TEACHER-MANAGER STATUS AND ROLES IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The article provides contemporary interpretation of the concept of *status*, *role* and *function* in relation to the teaching profession. In the aspect of the presented theoretical concept the study aims to reveal teachers' understanding of managerial status in teaching profession and the roles that compound it. For the purpose of the survey a questionnaire is used. The results convey information about the roles and functions which teacher ascribe to managerial status. The findings are in two aspects: in the specifics of the conducted study, it is evident that teacher's are reluctant and unable to identify themselves with the managerial status because of their negative reaction to roles and functions which presuppose it. Out of the specifics of the research, became clear that the teachers formed their own models and ways to become successful managers outside the understanding of *status-role-function*. In this general aspect, the study concludes that teachers need trainings and qualification to reconsider their position in the teaching profession.

Key words: teaching profession, managerial status, professional roles, functions

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary dynamic social environment, professional occupations change their traditional form. They are becoming more inclusive, multifaceted and ill-structured. Teaching profession is characterized by high indices of change – it is among the professions that the public contract "requires" to expand multidirectionaly.

The structure of the teaching profession is getting more complicated and requires a new look at traditional concepts of *status, role and functions.*

Status according to Linton is "all the attributes associated with the position of a culture as well as the behavior of all people towards an individual" (1). The *status* includes "the rights and obligations, functions and relations",

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which are ascribed to a particular point in a system of social relations. Teacher is a "official professional status", which is a "basic status of the personality fixing its social, economic and production-technical position.

Role in the sociopsychological aspect is "the dynamic aspect of *status"*. It is "Officially determined, standardized form of behavior experienced by individuals as a result of their professional position (1). *Professional role* is a kind of social role.

Professional function is "a complex and a range of various practical and theoretical activities with their own characteristics." (2).

The relationship between *status, role* and *function* in the teaching profession can be explained through the common interpretation of the relationship between these concepts. *Status* and *role* are considered to be "values by which the individual identifies himself". The *role* is "legally guaranteed" and the role norm has an official aspect. By fulfilling a role, the individual falls into a "role reality" with other individuals performing roles related to the same role. In this "role reality", the individual

is involved normatively and functionally. "The movement" and "the interaction" with other individuals place him in a *status* network and shape his behavior. According to this interpretation, the *role* is inherent to the *status* - it is an "aspect" of it. *Function*, however, is not necessarily part of the role. It also exists independently, as a set of specific actions. As such, it possesses no value characteristics and gain them only through involvement in a role (1, 3).

The need of a liberal interpretation is derived, not identified – the professional roles of teachers are increasing in number and their content becomes increasingly ambiguous. The summaries can be presented through theoretical and practical outlook.

In the theoretical sources, it is observed mixing the content of different roles, duplication of *status*, *functions* and *roles*. Some authors reduce professional roles to core ones – 6, 10, 12 in number and "distributing" the teacher's activity within their boundaries (4-5). R. M. Harden and J. R. Crosby, for example, formulate 6 summarized roles, but each role is divided into two parts – one requiring knowledge of the field of study and the other requiring pedagogical knowledge. Thus, according to the authors of this model, 12 roles are inherent to a teacher (4).

In the teacher's perception *roles* appear chaotic and are perceived with contradictions – from the total negation to unrestrained enthusiasm. The unusual, "new" roles are either rejected or accepted with reserves. The common opinion is that the teachers fulfill their functions without "being involved in incomprehensible roles" (6, 7).

Of course, the "change" demanded is not about the content of the terms but in their "reconstructed presence". This study supports the assumption that official professional status "teacher" is generalized and could not "cover" the chaos of roles that the teacher performs. Therefore, teaching should be interpreted through "the existence of determined (or not) number of self-dependant structural units, which are components of the teaching profession, marking different aspects of the status of teachers". Roles that the teacher adopted in relation to one or other status, operate in system and form "status space" (7). But structure is relative – a certain *status* in specific conditions is "minimized" to the *role*

and particular *roles* in specific conditions are "maximized" to *status*. This "deconstruction" can be explained as follows: the status of *teacher-educator*, performs the role of manager, manager of the process of education. Because the managing is an inherent feature of educating. Another important feature of the *status* and *role* in the teaching profession is based on sociopsychological understanding of their functioning within the personality. Since it could not be given a consistent explanation to the interpretation, this problem should be approached flexibly: to take into account factors such as gender, formal/informal interaction in the role, degree of acceptance of the role by the individual etc. It should be taken into consideration the fact that the individual "actually occupies several statuses, but he is unable to perform the roles associated with them at the same time" (1).

This study is focused on *managerial status* in the teaching profession and the roles that fill it. Theoretical formulation is based on understanding that:
• The teacher is a low level institutional manager (8 – 10);
• The teacher-manager's interaction with other levels of the organization is vertical (7);
• Roles traditionally performed and imposed upon teachers do not fully describe the roles dynamics of the management status of the teacher (7).

RESEARCH
The research addresses the following set of problems:
• How the teachers understand the managerial status of the teaching profession in its role-identification?
• What is the attitude of teachers to roles typical for the managerial status?
• What function do teachers assigne to different roles from the scope of managerial status?

METHODOLOGY
For the purposes of the survey a questionnaire was developed * with the total of 18 questions, including: seven control questions (gender, teaching experience, field of employment, type of educating facility, educational qualification and additional qualifications, job position); seven questions about role identification and role attitudes; four questions to establish relationships and attitudes associated with the

managerial status of the teacher. The inquiry is conducted anonymous.

100 teachers from different stages and levels of education were questioned. For the purposes of this article, certain questions of the survey were analyzed (details in section RESULTS).* Ordinal scale and content analysis method were used to analyze the results.

RESULTS

Management functions, most frequently referred in the specialized sources, are: planning, organizing, managing, controlling, directing personnel, deciding, motivating, coordinating, communicating, supervising, performance, activation, evaluating, testing, innovating, creating, prognosing, influencing, bargaining (8). According to these functions, typical roles of the managerial status of the teaching profession have been determined. In the survey, the respondents ranged 22 professional roles, according to the degree of importance they attach. In **Table 1** are those which are inherent in different degree to the managerial status of the teacher.

According to the shown figures, teachers take *Authority* as the most important role **(Table 1)**. According to their perception this role requires behavior, by which 'to inspire pupils and respect for others", students to be "forced" to respect the institutional position of the teacher and "to induce respectful business distance".

In aspects of the managerial status *Authority* could be associated with functions: organizing, managing, controlling, decision making, evaluating, testing, influencing, negotiating. In the so described perception, teachers mostly identify the role of *Authority* with influencing function. They do not accept the decision making and negotiating functions because of the the assumption that these functions are inherent to the representatives of middle or higher management - Director, Deputy Director. Teachers associate testing, controlling, evaluating functions with direct training activities, i.e. they relate these functions only to their status of *trainers*.

Second most important role of the teacher is that of the *Leader* and it is associated with "directing the activities of the class", "providing an undisturbed atmosphere", "developing children skills and abilities", "stimulating students creativity" and "organizing class activity". Planning, monitoring, problem solving functions are

excluded from the role of the Leader. Coordination function is included, but as a "coordination of the class activities". According to the teachers' ranking of the role for which they feel most prepared and qualified, *Leader* role is the fifth **(Table 2)**.

Table 1. Professional roles included in the management status of teacher

Role	Weight
Authority	1
Leader	0,77
Advisor	0,76
Innovator	0,73
Consultant	0,68
Initiator	0,62
Collaborator	0,56
Executor	0,51
Coordinator	0,50
Distributor	0,47
Moderator	0,46
Mediator	0,41
Opponent	0,35

The respondents present *Advisor* and *Consultant* roles by functions communication and motivation. *Advisor* is one of the roles for which teachers are best prepared and qualified **(Table 2)**. Therefore, respondents competently describe their actions in relation to this role: "advising the child", "supporting its adaptation", "giving directions and guiding the student choices", "advising parents". The role of the consultant is not difficult or uncommon for teachers, but qualification is require for the implementation.

Initiator, *Collaborator* and *Executor* are also among the preferred roles with a weight of more than 0.5 **(Table 1)**. They are not identified in the top five positions of most unusual, most difficult, most unprepared and need training **(Table 2)**. The teachers, however, make a distinction between the role of the Executor from those of the Collaborator and Initiator. Teachers do not considered to be authorized by the system to initiate educational change. They feel more like direct executors of activities ordered and controlled by a superior, but through cooperation and initiative. In the interpretation of the teachers' vision of Initiator, Executor and Collaborator role, the answers to the following question "What kind of opinion hade the school manager/s to the performance of your professional roles" are

used. There are three possible phrases to be completed: "Encouraged, supported, because ...", "Suppressed, obstructed because ...", "Do not state an opinion, because ...". This question is not answered by 18.5% of the respondents. About 6% of all responses are not subject to analysis because they are idiosyncratic, i.e. non-categoric answers. Responses to the other 75.7% are treated as 100%. 83% of responding teachers said they had been encouraged and supported by the management **(Figure 1)**.

In their responds teachers use surprisingly similar phraseology: 55% of all teachers who have responded that they consider themselves to be encouraged and supported, claim that this is "done in student /child interest". 25 % responded that the management support is "in favor of the school". Variations between these responses are small. Some expressed both opinions - in favor of child and school, in the interests of work process and children, "the common goal and students". Of great interest are the explanations of the answers. They focused on cooperation and initiative as a value in terms of implementation and as its significant functions. Statements like: "the management respect my work, skills, qualification and my personality", "it is a mutual trust", "the management shows interest in my achievements", "management relies on accurate implementation and initiatives", "I successfully implement initiatives", "I create interesting technological and innovative methods", „the management is willing to work with competent teachers" etc.
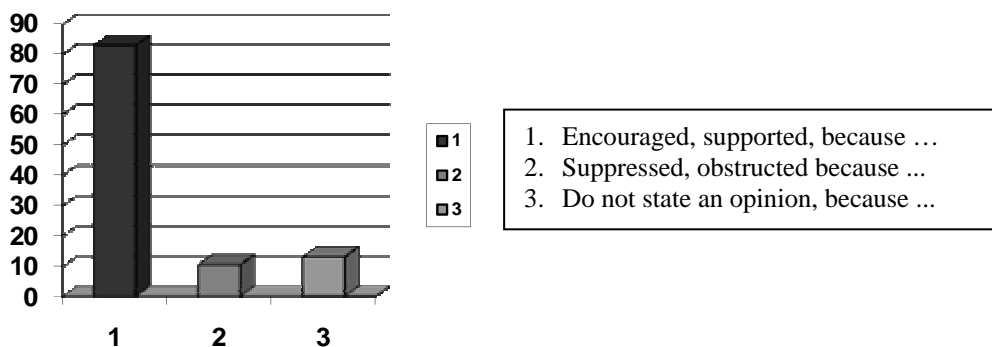

1. Encouraged, supported, because …
2. Suppressed, obstructed because ...
3. Do not state an opinion, because ...

Figure 1. Answers of the question in percentages

Table 2. Ranging professional roles by indexes

Roles	1	2	3	4	5
Most atypical	**Opponent**	Competitor	**Distributor**	Mentor	Expert
Most Difficult	Expert	Competitor	**Opponent**	**Moderator**	**Coordinator**
Best prepared and qualified	Educator	Friend	Source of information	**Advisor**	**Leader**
Most unprepared	Expert	Competitor	Facilitator	Mentor	**Opponent**
Need of qualification and training	**In/novator**	**Moderator**	Expert Facilitator	Source of information	**Consultant**

One possible conclusion from the analysis is: Some roles in the minds of teachers are actually functions of the roles which they accept and know.

Regarding the arguments supporting the answer "Suppressed, obstructed because ...", "Do not state an opinion, because ..." they support the understanding of the *executor* role by initiative and cooperation but expressed with a negative sign: "doing things which are not directly related to work", "the principal feels threaten because I want to qualify and because of that he has a negative attitude towards me", "I am wanted only when there is a need for good representation or in case of work monitoring", "He does not allow teachers to evolve and to advance professionally" etc. *Coordinator* and the *Distributor*, both roles are assimilated and reduced to one specific function: coordination. Distributor is not a typical role for teachers, which is why they identify it with Coordinator. *Coordinator*, on the other hand, is one of the most difficult roles for which teachers spend time and energy, as well as this function is often related to obligations which are not included in their job description. Drawing a parallel with the previously derived conclusions is relevant - the roles requiring more than routine effort are rejected by teachers. This way managerial status is "deprived" and the teaching profession retains its conservative nature.

Moderator and *Mediator* are the two professional roles of the most present interest which are relevant to the low level school management. These are roles to which teachers do not attach particular importance, but understand in very different ways. *Moderation* is considered to be unnecessary, unnatural, difficult role that teachers required training **(Table 2)**. The role of the *Mediator* is explained by teachers as "an intermediary between students-parents-school management" and it is consciously ascribed to the managerial status through its function of vertical interaction within the system. According to the respondents, this role can be interpreted as one of the formal roles that teachers do not want to identify with.

The role of the *Opponent* is rejected because it is considered a behavior causing teachers to fall into a direct confrontation with students. Teachers' arguments are as follows: "I can not argue with students", "I can not confront students", "I do not want to offend children". The additional explanations reveal defensive reaction against this role: "... because we're not on the same level", "we are not equal". Thus it is easy to understand why the *Opponent* role is the first in place not-typical role for teachers; third most difficult role that is required to play, fifth among the roles for which teachers feel most unprepared **(Table 2)**. The rejection of the role is clear – the role of *Opponent* is the only role which teachers indicate with criteria but do not show interest to be trained for it. What is the expanded meaning of the opponent role in managerial status of the teacher?

Table 3. *Comparison between subjective and objective categories in the answer "I can not answer because ..."*

Subjective Categories	Number	%	Objective Categories	Number	%
I don't feel like manager; I do not perceive myself as a manager;	10	26	I am not a class manager (I do not teach one class only, I am an educator, I do not work alone in the group)	12	31
It is very difficult to be (I cannot be) manager	6	15	It is not familiar to me…	2	5
I cannot imagine to be manager	4	10	I still learn…	2	5
I do not need to be manager	3	8			
	23	**59**		**16**	**41**

What is the expanded meaning of *the opponent role* in managerial status of the teacher? As an *Opponent*, the teacher-manager can *control, guide, decide, motivate, communicate, manage, activate, evaluate, influence and negotiate*. With these functions the teacher could extend his powers without the need of official authorization.

It is an interesting parallel with the role of in/novator. This role is not identified as difficult or atypical. Teachers do not feel poorly prepared for it. It is preferable role but requires training, mostly for its implementation (**Table 1 and 2**). When teachers try to interpret the role, their approach is in a conventional manner. They point out the innovate function, but only in relation to the teaching process and enriching it by technical means. Teachers do not understand the creative function as an

opportunity to implement new approaches in institutional organization and management.

In the interest of the survey, the *managerial status* is minimized to a role and reduced to class/group manager by a question included in the questionnaire. Teachers are asked to express opinion if the role of class/group manager enhances the quality of their work. Teachers are required to respond with YES, NO or "I can not answer", but also to explain "because…" in an additional extension of the question. 26% of respondents did not give an answer. The first disturbing tendency became obvious even with the distribution of responses. It turned out that most frequent answer is "I can not answer because ..." (**Figure 2**). That is where most arguments are given.
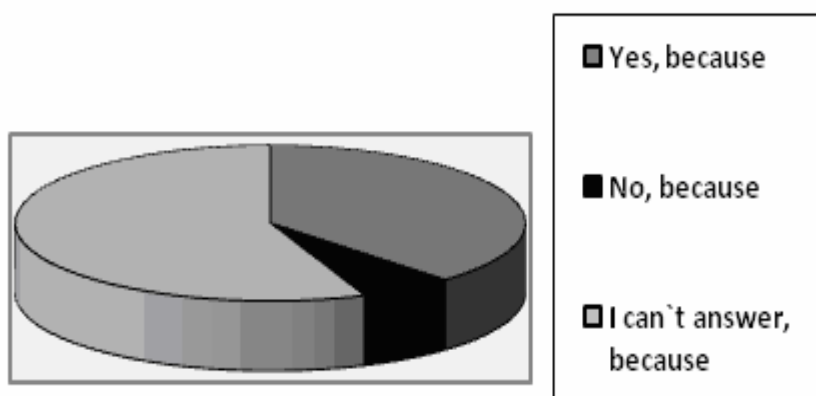

Figure 2. Answers of the question in percentages

The general overview of the arguments distributed them into two categories for analysis – subjective and objective. The number of people responded to this question was equalized to 100%. The same approach was applied to analyze the answer "Yes, because...". 6% of all respondents answered "No, because…" These answers are not analyzed separately because of their relatively small number and because in meaning they are very similar to "I can not answer because ..."

The subjective rejection prevails the objective rejection of the managerial role. Teachers do not perceive themselves as managers and do

not want to be such. The objective references of the managerial position are expressed by formal understanding of the role – as a class manager and/or person responsible for the group.

Teachers accepting their role of managers registered more answers to objective categories (**Table 4**). What is most impressive is linking the management with various roles improving the quality of teachers' activity. This means that teachers, who consciously accept management as a part of teaching profession, unconsciously include it in their professional system as a status of significance.

Table 4. *Comparison between subjective and objective categories in the answer "Yes, because..."*

Subjective Categories	Number	%	Objective Categories	Number	%
My students copy me (they have me as an example)	4	14	I accept various professional roles	10	36
I am improving myself, I improve my work	4	14	Increasing my responsibility	5	18
			Improving the interaction with student	5	18
	8	**28**		**20**	**72**

SUMMURY

This study offers conclusions in two aspects:
In the specifics of the topic:

- Teacher's inability and often their reluctance to identify with the status of manager are due to the burdening functional and role responsibilities of the status.
- Teacher's strong attachment to traditional roles, their resistance to the so called "new, non traditional" roles, again because of the forced additional responsibilities.
- Building unconscious adaptive mechanisms allowing teachers to survive in the unstable educational situation by making the most of the useful roles.
- Teacher's ability to vary in different role scenarios in order to become a successful low level manager, despite of the role inadequacy.
- Functional independence of teacher-manager from status-role and also independence of the managerial status from role-function in the teacher's notion of it.

In a more general aspect, the study premises the purposive training of teachers for:

- Reconsideration of the statuses (status identification) trough current structure of teaching profession – role dynamics of the status.
- Entering "new, atypical roles", considering of dynamic role scenarios, training roles skills and varying scenarios in different status situations.
- Identifying career ambitions and expectations – relations between personal qualities and professional competency within the role.

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