opportunities to interact from the very beginning. Moreover, the objective for which a group is formed has to be clearly explained and an ensuing discussion allowed for each member of the group to take their stance towards the objective and disclose individual expectations. It is also recommended that the programme and methods applied in group work be discussed and that any further issues be considered (Łysek 2012). Members of a group respond with more conviction, diligence and efficiency when they are informed about the rules governing the group work. Equally important is the development of the sense of confidence in the person who is in charge and in other members of the group. The aforementioned conditions are commonly fulfilled when supervisors do not withhold anything from the participants concerning the course of their meetings. This is the reason why a presentation of the concept of the role of instructors and their methods of working with their groups might be the first stage in the process of forming the group values and standards. Also, each supervised member of the group should be allowed to participate actively in group work and thus introduce themselves to other members. Moreover, group work is expected to create an opportunity for learning and developing new forms of didactic interaction and discovering participants' qualities and merits. Establishing a mutual assistance and joint responsibility in a group requires the achievement of a high level of autonomy on the part of the participants. This may be difficult to accomplish especially with the groups operating within a larger institution. Yet, such difficulties may be overcome by precisely assigning certain activities to the group and by clearly defining its goal in the programme of the institution (James & Freeze, 2006).

Another element required for the effectiveness of supervision and counselling activities, particularly valid for the group supervision, is the stabilisation of the structure and model of the group. One of the phenomena occurring at this stage is that individual members of the group undertake actions that are to provide them with the desired place in the social structure of the group. The lively course of this stage generally results in the development of a hierarchy in the group, which initiates an increased activity of its individual members in achieving both their own goals and the objectives of the the group. After the phase of overcoming the initial anxiety about being rejected, the group members later feel distressed about losing their own individuality. Moreover, there emerges an issue of uncertainty concerning what an individual may achieve in cooperation with the group and in what manner the group is capable of providing assistance to the individual in achieving their planned goals and objectives. Accordingly, the members of the group display various types of behaviour that are more or less in line with the designated standards of performance accepted by the group. Individual behaviour of the people who have authority in the group usually shape most of the standards that are actually observed by the group members. Such phenomena can be observed in every group and require appropriate efforts from the group supervisor. They need to react, as the spontaneous course of actions poses a threat to achieving the goals and objectives established earlier (Łukasik, 2015).

A completion of the goals defined by the supervisor or advisor is the next stage of the process of counselling, and its characteristic feature is the accomplishment of various tasks. The tasks are aimed at enabling the participants to reach the assigned goals. The primary task at this stage is to individually improve one's teaching skills and to overcome difficult didactic situations. The completion of this task is primarily based on focusing the participants' attention on the creative dimension of the actions they undertake, as well as on the reflection and cooperation of the members of the group in maximising the attainment of the assigned goals. This objective is achieved by special techniques that enhance the prospects of maintaining the group and reinforcing its productivity (Bąbel & Wiśniak, 2008). The series of actions aimed at the attainment of the goals is completed by the summary and the study of the actions undertaken so far in relation to both the individual and group objectives reached, but also by emphasising the strongest and weakest elements of the conducted process. The stage of evaluation and counsel also assumes the analysis of causes of the difficulties that emerge during the meetings. Such actions not only improve the professional skills of the members of the group but they also provide a perfect opportunity for the supervisor to acquire new experience. The evaluation of the undertaken steps results in the decision on potential further group activities and building a system of support for the supervised, based on their self-help (Sidor-Rządkowska 2009).

Similarly, to counselling, consulting presupposes assistance in solving current problems that teachers encounter in schools and in other educational and care institutions. The most striking resemblance between consulting and counselling is the fact that the expert (in the case of consultation) and the supervised counsellor (in the case of counselling) receive suggestions how to solve a specific problem in relation to which the expert in question or the supervised teacher sought assistance. In counselling, these guidelines are given by the supervisor who is commonly more experienced and educated. Yet, despite these resemblances, there are significant discrepancies observed between consulting and counselling. The first one is the fact that the consultation is not a process but a single, one-off meeting focused on solving a particular problem. Moreover, the aim of the consultation is not providing support for the one who requests assistance. Another difference between counselling and consulting is that the consultation strategy lacks broadening of knowledge base, which is also true about the supervisor involved in counselling and supervision (Kožuh, 2018; Gilbert & Evans, 2004).

Besides counselling and supervision discussed earlier, there are plenty of other strategies for learning and improving didactic interactions which are akin to them in a number of aspects. They include consultation, evaluation, brainstorming, development of human resources, internship, consulting, psychotherapy and coaching. Though similar to the strategies described in the article so far, each of the strategies listed above is also different from the others. This is the reason why these related strategies for improving didactic interactions are discussed individually further in the paper, with the emphasis laid on the contrasts between them and the process of supervision and counselling.

4. Evaluation as a strategy for overcoming difficulties in teaching situations

Another learning strategy that appears to be similar to advising and supervision is evaluation. It means assessment of the results of specific work, conducted according to the clearly defined criteria. Evaluation should continually accompany the professional work of a teacher since it occupies a special and leading position in the field of education (Niemierko, 2007). The correlation between evaluation and counselling is visible mainly as being one of the most basic elements of supervision. Evaluation is frequently repeated during the process of counselling because it represents the concluding stage of every meeting. Moreover, in counselling, evaluation is performed on a number of levels. It concerns the analysis of the process, new knowledge acquired by its participants and the

interpersonal relationships built during the meetings. Moreover, much attention is devoted to the emotional level, that is the experiences of the participants of the counselled/supervised group.

Research, practice and training have proven that professional teaching skills are improved by other strategies, akin to counselling, such as brainstorming or a debate. A debate means cooperation of a larger number of people, particularly class teachers who teach different school subjects, participate in specific didactic interactions together and reach joint decisions. There is a superficial similarity between a debate and supervision. The basic goals of learning bear some similarity to the expert support, including even the aspect of the teacher's personal growth at every level of their professional development. However, counselling does not refer to making joint decisions, which is the primary feature that distinguishes it from a debate. Moreover, in debates, the decision regarding solving a particular problem is made only by the supervised who take the entire responsibility for their own actions. In such cases, opinions of other members of the group and the supervisor/instructor are only of a supporting nature.

The development of human resources is a strategy supporting the work of teachers that resembles counselling in many aspects. It is a process by which the institution ensures that its staff members' competence to perform particular tasks is enhanced and directed towards further education.

The similarity between human resources development and counselling is visible primarily in the fact that both processes improve the effectiveness of didactic interactions undertaken at work.

Various forms of internship are other strategies of professional development that resemble counselling. They are devised with the purpose of helping beginner teachers by developing a programme that aims at facilitating the assumption of their new professional roles and discovering their right position related to the tasks they are obliged to perform but for whose completion they lack experience. This assistance is possible due to the interns' tutors (Niemierko 2007).

The similarities between internship and counselling are easy to identify. Both of these processes last for a certain period of time during which the interpersonal relationship between the two parties is of major significance. Another similarity is the fact that the tutor is more experienced than the intern. The experience of the supervisor is greater than that of the supervised. The main difference between these processes, however, is the fact that the basic goal of the tutor is to prepare the interns for their work. This means that internship is a specific form of teaching in the working environment. Literature review shows that further research in this field of the teacher's professional career is essential (Niemierko 2007; Okoń 2003; Mihaly, McCaffrey 2014; Stanković, Maksimović & Osmanović, 2018). It is assumed that a thorough analysis of the research results would indicate a change in the organization of internship as well as in the areas for improving and modernizing the internship process.

5. Coaching and psychotherapy as important strategies for improving the quality of didactic interactions

Another strategy for improving the professional skills that is similar to counselling is coaching. It is a systematic reviewing of professional work of a teacher by an institution or an individual expert. It is usually conducted by a group of nominated experts, who are delegated by a certain body, for example, the Ministry of National Education. One similarity between the two is discovered in the fact that both processes define control as connected with learning of the future profession. The other similarity is a careful analysis of every implemented didactic interaction. From this perspective, coaching appears to be a desirable strategy. Some further analysis proves that its possibilities have not yet been fully discovered by the training environment, which indicates the necessity of further research in this field (Sidor, Rządowska 2009).

Psychotherapy, like coaching, is a systematic process in which problems in personal or family life are analysed. (Oatley & Jenkins, 2003). The basic similarity between coaching and psychotherapy is a highly systematic and sustainable nature of the two processes. In both cases, the objective is to learn new, more constructive patterns and models of behaviour. Moreover, the two processes aim at supporting individual and personal development. The primary difference between the two is the fact that psychotherapy is essentially concerned with solving problems at the personal level, whereas coaching focuses on the analysis and solution of the problems that emerge at the professional level. The research indicates that these two processes are closely related. A teacher better prepared for difficult challenges copes better with didactic difficulties (Paszkievicz 2015). This, in turn, makes them more satisfied with work and happier in other areas of life. At the same time, satisfaction with overcoming professional problems effectively reduces the risk of stress, reluctance to work with students and burnout.

6. Conclusions and implications for further research and practice

The analysis of the problem presented in the paper emphasises the necessity of further research in this direction, which might pose detailed questions and provide answers to fundamental doubts regarding effective didactic interactions. The research of the indicated problem creates an opportunity to start a new stream of practical teacher training. It can also change the scope of theoretical content to be introduced in a block of subjects when preparing for the teaching profession. Research in this field will certainly enrich the practice of schools and their teachers in the area of effective didactic interaction. Further detailed research into this complex problem can significantly develop the competence of teachers and indicate new ways of resolving difficult situations occurring with students. The most important research would certainly be the study on the effectiveness of coaching. The second important problem of this research concerns the way of educating teachers in this area. It is important to determine which elements should be introduced into teacher's studies and which should be incorporated into their training and development during the first years of work. These conclusions and reflections are based on the cooperation of teachers emerging during their training period. Namely, it is assumed that the teacher has considerably more questions and doubts related to particular situations at school during their first years of teaching. The teacher's practice is not only enriched with experience and strengthened by proper interactions, but is also enlarged by numerous concrete situations unimaginable during their studies. The relationship between the personal evaluation of the candidates for visual arts teachers and their actual social skills was determined by the results of the research which evaluated the social skills of the candidates for art teachers regarding their personalities (Kalyoncu 2020).

Increasing the quality of didactic interactions based on various strategies represents the process of development of the teacher as the practitioner who analyses and continuously reflects on their own teaching. It is a creative space within which the teacher who is observed – in relation to the observed group and with participation of the observer and supervising instructor at the same time – learns from their own experience and seeks their own solutions to the problems encountered at work. These include finding efficient ways of solving problems in all the “difficult” situations listed above, as well as looking for methods of overcoming standard stress that affects both students and teachers. Thus, counseling and other forms of support of didactic interactions represent an opportunity to understand the position of the student and the teacher's own thoughts. The integration of all of the aspects that constitute the teaching profession broadens the teacher's perspective on didactic interaction and thus improves the teacher's competence at school. The opinions about the achieved level of professionalism of teachers and their autonomy within the broadly understood scope of education may vary, often radically. Yet, it can be claimed without any doubt that counselling and other strategies significantly support the process of professionalisation

of teaching in schools and other educational institutions. They certainly help teachers overcome the most difficult problems and the most complex critical situations that they may encounter in their working environment. The other obvious benefit is discovering new didactic interactions and learning how others perceive difficulties during the classes that these teachers teach. Participation and counselling may also be defined as occurring in the process of giving and taking. This is especially visible when counselling is conducted in a group. In the process of education, it is mainly perceived as sharing one's problems, doubts and ideas with other teachers, observing their work and problems, listening to the questions they pose, and seeking the best possible answers. This procedure also presupposes an exchange of experiences and reflections, discussion of the sources of difficulties, search for the core of the problem and discovery of new solutions. The participation in this process enables the teacher to discover their weaknesses and drawbacks in teaching, which initially may appear difficult, if not threatening, but which consequently enhances the development of the teacher. It is assumed that the more mature and self-aware the teacher is, the better their relationship with the students will be. Students, in turn, develop faster when they have good and close relations with other students. Perceived from such an angle, the work of the teacher with students and the work of the teacher with themselves as an expert and a guide of the process of education is also recommended. A definite benefit of such sessions is the increased openness to and confidence in the observer and supervisor as the same person and mutual trust among the observed. It is visible mostly in the increasing level of difficulty of the discussed cases and problems, and in the significant reduction of the resistance against presenting fragments or effects of the teacher's work. Another expression of self-confidence is also the disclosure of one's feelings, beliefs, and critical remarks concerning the methods of somebody else's work. In any case, counselling is constructive criticism which makes teachers more willing to share their reflections with others. An obvious professional benefit drawn from it is a better insight into the difficulties that arise in teaching due to the repeated analysis performed with the participation of others. The result of such an investigation is a new, broader way of perceiving a given problem. This allows making more spot diagnoses and adopting a better strategy in the process of education.

These considerations prove that counselling is not only a process in which others view and review teachers' work so that they can improve their professional qualifications. It is also the process of going beyond their professional role. This is the reason why the risk of fully accepting new information about oneself, which may result from this project, is worthwhile. With respect to all the benefits deriving from the process of education, they should be introduced as early as possible into the curricula of student internship courses and courses for pedagogy students, as well as into the curricula of training sessions and courses for experienced teachers. The strategies discussed in this paper contribute to the teachers' knowledge about their own selves: some things they have not been aware of before. This knowledge makes them understand better their reactions, feelings and their own ways of thinking. The strategies suggested in the paper and their contemporary application in education may prove to be helpful in overcoming teaching difficulties. As a result, teachers are satisfied with their profession and efficient in performing their didactic activities. In conclusion, further research and detailed analyses in this field prove to be a compelling necessity.

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