

PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS

The self as expert

At the parent-teacher evening the teacher presents her syllabus for the current year and explains the methods she is planning to use. Some parents express doubts as to the success of these methods. The teacher states that it is not necessary to exert pressure on the pupils as the curriculum leaves enough scope for using more than one method and instrument. Thus, she will be able to assist every single one of her class to reach the learning goals.

The teacher is not swayed by the parents' remarks. She perceives the problem of seemingly contradictory needs and refers to her own ability and knowledge that provide her with confidence and trust. She maintains the stance of an *expert on learning processes* who knows the children's different starting points and uses these as the basis for defining both the aims and focus of her work. She is also aware of the great variety of methods which she use to appropriately meet the needs of her children in different learning situations, she documents the children's learning progress, reflects on her own practice and prepares and carries out future learning processes accordingly. The teacher is aware that pedagogical action requires being able to cope with complex and contradictory situations. She is aware of the scope of instructional authority, which is a prerequisite for her professional work.

Such professional awareness means realising what makes a teacher's job a profession in its own right drawing a boundary based on what distinguishes it from other (social) professions. At the same time, professionally aware teachers regard themselves not only as part of their national and regional educational landscape, both influencing it and being influenced, but also as members of an international profession. They are open to change, regarding it as a challenge for both the school as an organisation and their own teaching. In addition, they pursue continuing education, expand their professional knowledge and apply it in their practice as needed. In cooperation with other teachers, they explore new teaching models and co-create the institutional framework of their profession.

Professionally aware teachers have the ability to distance themselves from themselves and from the immediate reality, to regard themselves and their professional position from an outside perspective. They regard the conditions of their profession as something which has developed over the course of history and consider it critically. They are *confidently* away of the freedom of their chosen profession as well as its restrictions and the danger of self-exploitation it can pose. They set boundaries against unrealistic demands – both others' and their own. They recognise *self-critically* how they are affected by their professional work with and draw a clear line between professional demands and their own individual selves.

Finally, professional awareness means knowing one's own knowledge and skills in a clearly defined field and seeing oneself as an expert. Such knowledge engenders *self-confidence* and the empowerment to act for the good of pupils, parents, and others involved.

Masthead:

AG EPIK – *Entwicklung von Professionalität im internationalen Kontext*

Developing Professionalism in an International Context

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