JAK SE UČITELÉ UČÍ

Cestou profesního rozvoje
k dialogickému vyučování

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Summary

This book deals with the ways teachers learn to implement dialogic teaching into their teaching practice. The monograph opens with two theoretical chapters. The first one introduces the key concept of dialogic teaching as a communication structure of instruction aimed at stimulating student thinking and deepening their understanding of educational content. The main characteristics of dialogic teaching, its indicators and principles are indicated, in contrast to other types of educational communication configurations. The chapter also touches upon the fact that the style of teaching common at schools both in our country and abroad is still far removed from the parameters of dialogic teaching, which explains the sustained effort (of foreign researchers, but also our own) to make this approach a reality of school practice. The objective of this book is to describe instruction in which teachers apply the methods of dialogic teaching. This state must be necessarily preceded by a stage when teachers learn how dialogic teaching works. Hence, chapter two describes how teachers can learn to transform their work, using video recordings of their own teaching, their analysis and reflection.

The core of the book is a empirical research designed as action research. The aim of the research was to initiate change in the school environment and to systematically examine its impact. The research was centred on a teacher development programme consisting of three components: theoretical, which provided teachers with space in the form of seminars where they were introduced to the theory of dialogic teaching and could discuss the possible ways of implementing it; experiential, which gave teachers an opportunity to try to implement the theory into their teaching practice; and reflective, where we watched the video recordings of instruction and discussed their contents in teacher-researcher tandems. These three components were arranged in a follow-up fashion and were repeated in cycles over the course of approximately one semester. As a consequence, we found ourselves not only in the role of researchers (which is in a way impartial and safe), but also in the position of those who educate teachers and accept co-responsibility for the progress they make as well as for the difficulties they face. This made us even more aware that validity and reliability of the results of our research is conditional on the quality of the research survey undertaken. A detailed description of its methodology is provided in chapter three.

The focus of this book lies in the results obtained. As mentioned above, our goal was to change the parameters of educational communication in the classes observed. Chapter four presents how successful this effort was in the perspective of numbers. First, we analyse whether and how significantly teacher communication behaviour changed as a result of the development programme and how this change was reflected in student communication behaviour. In other words, we address the question of whether we can argue with certainty that teachers and students started to communicate with each other in a new way. Next, we shift our attention to students and ask how they perceive the introduction of dialogic teaching methods. We show changes in students' attitudes to the subjects affected by the research survey.

The following two chapters allow us to follow the process of implementing dialogic teaching closely, through a mosaic of stories of teachers who collaborated with us. Individual case studies give an account of the transition from classic teaching to dialogic teaching. They document not only how teachers were coping with their established ways of action and potential problems preventing them from applying the principles of dialogic teaching, but also their ability to reflect on their own teaching and move towards change. Seven case studies are

crowned by a synthesis drawing attention to the fact that changing one's own behaviour is difficult, especially where a complex and deep change is to be achieved.

The book demonstrates that dialogic teaching is practicable, but also that teacher behaviour can be effectively influenced. An important point is that change must stem from teacher experiences – teachers need to try new methods out in practice, explore their potential benefits, but also shortcomings and limitations. The development is driven by critical comments by the researchers, but teachers themselves choose which comments and in what order they would like to deal with. In addition, it is also their initiative to look for ways to overcome the deficiencies identified.

We consider the finding that the nature of development of change is non-linear a significant contribution made by our research. We reached the conclusion that the alternation of stages of acceleration with stages of stagnation or regress is not an anomaly, but an inevitable part of the process if a complex change is to be achieved. In this case, disharmony or conflict between different features occurs easily, leading to a halt in the positive development. Probably even more importantly, we found through our analysis that the stages of stagnation or regress can be interpreted as a consequence of dissonance that often surfaced in the process of reflective interviews. A superficial assessment of the situation may conclude by saying that the researchers ruined by their interventions the progress made. However, our analysis revealed that inducing and overcoming of dissonance led to greater complexity and deeper anchoring of the change. Without experiencing and overcoming the dissonance, teachers would probably become entrenched in methods closest to their original routines. In such case, concentrating on indicators might actually lead to formalism – for instance the number of open questions of higher cognitive demand would increase, but the students would respond to them only briefly, or, as the case may be, many of them would be excluded from this type of questions. Data show that our procedure was as follows: select a simple path (indicators) and then problematize it (inducing dissonance).

As a result, the development took the form of gradual "clearing" of individual problems, many of which emerged in the course of the change as an unexpected consequence of newly introduced methods or forms of action. This brings us to an important realization – change means uncertainty and results need not be always good. This requires a great deal of courage on the part of teachers who need to move beyond what is known. And they also need patience as it takes time before the newly acquired pedagogical tools start to serve them effectively. All of this cannot be achieved without investing time, the amount of which cannot be easily predicted, as well as an enormous amount of energy.